



CSD-13 on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements

New York, March 11 to 22nd, 2005

Speaking Points Number 3

Subject:

Thematic Session on Sanitation:

1) Providing access to adequate sanitation and hygiene

Date and Time:

01.3 : 15:00 – 16:30 Conference Room 1

Responsible Person:

Tatjana von Steiger

Mr. Chairperson

Switzerland would first like to thank you for your comprehensive summary of our discussions during the IPM. Switzerland fully supports the practical measures listed in the summary.

We would like to emphasize a few points with regard to sanitation that should be reflected in the negotiated policy decisions.

- In its comprehensive report on Sanitation as well as in its recently published report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" the Secretary General does not miss to point out that despite huge progress in some countries overall access to sanitation is off track.
- In many parts of the world, sanitation is still seen as an unpopular obligation for the more successful water programs. Lack of political commitment, cultural acceptance, and awareness often leads to insufficient investment and poor performance. And the limited public funds are invested in non-targeted subsidies, from which only a limited number of households can benefit. This neglect of sanitation leads not only to infectious diseases, but as well to significant economic losses.
- Sanitation is instrumental to achieving hygiene and better health, which is a universal desire. This is the driving force for the promotion of sanitation. Switzerland fully agrees with the Secretary Generals call to more investments and the need to ensure that enhancing access to sanitation forms a part of development strategies. We firmly believe that in order to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation there is a need for a paradigm shift.

The paradigm shift

- This paradigm shift builds upon an understanding of sanitation as a public good. Achieving sanitation requires a change in knowledge attitude and practices of all stakeholders, i.e. first and foremost relies on the political will and commitment to higher investments, better performance and innovative, culturally and environmentally sensitive approaches. Sanitation has to be put much, much higher on the agenda of donors and

governments. This leads to a drastically more active public health policy, focusing on behavioral change, enhancing demand, support the development of markets and on the promotion of appropriate technologies, since large parts of sanitation will be on-plot sanitation. It requires a concerted effort of governments and civil society. This can be done with social mobilization campaigns and/or financial incentives such as intelligent subsidies to create demand for sanitation. Such subsidies must be high-impact investments and should focus on sanitation facilities in public infrastructures such as schools, health centers as well as target the poorest who cannot pay even for basic services.

- In recognizing this primary role governments play in creating a demand for sanitation, Switzerland firmly believes that involving the private sector is one plausible option to overcome the vicious circle of inadequate resources, failure, frustration and pessimism regarding sanitation. We believe that, by using the dynamism of national and local small scale private sector, it is possible to make a step further in public health and at the same time create new jobs. With adequate support and incentives, local micro-enterprises have the potential to deliver creative and innovative solutions that provide better services for all customers, including the poor.

Crosscutting issues: Culture and Gender

- Finally – as asked by the bureau - we would like to highlight the importance of two crosscutting issues that play a pivotal role in enhancing sanitation:
- The success of sanitation programs depends on the appreciation of these programs by the final user. Individuals and communities have to understand that unsanitary behavior puts in danger not only themselves but the public in general. They therefore have to understand the benefits of good hygiene practices, such as regular hand washing, and accept the technologies or products as appropriate to their culture. A culturally sensitive approach has to underlie these programs.
- The success and effective use of sanitation facilities depends on the involvement of both women and men in selecting the location and technology of such facilities. A gender sensitive approach is therefore crucial in providing access to sanitation, because there is a strong link between the focus on gender and women's participation on the one hand and the degree of project sustainability on the other.