

**12th Session
of the
Commission on Sustainable Development**

**Statement
by**

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Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to be able to address the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the first session of the review cycle focusing on implementation. The legacy of the Johannesburg Summit has provided a clear sense of direction. It has posed to use the three challenges of implementation, regionalization and partnership.

In September 2000 at the UN's Millennium Assembly, and again two years later at the Johannesburg Summit, Governments undertook to meet a series of measurable, time-bound targets and goals, including to provide increased access to safe water and sanitation, and to take steps to improve the lives of urban slum dwellers in the world's human settlements. These are noble goals in themselves.

In follow up to the WSSD, UNEP, at its 22nd Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF), devoted its Ministerial segment to a review of these targets, resulting in a number of decisions on the measures needed to achieve the water and sanitation related goals, as well as those of relevance to the small island developing States (SIDS). In this regard, 10 years after Barbados, we must summon the will to address the critical problems facing SIDS.

The implementation efforts recommended by the GC/GMEF have been undertaken within the overall framework of an expanded UNEP Water Policy and Strategy, and through support to regional initiatives that recognize the specificities of each geographical zone.

Achieving the goals on this session's agenda is not only relevant to Goal 7 of environmental sustainability, but central to achieving goals related to reducing child mortality, combating malaria and other preventable diseases, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and empowering women. The achievement of better human health and well-being, particularly of the planet's most vulnerable populations, is as dependent as ever on the health of our natural environment. Furthermore, it is also dependent on an honest assessment of the legal and institutional constraints that have to be addressed.

The facts concerning water and sanitation are clear, UNEP Global Environment Outlook reports estimate that in a few decades, approximately one-third of the world's population will suffer from chronic water shortages; and nearly as much presently do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities. The pressures of a burgeoning human population, especially in the urban areas of the developing world, the expansion of agricultural production and water-intensive industrial development, as well as the impacts of unsustainable human activity have all contributed to the current state of affairs. It is not only a crisis of availability of water, but a crisis of investment and management.

To provide only one example, with respect to human settlements, a recent UNEP study has found that megacities such as Bangkok, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Beijing, Calcutta, Dhaka, Jakarta, London, Manila, Mexico City, Shanghai and Tehran, all of which have more than 10 million inhabitants and rely on fast-disappearing groundwater supplies, face a very uncertain future. It is very clear that the pursuit of sustainable development is the only true security policy for our future generations.

The CSD last year identified the cluster of targets related to water, sanitation and human settlements as issues for initial review this year and next. We must begin our review by addressing what has happened since Johannesburg. How have we moved towards implementation? What are the constraints holding us back? Is it a question of resources or political will?

Equally important, we must showcase the success stories, the partnerships, and the best practices in each of the targeted areas so that others may build upon their practical and replicable approaches. The joint UNEP-UN-Habitat projects on Water for African and Asian Cities offer an example of how knowledge could be shared effectively within regions.

CSD12 is also the first session to benefit from a series of regional implementation forums, several of which UNEP played a key role in organizing, notably the meetings for Latin America and the Caribbean and for Africa.

UNEP's Governing Council, at the recent session of its Global Ministerial Environment Forum, focused its attention on these issues as well, exploring the environmental aspects of each – the protection and sustainable use of our water resources; the provision of environmentally sound sanitation services; and the improvement of human settlements and public health.

Meeting on the beautiful island of Jeju, in the Republic of Korea, the GMEF was privileged to be addressed at its opening session by Chairman Brende. He challenged the 90 Ministers, from more than 150 Member States, to exercise the needed leadership, within their own Governments and in the broader international policy arena, to meet our commitments to improve the lives of the billions of people across the world who demand our attention.

The Ministers also benefited from the input of the participants at the Fifth UNEP Global Civil Society Forum, whose contribution, I understand, is available at the back of the room.

While the GMEF President, His Excellency Mr. Arcadio Ntagazwa, Minister of State for the Environment of the United Republic of Tanzania, will be briefing you later on the full outcome of the Jeju session, allow me to highlight a few issues that I consider of crucial importance to CSD12's agenda.

Key among the decisions taken at the GMEF was the endorsement of the "Jeju Initiative", which reflected the discussions of the Ministers and heads of delegations on the environmental dimensions of various water-related themes.

IWRM involves a variety of environmental dimensions, as well as assessment and monitoring, capacity building and the sharing of sustainable technologies, among other things. UNEP's own water policy and strategy fully incorporates such an approach.

From assessment and monitoring, to policy development and implementation, UNEP activities include:

-- The Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) project, which has begun to issue the first of its 66 regionally-based reports on the health of transboundary water bodies, seas, rivers, lakes, underground aquifers, and their ecosystems in terms of the environmental and social economic impacts;

-- The Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS)/Water quality assessment programme, and regional assessments of the impacts of land-based activities in support of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment. In connection with the GPA's work, the White Water to Blue Water Initiative for the Caribbean region, and the upcoming Hilltops to Oceans Conference in Australia are both examples of UNEP partnerships designed to promote integrated watershed and marine-based ecosystems management in support of sustainable development with the support of the EU and US governments.

-- UNEP has also undertaken groundwater vulnerability assessments, notably last year's major report on groundwater and its susceptibility to degradation.

In addition, UNEP has promoted the need for intergovernmental dialogue on water in all regions, and actively supported African Governments in the establishment of the African Ministerial Conference on Water (AMCOW) as well as the African process for the protection, management and development of the coastal and marine environments in the region building on our Regional Seas Programme. In this context, UNEP has been closely involved in the development of the environmental component of the New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD).

The exchange and dissemination of information on sound policy responses and cost-effective technologies must also be promoted. Through its Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment, in Denmark, UNEP provides implementation support, and through the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC), in Japan, UNEP has provided assistance in identifying and assessing appropriate technologies, particularly for urban areas.

Another new initiative of several UN agencies – the 10 Keys for Municipal Wastewater Collection and Treatment – aims at accelerating the provision of water and sanitation services by promoting successful schemes, tried and tested in one country, so they can be replicated elsewhere on the globe.

There is no point in re-inventing the wheel. There are real life examples. If we can replicate them, where appropriate, I believe we can go a long way towards meeting the water and sanitation targets agreed to at WSSD and find solutions that balance the needs of the varied water users with the needs of the natural environment.

UNEP takes its responsibility to provide the environmental dimension of the sustainable development discussion very seriously. To do any less would be a disservice to our basic constituency, the billions across the globe who deserve and demand the best of each and every one of us.

Thank you.