

Small steps forward in tackling sanitation crisis, huge leap needed

Anglo-Dutch announcement welcomed, but NGOs warn that much more will be needed to end global sanitation and water crisis



For immediate release, 24th September: World leaders today gathered alongside UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who called for accelerated action to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets for sanitation and water. End Water Poverty, an international coalition of over 110 civil society organisations, welcomed announcements from the UK and Netherlands that they would promote a *'global framework for action'* that includes a high-level summit to be held in 2009 and the development and implementation of plans to meet the MDGs in 20 countries, supported by an extra *initial* budget of €100 million over five years.

While welcoming the news, NGOs warned, however, that much more would need to be done to end the scandal of 40% of the world's population lacking access to a safe toilet. Steve Cockburn, End Water Poverty Coordinator said: *"Increasing support for countries' own plans to meet the MDGs and establishing a high-level meeting to drive progress are positive steps forward not just in delivering much-needed progress on sanitation and water, but also in boosting efforts to fight poverty, reduce child deaths and get girls into school."*

"Yet the success of any meeting is obviously not in the fact that it is held, but in the outcomes it produces, and the success of country plans will be in their funding and implementation. The key test will be if between now and next year many more governments across the world get serious in delivering their commitments and provide the finances and political will to make a real difference."

The announcement was made at an event organised by the Governments of Netherlands, Japan, Germany and Tajikistan and attended by the UN Secretary-General and the Governments of the UK, Spain, Tanzania, India, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Thailand and Kazakhstan. It was held one day in advance of the UN-High Level Event on the MDGs.

Jamillah Mwanjisi, Executive Secretary of the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW), who also spoke at the event, added: *"In 2008, African leaders promised to step up their efforts and develop national plans to provide safe sanitation and clean water to their populations. Yet these commitments will only ever be realised if donor governments play their part too. The UK and Netherlands have taken positive first steps, but now others must follow."*

"This must begin when leaders gather tomorrow to discuss ways to meet the MDGs. They must show they are prepared to provide much stronger support to tackle a crisis that is fatally undermining both the fight against poverty and the provision of human dignity."

End Water Poverty has been drawing attention to the neglect of a global crisis in which 2.5 billion people have no access to safe sanitation and almost 900 million people have no access to clean water. On current trends, the target to halve the proportion of people without access to sanitation in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 will not be reached until 2108.

To remedy this situation, End Water Poverty have been calling on leaders to agree a global framework for action that includes three elements:

- An annual review and high-level meeting to drive progress in the sector
- The development of national sanitation and water plans
- A commitment that no credible national plan will fail through lack of finance

This morning a global petition of 960,037 signatures was presented to Dutch Prime Minister Jan Balkenende in support of the End Water Poverty campaign.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon summarised the event by saying *"we often say water is life, now let us act like we mean it."*

Notes to editors :

1. The high-level event in 2009 will be hosted by UNICEF and supported by the Governments of the UK and Netherlands and will aim to bring together governments and multilateral agencies to deliver progress in the sector. The announcements were made by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Jan Balkenende, and UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, Gareth Thomas.
2. Other significant statements made included:
 - a. **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**: stated that the deaths of thousands of children every day “diminishes us all”, adding that “we often say that water is life, let us act like we mean it”. He called for much greater investment in the sector, saying that an extra \$10-18bn would be needed each year to meet the MDG targets.
 - b. **Government of Tanzania, on behalf of the African Union** (Prof David Myakusa, Minister for Health and Social Welfare): Highlighted the need for African leaders to implement the AU commitments to develop national plans to achieve the MDG targets
 - c. **Government of Tajikistan** (President Mr Enomali Rahmon): Called for a special session of the UN General Assembly on water, and for the mobilisation of financial resources.
 - d. **Government of Japan** (Special Envoy, Ms Yoriko Kawaguchi): Described the MDG 7 (including the targets on water and sanitation) as the most strategically important MDG target, and focused on the need for water cycle management.
 - e. **Government of Germany** (Vice-Chancellor Frank-Walter Steinmeier): Outlined that “there can be no economic development, no prosperity, no healthy population and most certainly no political stability” without tackling water and sanitation.
 - f. **Government of India** (Shanta Sheela Nair, Secretary Ministry for Rural Development): Called for the prioritisation of sanitation to boost progress in clean water and health.
 - g. **Government of Spain** (Soraya Rodriguez, Secretary of State for International Cooperation): Need to step up of efforts with a bigger budget and better coordination.
 - h. **Civil Society**: Barbara Frost, Chief Executive of WaterAid and Jamillah Mwanjisi, Executive Director of African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation, both supported the global framework for action and called on others to come on board.

Media Fact Sheet



Sanitation and Water – the missing link in international health and development

The United Nations has declared 2008 the International Year of Sanitation in recognition of the scale of the crisis. Over 2.5 billion people - 40% of the world's population - do not have a safe, clean or private place to go to the toilet. Almost 900 million people do not have access to clean drinking water. The resulting diarrhoeal diseases kill 5000 children every day, five times the number of deaths from HIV/AIDS.¹ This global crisis is undermining all development efforts and particularly efforts to reduce the number of children who die before their fifth birthday.

The human cost in health and development terms:

- A recent report by WaterAid highlighted evidence suggesting that poor sanitation could be the biggest cause of child deaths – **killing up to 2.4 million children each year** through its impact on diarrhea, pneumonia and malnutrition.²
- Children in homes with no toilet are **twice as likely to get diarrhea** as those with a toilet.³
- At any one time people suffering from diarrhea and other water-related diseases fill **half the hospital beds in developing countries**.⁴
- Each year millions of productive days are lost due to people being ill from diarrheal disease⁵ which **costs sub-Saharan Africa 5% of its GDP**.⁶
- Investments are cost-effective. According to the 2006 UN Human Development Report, **every \$1 of investment in sanitation yields a \$9 economic return**.
- Each year over **443 million school days are lost** to water-related illness, undermining the aim of universal primary education, especially for girls.⁷ Girls' attendance increases 11% with the provision of separate sanitary facilities in schools.⁸
- **The burden of this crisis falls most heavily on women** – with girls having to drop out of school to fetch water or because of poor sanitation facilities in adolescence, and women having to care for sick or dying children as well as spend hours fetching water.
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed by world leaders in 2000, include a target to halve the number of people lacking access to safe water and sanitation by 2015. **On current trends the goal for sanitation will only be reached in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2108.**

Addressing the global sanitation crisis

End Water Poverty is calling on governments to act boldly by providing the institutions, finances and political will needed to meet the MDG targets. In particular, End Water Poverty is calling on leaders at the UN meeting to agree a global framework for action that includes:

- An annual review and high-level meeting to drive and monitor global progress in the sector
- The development of costed and coordinated national water and sanitation plans
- A commitment that no credible national plan should fail through a lack of finance

www.endwaterpoverty.org

¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report* (2006)

² WaterAid, *Tackling the Silent Killer – The Case for Sanitation* (2008)

³ <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/Publications/Briefing%20Notes/BN%20Child%20HealthI.htm>

⁴ UNDP, *Human Development Report* (2006)

⁵ Hutton, G. et al., "Economic and health effects of increasing coverage of low cost water and sanitation interventions." *UNDP HDR Office Occasional Paper* (2006)

⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report* (2006)

⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report* (2006)

⁸ IWS Advocacy Kit: UN Water 2008. Factsheet 2