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**Statement**

**by**

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and  
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**at  
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Development**

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Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,

Let me begin by thanking you for the Chairman's summary on the interactive discussions as contained in the Report of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) that just commenced. I would like to commend you for setting the tone for actions at this session by rightly underscoring that "It is recognized that developing countries, especially those in Africa, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States, face the greatest challenges in achieving sustainable development and in meeting the Johannesburg Plan Of Implementation (JPOI) targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), so there is a particular focus on policy options and possible actions that could address their needs." This is absolutely the right approach by which a special attention is accorded to the most vulnerable countries of the world to start with.

As the UN's advocate for these countries, very often I have spoken in the similar vein. I have harped on the fact that without these three disadvantaged groups achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the indicated target years, the international community as a whole would not be able to achieve those. Hence, there is the need to give priority to these groups of countries.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, right at the beginning of your work here, I would like to urge strongly the distinguished delegates participating at the current session of the CSD to address the specific needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. These are the three groups of countries that are now well recognized by the United Nations as the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups among member states, and those that need the special and focused attention of the international community as articulated in the Goal 8 of the MDGs as well as in their respective Brussels and Almaty Programmes of Action and recently-adopted Mauritius Strategy. The lack of resources, capacity and technology in these countries highlight the need for the increased support and cooperation of the international community in their efforts. Hence, we must keep their concerns high on the agenda if these countries are to become sustainable in their development efforts.

In the context of this particular relevance, the documents being considered by this session should have reflected very prominently the issues concerning these vulnerable countries, particularly the LDCs and SIDS as the Brussels Programme and the Mauritius Strategy devote special attention to water, sanitation and human settlements. It would have been appropriate to incorporate worthwhile references to their concerns for consideration of the Commission. It is also disappointing to find that the matrix of the IPM summary made by you, Mr. Chairman, does not include the special profile that you had accorded to the needs of these most disadvantaged countries.

Roughly a third of the world's rural population concentrating mostly in the LDCs remains unserved by improved drinking water sources. As has been reiterated in the CSD

preparatory process, expanding rural water supply, together with sanitation, can be viewed as integral to broader poverty reduction efforts. In March 2003, at the Kyoto Water Forum, my Office presented a research paper on “Critical importance of water issues for the Least Developed Countries” to highlight these.

The Least Developed Countries contribute to the major part of the more than two million people in developing countries, most of them children, who die each year from diseases associated with unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. Half a billion people are now found living in countries, again many being LDCs, defined as water-stressed or water-scarce. Recent estimates suggest that climate change will account for about 20 per cent of the increase in global water scarcity – and the impact will be not only on the LDCs and the small islands but also in the water catchments and land use patterns of landlocked countries.

Scientists and researchers have warned of the growing threat posed by water shortages across Africa, the continent that is the home of 34 LDCs. They say that in a little more than 20 years' time, the number of people there without access to clean water could double to over 600 million. This would force the continent into an ever greater reliance on food aid. It is predicted that within 25 years, population growth and economic development will lead to nearly one in two people in Africa living in countries facing water scarcity or experience what is known as 'water stress'.

It is in the sub-Saharan Africa with the largest concentration of LDCs that the problem is worst. Already afflicted by periodic droughts, the researchers suggest, the region will suffer more widespread water shortages as the population grows. They predict a shortfall in crop yields of over 20 per cent because of insufficient water, with many governments too poor to finance the food imports needed to make up the difference.

Earlier this year in January at the UN-convened Mauritius International Meeting to conduct the 10-year-review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the water, sanitation and human settlements issues in SIDS received special attention of the international community. The Mauritius Strategy clearly emphasizes that the “access to safe drinking water, the provision of sanitation and the promotion of hygiene are the foundations of human dignity, public health and economic and social development”. The SIDS continue to face water management and access challenges. This is caused in part by lack of water availability, water catchments and storage, pollution of water resources and saline intrusion. Salinity is also exacerbated by sea-level rise and climate variability.

The Mauritius Strategy requests the international community to help SIDS in capacity building and for the implementation of the Joint Programme for Action for Water and Climate – a venture of the Caribbean and Pacific regions. SIDS also continue to seek international assistance for the MDGs and WSSD 2015 targets on water, sanitation, hygiene, and the production of integrated water resources management and efficiency plans by 2005.

Repeated emphasis has been placed on the importance of pro-poor policies and the need for providing access to the poor. Therefore, the LDCs being the poorest segment of the

international community have to be the obvious focus of interdependent and interconnected water, sanitation and human settlement programmes shifting gears from a needs-based approach to a rights-based approach, which would generate political will and a resource allocation culture that puts the interest of the poor first.

Greater efforts by donors to meet their commitment of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income as development assistance including the 0.20 per cent for the LDCs could be a major contribution to financing the water and sanitation goals. International financing institutions could increase overall resource commitments to water and sanitation, as well as reorient their portfolios, to meet the needs of the LDCs and SIDS as par the global programmes of these groups. In addition, as has been emphasised, the Global Environmental Facility should be encouraged to use the opportunity of its enhanced replenishment to increase funding for water and sanitation, using its international water and land degradation windows, for these two groups. South-South cooperation may be promoted as a tool for sharing experiences, best practices and technological solutions.

An option for mobilizing domestic resources for water investments benefiting the LDCs and SIDS is the establishment of local, national or regional funding mechanisms, such as national water funds, the African, Caribbean and Pacific-European Union Water Facility, and the African Water Facility launched by the African Ministers Council on Water.

In achieving increased access to sanitation services for the poor, the Dakar Roadmap resulting from the First Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Forum offers another useful model for the LDCs to meet the sanitation goals. In these countries, microcredit schemes could play an important role in providing finance to households for investment in sanitation facilities. Microfinance may also be able to support small entrepreneurs in the business of providing sanitation services.

The reports before the CSD-13 have rightly underscored that women, who are generally the primary leaders of change at the community level, can play a central role in integrated approaches to water, sanitation and human settlements. Active participation of women in planning and decision-making, informed by a rich appreciation of the interlinkages among water, sanitation, housing, health, education and other aspects of family welfare, can significantly improve the design and implementation of integrated policies and programmes. Experiences in LDCs support undoubtedly this assertion.

The 58th session of the UN General Assembly (58/217) proclaimed the decade, 2005 to 2015, as the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life', that commenced on the World Water Day last month. The water and sanitation targets of the MDGs are to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015, the year that marks the end of the Decade, which in all appropriateness should focus on the most vulnerable groups of countries – the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

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