

News Note

UN Secretary-General launches the “Sustainable Sanitation: Five-Year Drive to 2015”

United Nations, 21 June 2011—UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, along with UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake, Ugandan Minister of Water & Environment the Hon. Maria Mutagamba, and His Royal Highness the Prince of Orange, today launched the “Sustainable Sanitation: Five-Year Drive to 2015”, a push to speed up progress on the Millennium Development Goal target of improving global sanitation by 2015.

The launch took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York, with members of the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and other dignitaries in attendance.

The Millennium Development Goals include a target of halving, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to basic sanitation. With 2.6 billion people – half of the population in developing regions – still without access to improved sanitation, the target is lagging far behind, and without urgent and concerted action globally it will be out of reach.

On 20 December 2010 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling upon the UN Member States to “redouble efforts to close the sanitation gap”. The resolution established a global push, “Sustainable Sanitation: The Five-Year-Drive to 2015”, to focus attention on the Goal and to mobilize political will, as well as financial and technical resources. The resolution also made history by calling for an end to open defecation, the most dangerous sanitation practice for public health.

Over 1.1 billion people have no sanitation facilities at all, and practise open defecation. According to UNICEF, inadequate and dirty water, poor sanitation, and improper hygiene are the main causes of diarrhoea, which each year kills at least 1.2 million children under five. The organization says diarrhoeal diseases are mainly excreta-related; therefore it is crucial to protect people from contact with faeces. Improvements in sanitation can lead to an almost 40% reduction in illnesses caused by diarrhoea.

Achievement of the sanitation goal, UNICEF says, will have far-reaching and lasting effects on the health and well-being of millions of people.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

About **UNSGAB**

The **United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation** is an independent body established in March 2004 by the UN Secretary-General to give him advice as well as to galvanize action on water and sanitation issues. Chaired by His Royal Highness the Prince of the Netherlands, the Board is composed of a wide range of dignitaries, technical experts, and individuals with proven experience in providing inspiration, moving the machinery of government, as well as working with the media, the private sector and civil society. See: <http://www.unsgab.org/>

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