

**7th Meeting of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation
(UNSGAB)
13 – 15 December 2006
Sheraton Tunis Hotel
Tunis Tunisia
Meeting Summary (provisional)**

BACKGROUND

The seventh meeting of UNSGAB was the first session under the Chairpersonship of His Royal Highness Willem-Alexander, the Prince of Orange of the Netherlands. He was asked by Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan to take the position after the passing of UNSGAB's first Chair, Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto in July of 2006. The Chair and Ms. Rachel Mayanja, UN Assistant Secretary-General who represented UN Secretary-General expressed special appreciation to Vice Chair Ms. Uschi Eid who led the Board as Acting Chair, dedicating her time and energy, to advance the agenda of the group since July. Two new members were welcomed, Mr. Hideaki Oda former Secretary-General of the Japan Water Forum and Mr. Bassary Toure, former Minister of Finance, Mali.

The meeting also marked the first Regional Dialogue on December 14th with the African Union, the African Minister's Council on Water (AMCOW), the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and other regional representatives. The Regional Dialogue yielded a joint statement and set of joint actions to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goal targets on water and sanitation.

AFRICAN REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON WATER AND SANITATION

The day long session was opened on 14 December by the Chair and AfDB President Mr. Donald Kaberuka. Mrs. Maria Mutagamba, President of AMCOW and Ugandan Minister of State for Water and Environment co-chaired the Dialogue with the UNSGAB Chair. Participants heard presentations from the UNSGAB Secretariat on the Hashimoto Action Plan, and the AMCOW Technical Advisory Committee on their Issues Note identifying strategic priorities for cooperation.

A detailed discussion regarding how to best capitalize on the 2008 International Year for Sanitation (IYS) touched on the need to disaggregate sanitation into three aspects: individual hygiene, household sanitation arrangements, and wastewater treatment. Participants agreed that a clearer definition of what constitutes sanitation interventions for the purposes of the IYS would be helpful. The African representatives shared their frustrations regarding the difficulty of securing funding for sanitation (for example, it is much easier to get funding for water supply), and the fact that responsibility for sanitation often lay among various ministries and therefore lacks a responsible party or focal point – the result, not enough is done. The utility of national sanitation strategies was considered along with work-for-sanitation initiatives. All agreed to promote the suggestions in the IYS.

Participants considered the centrality of political will to achieving breakthroughs for water supply and sanitation, and how UNSGAB could play a role in securing high-level political support. Agreed joint actions include advocating for an African Union Summit of Heads of States on Water and Sanitation, convening meetings with donor agencies on water and sanitation, and promotion of water and sanitation discussion at the upcoming G8 meeting in Japan in 2008.

African representatives made clear the pressing need for infrastructure on the continent, and UNSGAB members reflected on how countries could pursue such funding for the needed infrastructures. Participants noted that in light of climate change, infrastructure plays a role in Africa's ability to adapt to increased climactic variability and is a part of water adaptation strategies. UNSGAB will endorse the efforts of African Governments to develop water and sanitation infrastructure which is necessity for water security for social, economic development and environmental management in Africa and continue dialogue to find the best way of doing this.

Regarding Water Operators Partnerships, AfDB agreed to support their development with UN-Habitat. UNSGAB is committed to promote trans-boundary institutions and collaboration on disaster preparedness.

A central theme throughout the dialogue was the importance of "cross sectoral approach". For example, the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report indicates that "sanitation is after all the best primary healthcare available" and some studies show that investment in water and sanitation sectors results in around 5 to 20 times reduction of cost in the health sector. In addition, infrastructure such as dams would allow for Africa to capture the 96% of currently unrealized hydro potential and to also benefit the agricultural sector with water storage for irrigation. African nations will benefit from such "cross-sectoral approach" when pursuing achievement of their national development targets including those relating to MDGs.

The session resulted in "the Joint Statement of African Dialogue on Water and Sanitation" which was unanimously adopted by the participants. This statement galvanizes the link among UNSGAB and African institutions to promote focused actions on the continent. Ms. Ushi Eid will take the lead on behalf of UNSGAB to follow up on the agreed actions. The Chair and Mr. Mandla Sizwe V. GANTSHO, Vice President of AfDB also signed a bilateral agreement on concrete actions that will follow up the Joint Statement and make Hashimoto Action Plan into reality.

