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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**KEYNOTE REMARKS AT STOCKHOLM
WORLD WATER WEEK
“BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SANITATION AND WATER
FOR ALL”**

Stockholm, Sweden, 2 September 2013

**Dear Hosts,
Honoured Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Often in life and in the world we are overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the problems we face.

Sometimes this translates into a sense of frustration and helplessness. We say “this goes beyond my capacity and competence.” We turn our attention elsewhere, away from the disturbing realities.

With the water and sanitation challenge there is a different dynamic. Yes -- it is a huge problem. But yes -- it is also hands-on, concrete and universally understood.

I am sure that you who are attending World Water Week have experienced the awakening and mobilizing effect of the water and sanitation message that you deliver on health, development and security.

It is self-evident that dealing effectively with the water and sanitation crisis is fundamental to fighting disease and poverty. It is key for enabling a life of dignity for billions of people around the globe.

In a world of population growth and pressures on water resources within and among nations, sound and fair water management is a huge task and a clear imperative.

And we have no time to waste.

The 2015 deadline for the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is rapidly approaching.

There is good news in some areas.

Since the adoption of the MDGs in the year 2000, global poverty rates have been reduced by half.

Two hundred million slum dwellers live better lives.

Enrolment in schools has increased dramatically.

And last year we were able announce that the world had reached the target for access to improved sources of water.

But water quality to a large degree still fails to meet basic World Health Organization standards.

One of the main factors that negatively affects water quality is the lack of sanitation.

The sanitation target is among the most lagging of the MDG Goals.

More than 2.5 billion people around the world do not have adequate sanitation -- more than one third of humanity.

Of these, 1 billion people practice open defecation. One out of every four people in the least developed countries defecates in the open. This is largely a function of poverty, with serious human consequences. Ending the practice could, for instance, lead to a 36 per cent reduction in diarrhoea.

It would also enhance the personal safety of women and girls. Reports from several countries show that many rape cases occur when women have to venture out from their homes to isolated places for their basic needs.

We must break taboos. As was the case for the word “toilets” a few years ago, it is time to incorporate “open defecation” in the political language and in the diplomatic discourse.

Open defecation was a crucial component in the “Call to Action on Sanitation” that I launched in March this year on behalf of the UN Secretary-General.

The Call to Action identifies 2025 as our target to end open defecation by providing all people access to sanitation.

To that end, the United Nations General Assembly made a great stride forward in July by adopting the Sanitation for All resolution that declared 19 November each year as World Toilet Day.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sanitation is a huge challenge requiring sustainable solutions and concerted measures from a number of actors - national governments, local administrations, development partners, international organizations, the private sector, the research and science community and civil society.

As we look beyond 2015, it is essential that sanitation is placed at the heart of the development framework.

I am encouraged by recent recommendations of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, of Jeffrey Sachs’ Sustainable Development Solutions Network and of the UN Global Compact.

They all identify universal access to sanitation as a top priority for poverty eradication and sustainable development, two pursuits which in the end should converge.

Roughly 80 per cent of global wastewater from human settlements or industrial sources is discharged untreated, contaminating oceans, rivers and other water bodies.

This pollution is expected to worsen with the rapidly increasing number of people living in cities, along with growing industrial and agricultural activities.

Further, poor sanitation and hygiene is the primary cause of diarrhoea.

Diarrhoea is, after pneumonia, the biggest killer of children under five in the world, responsible for 800,000 deaths each year – around 2,000 children every day.

Even when diarrhoea does not kill, it empties nutrients from the body which in turn, and after repeated occurrences, results in stunting, stopping children in their growth.

Stunted children are not just shorter and thinner. They are more vulnerable to disease and their brains do not develop as they should.

These children fall behind in school, earn less when they grow up, contribute less to their nations' growth and, above all, live less full lives than others.

The argument is compelling for us all to focus our attention on sanitation for sustainable development, also from an economic perspective.

According to the World Health Organization, inadequate water supply and sanitation around the world corresponds to annual economic losses of \$260 billion.

According to established studies, the economic benefits of meeting the MDG target on water and sanitation amount to \$60 billion annually.

We also know that every dollar spent on water and sanitation can bring a five-fold return, mainly through diminished health costs and increased work productivity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now is the time for accelerated, energized and concerted action.

There is a need for us to accept responsibility in each specific sector. But there is also a need to develop dynamic partnerships and cooperation patterns between us.

The Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) initiative is an example of the multiple gains of such cross-cutting cooperation.

I experienced this dynamic partnership when I, as Chair of Water Aid Sweden, moderated the second SWA High Level Meeting at the World Bank in April 2012.

It was one of the best meetings I ever attended on sanitation. We brought everyone who needed to be there around one table – ministers of finance, water and sanitation, civil society, international organizations – not least the UN and World Bank working side by side. More than 50 Ministers attended and some 400 commitments were made.

All the countries that made commitments at the 2012 High Level Meeting have provided progress reports one year later. Many of these reports show substantial achievements.

Fifteen developing countries reported significant progress in scaling up community-based work to tackle open defecation.

Thirteen countries reported budget increases for sanitation and water.

Four of eleven donors reported a higher priority for sanitation in their aid programmes.

In Kenya one entire district was declared “Open Defecation Free.”

In Benin, the national budget for sanitation increased by 20 per cent in one year following the high-level meeting in Washington.

A surge of initiatives is driving further accomplishments.

I applaud the United Nations Secretary-General’s Advisory Board, UN Water, the Group of Friends of Water at the UN and other countries leading the way.

Next year in April, UNICEF and the World Bank will convene the third SWA High Level Meeting.

I look forward to seeing continued progress and registering new commitments.

Governments and local administrations need to continue to give higher priority to investments in water, sanitation and hygiene – WASH. They should be aware of the substantial savings this would mean for other parts of society, not least for the health sector.

Development partners should also continue to give WASH higher priority in their aid policies.

It is fundamental that we accept shared responsibilities and that we place the problems in the centre – not in institutional silos. In the end, quite simply, we can, indeed, reach an informal division of labour in solving them.

Nobody can do everything – but everyone can do something.

Let me give you the example of young entrepreneurs I met in Ethiopia last year.

I visited a small sanitation project called Feyenne, southeast of Addis Ababa.

Feyenne is supported by UNICEF and the Oromia Bureau of Youth and Sports and is run by three young men who used to live on the streets.

In their small office I saw a chalk board with one word on it -- “sustainability”. The New York and Rio+20 negotiations came to life for me!

Their approach to sustainability was to tackle the sanitation problem as a business. The concept was simple – to provide safe, clean public toilets near the main market for which use they could charge a modest fee.

This is just one model, one example – and it is replicable.

It is the kind of simple, affordable action that changes people’s lives.

It helps tackle the sanitation problem apart from providing employment opportunities for young people.

Here, I would like to commend this year’s Stockholm Water Prize Laureate Dr. Peter Morgan for his practical and low-cost solutions that provide access to safe sanitation and clean water to millions around the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Finally, let me turn to the issue of water and water management from the perspective of conflict generation and conflict resolution -- another passion of mine.

In many parts of the world we see growing risks of water, or the lack of water, becoming a reason for conflict.

I have seen it in Darfur where poisoning of water wells was a way of forcing people to leave their villages for the overcrowded camps.

I have seen it in complex and strained relations among States related to cross-border management of waterways and rivers. One country may need water for energy; a neighbouring country may need water for agriculture.

These are often issues of fundamental national, economic and political interest.

These interests need to be reconciled in mutually acceptable ways in order to provide security and prosperity.

It is of great importance that we in today's world realize that scarce resources must be managed fairly and wisely and must be shared as much as possible.

Just as sanitation is central to the post-2015 development agenda, so is equitable water and resource management.

This is particularly urgent as the impact of climate change becomes ever more apparent and severe.

If competition for resources turns into open conflict, invariably all sides, all involved, will suffer.

Our aim must be to make scarce resources, in particular water, a reason for cooperation rather than conflict.

This is a matter of vital interest, not least in the world's arid lands, such as in the Middle East.

This is well known to His Highness Prince Hassan of Jordan – the new Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, UNSGAB. We look forward to working closely with him and the Advisory Board.

Resource and water “hydro” diplomacy is an increasing challenge for the international community. It is a daunting and at the same time inspiring task.

The United Nations – in particular through UN Water, which coordinates the UN's work on all water related issues – stands ready to assist.

This year is the International Year of Water Cooperation.

Let us all commit to address seriously the water management and sanitation challenges, which I spoke about earlier, on the basis of cooperation, common interest and common purpose.

This will, I predict, make it possible for us to achieve sustainable development, enhanced security and, in the end, a life of dignity for all.

Thank you.