

Speech by the Board Chair at Opening Plenary, WWF4

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to speak again as the Chair of the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation and announce the Compendium of Actions of the Board, the principal output of our past discussion and activities.

When Mr. Kofi Anan, the UN Secretary General, in 2003 asked me to lead the Board to advise him and work together to achieve the internationally agreed targets on water and sanitation, I thought the task is heavy. The Board's wide spectrum of backgrounds includes politics, finance, administration, academia, labor, NGOs and public and private operators. Discussions have often been tough as different perspectives and views collided in the course of creating our action proposals. Members reached consensus only because we share the certainty that the world must urgently provide better water management, and more clean water and sanitation services to more people, especially the poor.

The Compendium of Actions "Your Action, Our Action" at your hand is our action plan for achieving breakthroughs in vital areas of water management, water supply and sanitation. "Your Action" are the actions that key players should take, some of whom we name directly. For "Our Action" the Board, as a collective and individually, will work with these players to remove obstacles and bottlenecks in achieving the internationally agreed targets. We selected 6 themes for this Compendium of Actions, namely, Financing, Water Operators Partnerships, Sanitation, Monitoring, Integrated Water Resources Management, and Water and Disaster.

Financing is concern of almost all the stakeholders on water and sanitation.

As water and sanitation services are not free, governments must develop appropriate financing mechanisms to ensure that the necessary systems can be built and maintained. This will require the appropriate mix of tariffs and subsidies. Especially where the poorest people pay a higher percentage of their income and wealthier individuals and organizations do not pay their fair share, Governments and utilities need to devise and apply more equitable tariff systems.

On this basis from the standpoint of financing, the core of the problem here is not that there is no financial resource available.

It is important that we pursue the question of why the ample financial resources available in the world do not flow into the water and sanitation sector. After persistent discussions, the Board came to a conclusion that the improvement of services and the expansion of financing schemes needed to act as an inseparable pair.

The Board recommends that three key actions be implemented by international financial institutions, donor organizations including OECD-DAC, regional bodies, national governments, and other key players; firstly, a sustained programme to create better governance and transparency in water services; secondly programmes to expand the knowledge and awareness of local service operators to new funding sources as well as those to develop local financial markets; and thirdly, Donors will be requested to put their water funding in building capacity in these areas.

The Board will start working on international financial institutions, regional banks, OECD and donors at high level to make our proposals happen. The Board will conduct dialogue with national governments and regional bodies so that our proposals will directly benefit local water services, and most importantly, people waiting for water at grass roots level.

The discussion of the Board was focused on one of the most important missing links, that is, improvement of public water services that currently provide more than 90% of water supply in the world. Modest improvement in public water operators will have immense impact on global provision services. The Board proposes a new mechanism to improve public water services based on the concept of mutual support from more to less efficient water operators, on a not-for-profit basis. We call this form of a structured programme of cooperation between water operators as a Water Operators Partnership (WOPs).

The Board will work out an Action Programme, including proposed institutional arrangements for the WOPs, advocate its support to the public and international community, and work together to make it happen.

The world is not on track for achieving the sanitation goal. The first blockage is lack of awareness and political will to pay greater attention to sanitation in each of its three aspects: hygiene promotion, household sanitary arrangements, and sewage treatment. In parallel, there is a need for programmes to develop and apply the tools for action. While advocacy is key at the Global level, regional and sub-regional organizations must

undertake concerted campaigns to help with the provision of financing, marketing, technology and organizational assistance and guidance.

To raise political will, four steps are proposed over the Decade for Water: Firstly the year 2008 be designated as “International Year of Sanitation” to galvanize political will; secondly, the establishment of UN Sanitation Prize in the context of a UN Water Prize to put a spotlight on people in local sanitation services; thirdly UN Regional offices be requested to organize Regional High level meetings especially in the “International Year of Sanitation” to review and promote the needed policy and organizational changes; and lastly but not the least, A Global Sanitation Conference” organized by UN, to be held towards the end of the UN Water Decade to take account of progress.

At the same time, it is important to regionally collaborate with existing initiatives and campaigns such as WASH and Ecosan and to organize regional or sub-regional sanitation workshops with involvement of stakeholders including health professionals and scientists.

The Board will work with donors, related institutions and governments so that the idea is widely recognized and implemented on a global scale.

Monitoring is essential to understand the real impact of investment by both national governments and the international community toward achievement of internationally agreed targets on water and sanitation. The UN, as the caretaker of the goals, should take the responsibility to provide the reliable data necessary for measuring progress towards the goals. The Board proposes three actions: the Secretary General be requested to work with UN Agency Heads to increase the priority in resource allocations accorded to the JMP; UN Water to take a highly visible role to bring together the various levels of monitoring, synthesizing and reporting at the international, regional, national and local levels; national governments to support efforts to improve monitoring tools and items; and OECD to re-examine the current monitoring systems in the light of the several objectives to be achieved, especially regarding Financing.

The Board will act with the international community and financial institutions to support the UN and others to realize the proposed enhancements and changes.

The Board recognizes that national governments are making progress towards fulfillment of internationally agreed targets on formulation of national IWRM and Water Efficiency Plans and feels that the progress should be expedited. The Board proposes that the UN and the international community take actions so that a report on progress

being made on IWRM and Water Efficiency Plans and be submitted by all the member states at the water review and discussed at the 16th Commission on Sustainable Development in 2008, that the submitted plans be placed in a database created by UN for sharing with the world, and that IWRM principles are applied in trans-boundary situations while trans-boundary organizations are supported by international community. The Board will start dialogue with the Secretary General, with the UN and as needed with Governments to make this happen.

Water is life. Water is also a threat to life when in a form of flood, tsunami or mudflow, as we have recently seen in the Indian Ocean, Hurricane Katrina, and mudflows in the Philippines. To prevent recurrence of such tragedies, the Board believes that international community must agree on one common easy-to-understand target for coping with water related disasters that will create global awareness and commitment. Target formulation process can start from discussion among experts and moves towards consensus building. The important thing is that actions are taken now towards this direction while knowledge and experiences on water related disasters are shared through UN and other organizations. The Board will collaborate with the relevant players for defining such a target and then for achieving progress toward this target when it is agreed by international community.

Important issues remain to be addressed from cross-cutting perspectives: stakeholder participation has become an accepted norm in literature and conferences, and yet it is rarely practiced in fields in many parts of the world; Women, the poor, indigenous people, youth and children are too often excluded.

As water is related to many aspects of economic and social activities, links and synergy with the other key sectors are important: teachers, medical and health professionals, labor organizations, merchants, and farmers must be brought to the table in order to find solutions to problems in the worlds' community/region/country. It is time to discuss water problems with different people with different perspectives and missions. The Board will globally advocate so that stakeholder participation and dialogue with other sectors become everyday scene everywhere.

We will take our actions. We ask you to take your actions. Only action will save the world from water crisis in the 21st century.

Thank you

