

Recommendations for the Annual High-Level Meeting on Sanitation and Water



Introduction and summary

The first Annual High Level Meeting (HLM) on sanitation and water will be hosted by UNICEF in Washington, 23 April 2010, bringing ministers together from North and South to take concerted action to tackle the global sanitation and water crisis.

The HLM is an opportunity to reverse the political and financial neglect of a crisis that is undermining all progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It should provide a forum for mutual accountability, for reaching consensus on the key challenges blocking progress, and for agreeing and reviewing key policy or financing actions.

It is essential that the HLM is attended by Finance Ministers and Ministers responsible for water and sanitation from developing countries, as well as Development or Finance Ministers from donor countries. Ministers need to deliver a strong political statement, but more importantly need to deliver tangible actions that deliver real progress towards achieving sanitation and water for all.

Tangible actions to be taken include:

1. Ensure that *'no credible national plan will fail through a lack of finance'*, beginning with extra support to develop and implement national plans in at least 15 pilot countries.
2. Refocus investment towards low income countries and marginalised groups
3. Formalise the Global Framework for Action as a platform to deliver commitments

A political statement, signed by all attendees, should include:

- Recognition that progress in tackling the sanitation and water crisis would also drive progress across development sectors, not least in improving child survival, increasing girls' education, strengthening economic growth and reducing poverty.
- Recognition that access to sanitation and water is a fundamental human right, and should be prioritised as essential services alongside health and education.
- Recognition that progress has been critically slowed by a lack of political priority given to the sector, weaknesses in national capacities, insufficient and poorly targeted finance, and the absence of a global platform where issues in the sector can be addressed.
- Recognition that despite these challenges, some countries have made genuine progress and that there is a need to learn from and build on their experiences.
- Recognition that climate change and population growth will exacerbate the sanitation and water crises, and that financial and technical adaptation support must be provided to governments and communities in areas of increased water stress.
- Commitments to act to fulfil existing agreements, including the eThekweni Declaration, the African Union's Sharm el-Sheikh Agreement, SACOSAN's Delhi Declaration, the European Union's Agenda for Action on the MDGs and various G8 commitments.
- Commitments to implement the aid effectiveness principles enshrined in the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action, from both donor and recipient countries, and to increase the sustainability of water, sanitation and hygiene interventions.

ACTIONS IN DETAIL

1. Provide a political commitment, and additional resources, to ensure that ‘no credible national sanitation and water plan will fail through a lack of finance’

- a. As a first step, donors and national governments should form agreements in 7-10 pilot countries to develop credible national plans¹, including a *new pooled fund* and enhanced technical support to develop capacity and planning systems.
- b. Donors and national governments should form agreements in 7-10 pilot countries to implement existing national plans, with donors and developing countries providing additional finances to fill identified funding gaps.
- c. Civil society organisations should be fully and meaningfully involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of national plans.
- d. Donors should provide support for countries, in addition to existing aid commitments, to integrate climate risk based approaches in national sanitation and water plans, as an adaptation response.
- e. Develop commonly agreed frameworks, at the national level, for monitoring sector performance, evaluating interventions and holding government and service providers accountable.

2. Refocus investment towards low-income countries and marginalised groups

- a. Donor countries should ensure that at least 70% of aid for water, sanitation and hygiene education is targeted towards low-income countries.
- b. Developing countries should commit to significantly increasing the level of public expenditure dedicated to the sector, with at least half going to sanitation and hygiene.
- c. For African countries, this should include meeting the commitment made in the eThekweni Declaration to invest at least 0.5% of GDP in sanitation and hygiene education.
- d. Both donor and developing countries should commit to ensuring that at least 50% of all finances to the sector are allocated to pro-poor interventions for essential WASH services.
- e. Ensure particular attention is given to targeting services towards marginalised groups, and those in vulnerable situations, including women, children, older people, people living with HIV and AIDS, people with disabilities, people living in informal urban settlements, and other socially excluded groups.

3. Formalise the Global Framework for Action as a global platform to deliver commitments

- a. Agreement of the key global structures and processes needed to drive and monitor progress as part of the Global Framework for Action, including a Global Task Force, an Annual Review and an Annual High-Level Meeting.
- b. Agreement that commitments made at the High-Level Meeting must be subject to a monitoring process, with civil society participation, and parties must be held accountable for delivery at future High-Level Meetings.
- c. A commitment to broaden the participants in the Global Framework for Action beyond those involved at the first High-Level Meeting.

¹ Further work is required on defining a ‘credible national plan’ but would include elements such as appropriate policies and strategies; strong sector coordination – including links with other ministries such as those for Finance, Health and Education; clear institutional arrangements; sufficient finance and effective performance monitoring, and meaningful involvement of civil society organisations. For a discussion paper from WaterAid please see www.endwaterpoverty.org/country_compacts