

## **Solving Rubik's Cube: the colour blue and the Millennium Development Goals**

Speech by His Royal Highness the Prince of Orange  
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President Moreno, ladies and gentlemen,

The Millennium Development Goals are much like Rubik's famous Cube. Everything is linked to everything else. One twist in the right direction for poverty reduction can immediately lead to problems on the other side of the cube, with the environment, for instance.

As chair of UNSGAB, the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, I always try for the blue side first. UNSGAB was set up by the former UN Secretary-General to push efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for water. That is, therefore, our primary concern. But we are not the only ones working on the cube. Fortunately, as with Rubik's Cube, there is a formula for solving our cube too. The difference is that you don't have to be good at maths to apply it. Good governance is needed to solve this cube!

That is why I was delighted to accept your invitation to speak at this Meeting today. The Inter-American Development Bank plays an important role on every side of the cube – like the African and Asian Development Banks, with which UNSGAB already has close ties. We would like to build similar ties with the IDB, since its work is living proof of the importance of an integrated approach. And an integrated approach is especially vital if you are looking at the issues from the viewpoint of water. Integrated, for instance, with the health sector, because adequate water and sanitation are prerequisites for primal preventive healthcare, but also integrated with the energy sector if you look at the worldwide underused hydro potential or the use of sustainable energy and biofuels which we discussed earlier this morning. And speaking of biofuels, your region always shows up on my radar screen.

Sugar cane is now being grown there on a very large scale for the production of ethanol. This may be good news for the climate, but not automatically for ecosystems. And what's more, an average of 23,000 cubic metres of water is needed for every hectare harvested, which means that enormous quantities of water are no longer available for other purposes.

I certainly salute recent agreements on bio-ethanol as it shows the world it's leaders start to accept their responsibility for sustainable growth and development. But first, ladies and gentlemen, first we have to find a solution to reduce the amount of water needed for food production. If we want to be able to feed the ten to eleven billion who are projected to inhabit Mother Earth by the end of this century, we first have to address these basic needs, for instance through biotech to produce drought or saline resistant crops, in short a new green revolution. Only then, only then we can look for alternatives to use the freed amount of water for new endeavours of which biofuels can be one. Last year we were told the West is addicted to oil. I would like to add that the whole world is addicted to life! Mankind has survived without fossil fuels for tens of thousands of years, but man has never survived more than three or four days without water!

As always, the poor are the most vulnerable, because their primary needs are affected – food security, drinking water and sanitation. And they feel the economic impact too, as they simply do not have the resources and knowledge to cultivate new cash crops on a large scale. So it is important that in developing biofuels, we should focus on water efficient crops, with opportunities for small-scale growers.

In our own Hashimoto Action Plan, named after the late former Japanese Prime Minister and my predecessor as chair of UNSGAB, this board has identified six key areas in which radical change and swift, resolute action are needed. Our plan is only eleven pages long. It is based on existing knowledge and widely held opinions. The answers are all there, we just have to start asking the right questions. Therefore you shouldn't expect any more plans from UNSGAB. But we will do all we can to keep everyone on track, and their sights firmly set on achieving the MDGs for water and sanitation.

I am not going to discuss all six key areas from the Hashimoto Action Plan today. But the need for Integrated Water Resources Management and adequate funding is at its heart. And by

adequate I mean not only enough money, but also new forms of funding, customised organisation at local level, and special attention for the most vulnerable groups and regions.

Which brings me to the Inter-American Development Bank's important new water and sanitation initiative. In both relative and absolute terms, the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean is less dramatic than in Africa, for instance. But in Latin America and the Caribbean too, it will prove difficult to achieve the MDG water targets. One in every eleven inhabitants of this region has no access to clean water – a total of some 50 million people. And in 2004, fewer than one in every four inhabitants had no access to sanitation. That is around 125 million people. The IDB itself has calculated that more than 30 billion dollars will be needed if the targets are to be met by 2015. So there is every reason to take targeted action.

I am looking forward to hearing Mr Antonio Vives's presentation on the water and sanitation initiative. But as chair of UNSGAB, I have several reasons for finding the text as it now stands very promising. To start with, the IDB is sending out a clear signal that it plans to step up investments in water and sanitation. The targets are also measurable, with a clear timetable. I am delighted that sanitation occupies such a prominent place in the initiative, and that the bank wants to involve local and regional actors. The initiative encourages the drafting of national water sector business plans and recognises that the poorest groups and regions should receive extra attention. And last but not least, the bank wants to work with other donors and private banks to develop new financial instruments, so that individual drinking water companies and local governments can apply for funding. Without moving too far ahead of your discussion today, I would say that all these points are in line with UNSGAB's priorities.

This means that the IDB and UNSGAB are allies, and allies should help each other. At UNSGAB's request, next year – 2008 – has been nominated International Year of Sanitation unanimously by the General Assembly of the United Nations. I hope that the IDB seizes the opportunity to place sanitation in the Latin American and Caribbean region high on the agenda. Because if the bank pushes the right buttons, these national water plans **will** be drawn up. Another point on which IDB plays a crucial role is the urgently needed reform of the donor architecture. National governments, bilateral donors and multilateral institutions like the World Bank need to work together. Only then will enough money be released. Only then will funding mechanisms be harmonised. And only then can we harmonise capacity building in the water and sanitation sector.

So I call on the IDB to make an active contribution to the discussion, in Latin America, the Caribbean and beyond. The next major opportunity is in April this year, when the first World Water and Sanitation Meeting will be held, in the margins of the World Bank and IMF spring meetings. In the next few years, this Meeting will be an important forum, enabling us to measure the progress we have made with water and sanitation by the yardstick of the MDGs. It would be a very good thing if IDB's voice could be heard there loud and clear - if only as an example to others. Because we need to keep each other on track.

Finally, I would like to thank the IDB and President Moreno for the most generous support pledged for the regional dialogue UNSGAB and the IDB plan to organise in Bogota in November. This regional round of consultations on water and sanitation with all parties involved, governments, NGO's, the Worldbank and other interested stakeholders, will map the road ahead to achieve the MDG on water and sanitation by 2015 in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a part of that dialogue I hope and expect that your water and sanitation initiative will inspire everyone involved and act as a catalyst for many more actions and activities. After all, much more is needed and the region owes it to its people and its standing in the world to do its very best to achieve the 2015 targets. The implicit recognition of water as a pillar supporting an intersectoral approach is an important step.

So let's start turning the cube as fast as possible, and put all the colours in the right place. Blue will always be my personal favourite. But I don't mind if we start with another colour or aspect, because in the end, it's solving the whole cube that matters.

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