

First Annual High Level Meeting of Sanitation and Water for All April 23, 2010

On April 23, 2010, UNICEF hosted the first annual High Level Meeting of the Sanitation and Water for All partnership at the World Bank in Washington DC.



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The meeting, co-chaired by **HRH Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, Chair of the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Sanitation and Water (UNSGAB)** (middle) and **Mr. Saad Houry, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF** (left) was attended by 74 Ministers and high level delegates representing developing countries, donors and development banks, UN and civil society organizations. **World Bank Vice-President Katherine Sierra** (right) welcomed the participants of the landmark High Level Meeting of Sanitation and Water for All to the World Bank.

Following opening remarks by UNSGAB, UNICEF and the World Bank, **US Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero**, described efforts the US Government is undertaking such as “working closely with a number of partners including the Sanitation and Water for All, to develop a multi-donor technical assistance mechanismto support countries that lack the capacities to develop and implement water and sanitation plans and strategies.”



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Minister Buyelwa Patience Sonjica, Chair of the African Ministers' Council on Water and South Africa's Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs then read the *Statement of Water Ministers*, prepared at the April 22 Ministerial Dialogue on Sanitation and Water, in which Water Ministers committed to develop national plans and address institutional capacity gaps and called on donors to increase the percentage of sector aid for basic water and sanitation services to 27%.

The audience heard presentations on Thailand’s extraordinary accomplishment of achieving universal sanitation coverage, due in large part to the Government’s political commitment and dedication, and from the World Health Organization (WHO) on the key findings of the UN-Water Global Annual Assessment on Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS).

Dr. Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Public Health and Environment at WHO presented findings and analysis from the UN-Water Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) to provide context and inform the deliberations. Dr. Neira highlighted key messages from the GLAAS report, including “sanitation and drinking water are not the first choice for either donors or developing countries when they decide where to put their resources for development” and “limited resources available for improving sanitation and drinking water systems and services are poorly targeted to meeting the MDG target for sanitation and drinking water.” GLAAS also shows that “most countries do have policies for sanitation and drinking water.”

Mr. Jamal Saghir, Director of Energy, Transport and Water at the World Bank (middle), then facilitated a discussion amongst Ministers and other participants to take stock of progress, share best practices, explore the linkages between water, sanitation, economic growth and health, and address appropriate solutions to improve progress to ensure basic services to all. **The following summarizes key highlights of the discussion.**

Dr. Kwabena Duffuor, Ghana’s Minister of Finance and Economic Planning expressed support for Sanitation and Water for All and stressed the “immense potential to create jobs and affect MDG 1 (eradicating extreme poverty) as well as the other MDGs”.



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Mr. Louis Boorstin of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, speaking about the collective responsibility we all have to improve sanitation, pointed out that “a lot of the reasons there is good sanitation in (developed countries) is everybody’s kids were dying...(now) other people’s kids are dying and we need to act as if those kids are ours.”



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Mr. Henry Northover of WaterAid, drew attention to “the unacceptable distance between the articulated preferences of the poor” for water as the highest priority and “the international aid system which is broadly unresponsive and many governments giving inadequate budget allocations to water and sanitation.” WaterAid tabled two proposals. First: for stakeholders to build integrated approaches

which recognise that investments in health, education, economic growth are always going to get diminishing rates of return for as long as we do not balance them and complement them and integrate them with investments in water and sanitation. Second: for donors to agree to build the capacity to quickly coordinate and target the necessary human technical and financial capital to those countries that are demonstrating a serious commitment to increase their efforts to bring water and sanitation for all.



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Mr. Paul-Bertrand Baretts of France's Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs emphasised the importance of national plans and strategies as the basis of investments. He also stressed the importance of linking the Sanitation and Water for All High Level Meeting to other sector efforts, including the upcoming MDG Summit to be held in New York in September 2010 and the Sixth World Water Forum to be held in France in 2012.



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Mr. Mohamed Lemine Ould Aboye, Mauritania's Minister of Water and Sanitation highlighted the efforts his country has made but added that more external support is needed to achieve the MDGs.



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Dr. Maria de Fatima Jardim, Angola's Minister of Environment supported increased prioritisation for sanitation and also, drawing on lessons discussed at the Ministerial Dialogue on Sanitation and Water, held April 22, highlighted the need for appropriate policies and dedicated institutions to promote progress on sanitation.



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Mr. Shinichi Asazuma of Japan's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, pointed out that "water and sanitation is a key factor to improve the matter of child health."



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UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director and Meeting Co-Chair, Mr. Saad Houry ended the meeting by pointing out that "MDGs will only have meaning if we're talking about MDGs with equity." He commended attendees for their participation in the meeting, invited comments on the Co-Chair's draft summary and said he looked forward to seeing everyone at the next High Level Meeting.