The Dialogue was supported by AfDB, GTZ of Germany and Government of Japan to which UNSGAB extended sincere appreciation. The preparation of the Dialogue was conducted jointly by AMCOW, AfDB, and UNSGAB Secretariat under active leadership of Ms. Uschi Eid.

7TH MEETING OF UNSGAB

Members reviewed steps taken on each chapter in the Hashimoto Action Plan and agreed on future Actions. In addition, membership of working groups was clarified and chairs for all groups were identified. Each of the Working Group Chairs will report back, by mid February, answers to key questions posed at the meeting including who should do what to advance the agenda.

1. Water Operators Partnerships (WOPs)

UN-Habitat announced that it will host a Global WOPs Centre in Nairobi. It was reported that preparation of Asian WOPs made substantial progress thanks to efforts by Asian Development Bank and Global Water Partnership. Updates on the Capacity Building Workshops on Partnerships for Improving the Performance on Water Utilities in Asia (July 25 – 27, 2006) and Africa (Dec. 6 – 8, 2006) organized by UNDESA, events to ignite actions to create WOPs worldwide, were provided.

The Working Group is chaired by Mr. Antonio Miranda.

2. Financing

It was reported that letters were sent to 47 key institutions in the world in order to promote Hashimoto Action Plan, thus far resulting in agreed/to-be-agreed joint action statements with 8 institutions was reported.

Progress made with OECD and development banks was discussed along with the need to focus on existing political mechanism such as the G8. Members agreed to make further progress on dialogues with key organizations through letters and direct contact. Certain institutions will be targeted for full-scale dialogue and actions with the Board..

Mr. Bassary Toure agreed to chair the Working Group.

3. Sanitation

Discussion focused on UNSGAB's role in the IYS. Members agreed to capture the outcome of the rich discussion during the African Dialogue and to translate these suggestions into actions. The need for a good communication strategy was stressed and member agreed to follow up with DESA which is expected to act as the coordinating agency. A film on sanitation situation in a slum shared by Ms. Eid and presentation on ECO-SAN by Ms. La O' Castillo inspired discussion on importance of focusing on communication and new technology in promoting IYS.

Ms. Margaret Catley-Carlson agreed to chair the group.

4. Monitoring and Reporting

Members considered the support for Joint Monitoring Programme as articulated in the Hashimoto Action Plan and letters making this link to the heads of the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Members agreed on the need to ensure the statistical integrity of reporting on water delivery and sanitation and how a comparison or

amalgamation of results from various data collecting institutions could help in this regard.

Mr. Gerard Payen agreed to chair the Working Group.

5. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

Participants discussed the implications of the letter addressed to all UN members from the UN Under Secretary-General Mr. Ocampo inviting countries to report on IWRM in 2008 at the Commission on Sustainable Development. The upcoming IWRM conference in Copenhagen was identified by UNSGAB as an opportunity to advance the agenda and all agreed that a timely letter encouraging the meeting to finalize monitoring guidelines relevant to all countries and with a focus on political process is needed.

The Working Group is chaired by Ms. Judith Rees whereas Ms. Margaret Catley-Carlson agreed to follow up on immediate next steps.

6. Water and Disaster

Members discussed progress on establishing a high-level panel on water and disaster. The High Panel is to be voluntarily established by UN agencies and supporting governments and institutions which were inspired by Hashimoto Action Plan. The Board suggested that the High Panel clarify needs and nature of a target so that its final outcome will be in line with recommendation of Hashimoto Action Plan. The Target, as agreed at the Berlin meeting, was no longer the ultimate goal, the Board agreed unanimously. It was suggested that two sub-groups, i.e., one addressing the necessity and achievability of a target and the other addressing provision of water and sanitation at disaster be placed in the High Panel. The important role of WOPs in ensuring provision of water and sanitation at disaster was stressed. The WG chairs will conduct immediate task of clarifying the high-level panel's terms of reference.

As the current chair, Ms. Juanita Castano agreed to take advance the agenda during the Tunis meeting and Mr. Hideaki Oda agreed to serve as Chair thereafter.

Closing

It was decided that the next Board meeting will be held in Shanghai, China in May, 2007. The Chair sincerely thanked all members for their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm. He looked forward to actions of the members in the coming months.