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PRESS RELEASE

ALL WOMEN NEED WATER AND SANITATION MORE ACCESS-TO-WATER AND SANITATION PROJECTS MUST BE LAUNCHED

BRUSSELS – MARCH 8, 2007 – International Women's Day.

Today, almost half the world's women still have no adequate drinking water and sanitation at home or nearby. Every day, they must carry water from distant sources.

Shortage, indignity, sickness, drudgery – this is still their water world. Through AquaFed, their international federation, private water operators are launching a call to address the urgency of this situation by creating more water and sanitation projects worldwide.

“Action is needed to improve women's lives in developing countries by significantly increasing the number of projects that connect more households to drinking water networks or provide better sanitation.” says Gerard Payen, President of AquaFed.

In developed countries almost everybody has piped water at home and accepts it as an essential service.

But in developing countries **more than 1 out of every 2 families (3 billion people¹) do not have tapwater at home or even nearby.** Water sources are often far away, forcing people to suffer the daily burden of fetching all the water they need. Women are primarily affected by this lack of service. For women, the burdensome task of carrying water demands vast amounts of effort, energy and time. Worse, this chore often deprives young girls of time to attend school and mothers the opportunity of jobs.

AquaFed is publishing a document today “Water and Sanitation for Women – Private Operators Contribute²” that describes the water and sanitation needs of women.

Projects aimed at developing access to water and improving sanitary conditions benefit women throughout the world. It is urgent to extend drinking water and sanitation networks in all urbanized areas in order to turn the human right to water into a reality for all women (at an affordable price). In rural areas, efforts must be stepped up to develop access to water and cut down the distances that women have to carry water. The number of drinking water and sanitation projects worldwide is totally insufficient: a renewed effort is needed urgently.

“Private water operators are used to making the right to access to water and to sanitation a tangible reality for people. That is their job all over the globe. They have improved water access and sanitation to tens of millions of families in the developing world”, declares Gerard Payen.

AquaFed's members are committed to continue to using their expertise to improve the quality of life of more women.

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AquaFed is the International Federation of Private Water Operators. Open to companies and associations of companies of all sizes and from all countries, it aims to contribute to solving water challenges by making Private Sector know-how and experience available to the international community. It brings together more than 250 water companies that serve people in 38 countries³.

¹ UNICEF-WHO, Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation, MDG 2006 Assessment, page 39:
www.wssinfo.org/pdf/JMP_06.pdf

² “Water and Sanitation for Women, private operators contribute.” 8 pages, AquaFed, 8 March 2007, available on
www.aquafed.org

³ Additional information on www.aquafed.org

If you would like further information, or additional comments from a senior representative at AquaFed, please contact Thomas Van Waeyenberge at +32 479 23 78 26