



CSD-12 on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements
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Statement by Ambassador Beat Nobs, Head of the Swiss Delegation

Mr. Chairman

The Secretary General and Jeffrey Sachs emphasized that water and sanitation are the key to poverty eradication. Switzerland reaffirms that we must focus our efforts on the most vulnerable. We are therefore fully behind the MDGs and ready to contribute our utmost to achieving them.

There is no blueprint to meet the goals and targets in water and sanitation. But there are some overriding issues of crucial importance which have to be taken into account:

1) “Ecosystems are the basic infrastructure for water supply and sanitation”

Access to water and sanitation is the basis for poverty eradication. But there is no sustainable water management without the protection and sustainable use of ecosystems that capture, filter, store and distribute water, such as forests, wetlands and soils. Ecosystems are therefore central to integrated water resources management, and with regard to developing IWRM plans by 2005. Until now, the IWRM concept has mainly addressed the “Water for Nature” dimension. It is high time to include a “Nature for Water” dimension. This can at least partly be achieved through the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Ramsar Convention, a global legally binding instrument to which we are nearly all Parties, should therefore also be recognized as a water convention.

2) “Sanitation is a business”

There is a need for a paradigm shift in order to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people with out access to basic sanitation. Put simply, the old paradigm is characterized by neglect from a public health perspective: Budgets for sanitation are low, the quality of goods and services poor and the available funds too often invested in untargeted subsidies. The result has been a vicious circle of inadequate resources and failure. Under the new paradigm, sanitation must be seen as an opportunity – actually as a business. Practical examples from all over the world increasingly demonstrate that private sector operators – often very small – are providing good service to their customers, who are often poor people but willing to pay for hygiene. This is not to say that markets for hygiene and sanitation will evolve automatically. The new paradigm advocates in favour of a strong state, but one that focuses on market creation and on the enabling environment. while at the same time managing the creativity and energy of the private sector to provide sustainable and demand driven solutions.

3) “Principled Pragmatism is required for Private Sector Participation in Water and Sanitation”

Achieving the goals and targets in *both* the water *and* sanitation sectors requires all actors to collaborate much more closely, that is: public authorities, civil society as well as private enterprises. The latter – be they international, national or local businesses – can contribute significantly to improve overall performance of the water and sanitation sector by providing management expertise and capacity which can mobilize additional investments. Therefore, public-private partnerships with a focus on the needs of the poor are *one* promising option to enhance sustainable access to water services and sanitation. However, in order to ensure that such arrangements with the private sector are successfully developed and implemented, consistent policy principles and implementation guidelines are required. Such principles and guidelines are currently elaborated in the framework of a Swiss initiative. I invite all interested parties to join us in advancing this initiative and encourage the promoters of similar undertakings to do the same, so that we can submit the outcomes to the CSD for further consideration at its 13th Session.

4) International water governance should be improved

In order to meet the enormous challenges in the field of water, we need a coherent political follow-up to the various ongoing activities. Switzerland is therefore of the notion that one of the major outcomes of CSD-13 must be a clear understanding of where we want to go with regard to the future of the water agenda. Chances are that if we don't address the issue of international water governance within the UN system, it will move to the background again, and our efforts will remain without consequence.