

## **Government of Turkey**

### **WATER MANAGEMENT**

- Global warming, the greatest problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century led to shortages in the availability of water resources. Water is the most critical of all natural resources. Water shortage, drought and lack of sufficient energy resources undermine the economic development of many countries.
- One of the challenges we face today is the declining per capita water availability as a result of rapid population growth, climate change and rising levels of pollution. The problem is further aggravated by the uneven water distribution on earth. For example, the per capita availability of fresh water in Turkey, a semi-arid region, is only one fifth of that of north America and western Europe. Precipitation in arid and semi arid regions is generally limited to four or five months a year. Therefore, water resource development projects, especially storage systems and irrigation networks, are indispensable for agriculture and rural development in the countries of these regions, namely the Mediterranean, Middle East, Central Asia and many parts of Africa. Multi-purpose water infrastructure systems in many countries have been fulfilling a vital role in providing safe drinking water, water for sanitation and agriculture. However, there is an urgent need to build additional water storage capacities due to an ever-increasing demand.
- Turkey is located in the eastern Mediterranean Basin where countries in the highest risk group with respect to the negative impacts of climate change, as indicated by the 4<sup>th</sup> IPCC Assessment report. We have recently revised our water policy by taking into account Turkey's present and future water and energy needs, its fast growing and rapidly urbanizing population. Priority has been given to utilize water resources in an efficient manner. We focus on the protection of the quantity and quality of the available resources but more importantly on providing safe drinking water and sanitation for urban and rural settlements.
- The World Water Forum is the main water-related event aimed at putting water firmly on the international agenda. It is my pleasure to invite all participants to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum to be held on 16-22 March 2009 in Istanbul. "Bridging Divides for Water" is the overarching theme for the Forum which offers an excellent opportunity for strengthening cooperation among our nations.