

Press release
March 4, 2005

The IInd Alternative World Water Forum (FAME) will take place from March 17th to 20th, 2005. Over 2000 people are expected for one of the largest meetings of Swiss and international civil society of the year. The goal: the adoption of action plans for the creation of a worldwide public water service. The full programme is now available on the website: <http://www.fame2005.org/>.

FAME is part of the continuum of actions in the area of universal access to drinking water conducted over several years on all continents. The first edition was held in Florence in March 2004, as a "counter summit" to the "official" one held simultaneously in Kyoto under the leadership of the World Water Council, regrouping representatives of the large intergovernmental institutions (U.N., World Bank, etc.) and multinational companies of the private sector. The organisers thus proclaimed their refusal to see water issues further subjugated to the interests of the business world.

For Alberto Velasco, representative of the Geneva cantonal parliament and president of FAME II, the primary objective of this meeting is to "develop and promote the institutions and the political parties who are finally enabling universal access to drinkable water and democratic and sustainable Management of water for solidarity". During the Florence meeting, four principles were established as fundamental to a worldwide public water service: the right to water, recognition of water as a "universal public good", the democratic management of water and the public financing of water. The Geneva Forum aims to build on these four themes and adopt action plans for operationalising them (preparatory texts are available on the website www.fame2005.org).

The Forum will open with a ceremony on the evening of March 17, co-chaired by Mario Soares, former president of Portugal, and Danielle Mitterrand, president of the Foundation France Libertés. The programme then branches out in two parts. Friday, March 18 will be devoted to conferences and debates, which should bring the assembly to adopt the action plans by the end of the following day. Several personalities, active in water issues from around the world will address the assembly.

Saturday March 19, will be devoted to a programme with parallel activities including a number of workshops, seminars and cultural events organised by the hundreds of NGOs who have joined the Forum. Around Geneva, the « Halles de l'île », « les Bains des Pâquis » as well as the entire street Savoies – in front of the House of Associations (Maison des Associations) (closed to traffic for the occasion) - will become meeting areas with booths, exhibits and cultural events.

A highlight of the programme will be the international meeting of parliamentarians, which will take place at the Geneva cantonal parliament chaired by the Member of Parliament Carlo Sommaruga. Mobilising local and national elected officials from the entire world and helping them promote water rights in their respective countries is one of the main goals of FAME.

As in Florence in 2003, the event is financed by public funds coming essentially from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the City and Canton of Geneva, as well as a number of Swiss municipalities. In order to ensure a strong participation of organisations and movements from the South, a large part of the budget has been reserved to pay for travel and lodging for representatives from countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

FAME will be one of the large mobilisations of the Swiss and international civil society of the year. While the U.N. has declared the period 2005-2010 the international decade of action "Water, spring of life", this event is the occasion for numerous actors - NGOs, associations, alternative movements, elected officials and politicians, trade unions, activists from Switzerland and the entire world - to show that there are concrete and operational alternatives in favour of a public water service.

For more information or for interviews with personalities:

Bastienne Joerchel : 0041 79 445 94 87

Chantal Woodtli : 00 41 79 702 03 38

Laurent Sommer : 00 41 78 667 04 75

<http://www.fame2005.org/>

<mailto:medias@fame2005.org>

Mailing address of the secretariat:
Association FAME 2005 c/o Maison des Associations
15 rue des Savoises, 1205 Genève,
Tél : 022 320 18 03 ; fax : 022 320 18 23 ; secretariat@fame2005.ch

Internet: <http://www.fame2005.org/>