

Water ★ Water Day to be observed on 22nd

By Our Correspondent

INTERNATIONAL Water Day will be observed in Pakistan on March 22, as availability of water is one of the core issues the country.

The United Nations General Assembly at its 58th session in December 2003 agreed to proclaim the years 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," beginning with World Water Day on March 22, 2005.

The Water for Life decade sets the global goals on "a greater focus on water-related issues, while striving to ensure the participation of women in water-related development efforts and cooperation at all levels to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development and Agenda 21."

The Assembly asked the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing the existing resources and voluntary funds, to make "Water for Life" a "decade for action." Water is critical for sustainable development, including environmental stability and the alleviation of poverty, and is indispensable for human health and well-being, said Hamid Malhi Coordinator Punjab Water Council while talking to The News.

"The first water decade from 1981 to 1990 brought water to over a billion people and sanitation to 770 million. Much more is still needed to be done. Safe water supply and adequate sanitation to protect health are among the basic human rights," he

added. Today, there are still almost 1.1 billion people who have inadequate access to water and 2.4 billion without appropriate sanitation, he said.

Talking about Pakistan, he said every year the country was facing water shortfall. "During the ongoing Rabi season we are facing a shortfall of about 20 percent whereas water shortage loom large in the coming Kharif season", he claimed. As the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" begins, the United Nations and Governments are galvanizing efforts to meet the internationally agreed targets, said Rabia Sultan of Punjab Water Council.

She said the United Nations General Assembly fixed 22 March of each year as the World Day for Water by adopting a resolution. States were invited to devote the Day to implement the UN recommendations and launch concrete activities in the national context, she added.

Last year, different organizations celebrated the occasion. The biggest was the Water Conference organized by the Pakistan Engineering Congress in collaboration with the Water and Power Development Authority.

A panel discussion was held to mark the occasion where Wapda chairman Tariq Hamid spoke. This year, the occasion will be expected to be celebrated with the same zeal and zest as various organizations like Pakistan Engineering Congress, World Wide Fund, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industries (LCCI) and various NGOs are planning to organize seminars and conferences to highlight the importance of water.