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***WATER HAS THE POWER TO MOVE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE.
CLEAN WATER IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT.
LET WATER MOVE US IN THE DIRECTION OF PEACE.
PEACE FOR WATER!***

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV SAYS

**AT THE WATER FOR PEACE CONFERENCE
3RD WORLD WATER FORUM, JAPAN**

SHIGA – March 20, 2003 – Water is a crucial element for peace and security. At the 3rd World Water Forum, Green Cross is committed to bringing home the Water for Peace message at every level.

Armed conflicts will not solve – and can only exacerbate - the current world crisis: poverty and injustice lay the foundations of fundamentalism and hate. The under-development and isolation of countries leads to untold conflicts and suffering. War and violent conflicts must be avoided at all costs, Mikhail Gorbachev said today.

Wars and conflicts endanger water sources and peoples' access to them; and water related infrastructure can be targeted by both conventional military action and terrorism. In war-ravaged countries like Somalia and Afghanistan, the destruction of water services continues to plague society. Safeguarding the water resources of Iraq is a cause of great concern today.

Water must become a powerful vehicle for peace. The earth's great rivers and aquifers create natural links between peoples and cultures; but, without strong cooperation mechanisms and, critically, the genuine political will of leaders and governments, these shared waters could become a source of conflict. Such mechanisms and commitments are missing in many regions today – posing a serious threat to security and development alike. To combat these threats, UNESCO and Green Cross joined forces in launching the « From Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential: Water for Peace » programme in 2001, to promote peace and facilitate the management of shared water resources around the world.

Achieving these aims requires political will, backed up by strong financial commitments to support cooperation initiatives and mechanisms around the world.

Green Cross therefore supports the statements of Dr Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, President of the World Water Council, in his opening address to the Forum: “Water is a catalyst for peace and source of security for nations, communities and individuals alike...” Emphasis are to placed upon establishing conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, protection of water resources and facilities during armed conflicts, provision of water supplies in emergencies and management of natural disasters”.

Moreover, like Green Cross, the President of the World Water Council encourages the establishment of a World Water Fund “to secure the financing needs and to provide the accountability framework for meeting the MDG (the UN Millennium Development Goals) and other targets related to water”.

In April 2002, Green Cross and its partners launched a worldwide petition asking the negotiation of Global Convention on Water, the call from citizens is now being heard, says Mikhail Gorbachev today.

- “The need for basic education of all citizens, training of managers and decision-makers to encourage them to see their water supply as a vehicle for peace and development” emphasized by Andras Szöllösi-Nagy, Director, Division of Water Sciences of UNESCO.

- “The world’s resources of clean water have been put in jeopardy by a failure of the will to act and lack of a visionary commitment to affordable fresh water for all. There is no substitute for water: water is life, water means peace, said Jean-Michel Cousteau, President of the Ocean Futures Society,

- Mikhail Gorbachev believes that international laws should strengthen the protection of water systems during times of armed conflict and from terrorist attack, and that States must show good faith by immediately ratifying the 1997 *UN Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses*.

Most critical of all, at a time of great international instability; financial resources must be dedicated to the process of achieving WATER FOR PEACE and PEACE FOR WATER. This matter must be firmly on the table of the G8 discussions in Evian in June this year.

All sessions of the Water for Peace theme at the 3rd World Water Forum, Shiga 20 & 21 March, will aim at forging concrete commitments to action and will present recommendations to be promoted during 2003, the International Year for Freshwater.

For more information about
Green Cross, UNESCO, Ocean Futures Society, visit their website at:
www.greencrossinternational.net
www.unesco.org
www.oceanfutures.org