



WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DE CONCERTATION POUR L'APPROVISIONNEMENT EN EAU ET L'ASSAINISSEMENT  
CONSEJO DE COLABORACIÓN PARA EL ABASTECIMIENTO DE AGUA Y SANEAMIENTO

## WANTED: 3 MILLION PEOPLE ALIVE

### WORLD WATER DAY MESSAGE BY SIR RICHARD JOLLY, CHAIR OF THE WSSCC

World Water Day - celebrated each year on 22 March - provides us with an opportunity to recognize the centrality and importance of water to our daily lives, to poverty reduction, to our environment and to the sustainable development of nations.

It is particularly timely and appropriate that during this International Year of Freshwater we reflect on the vital importance of water and sanitation to the billions of those who are still without access to these basic human rights and services to which everyone is entitled.

Six months after the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, which agreed to set the Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation - to halve the proportion of people without access by 2015 - the international community gathers in Kyoto, Japan, to discuss ways of achieving these goals. How have we learned from past experiences and what are the lessons gleaned from the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-90)?

In a new and provocative briefing paper called: « **Kyoto ... the agenda has changed** » the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) reminds us of some of the mistakes that have led us to the dire situation faced by over three billion people in the developing world today:

- top-down, supply-driven approaches to provide water and sanitation services have not worked.
- promises and expectations of « free water » have failed to deliver. In most cases, free service has meant no service. If water is treated as a free good to be delivered then good water management including cost recovery, water conservation and techniques is likely to be weakened. In most cases, « free service » has meant « no service ».
- giving priority to water supply over sanitation and to sanitation over hygiene has not been effective. The neglect of hygiene - keeping faecal matter away from hands and food and from water itself when it is stored in the home - has been a major cause of infection and diseases, resulting in some 6,000 deaths per day, mostly children.
- splitting water, sanitation and hygiene into separate priorities and activities has been a fundamental mistake.
- blaming under-achievement on such factors as shortage of water, lack of funds, or rapid population growth and urbanization has led to confusion. There is little or no correlation between any of these factors and the scale and the severity of water, sanitation and hygiene problems.
- the tendency to assume that water and sanitation facilities shared by very large numbers of people will bring dramatic benefits.

Present levels of international aid going to hygiene, sanitation and water supply are estimated at about five billion US\$ per year. Yet Governments in the developing world are spending roughly the

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same again. It is our opinion that to reach the « WASH » goals of halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation will require at least a doubling of this level of investment. Most important of all is to raise the share of national and international resources going to services in slums and urban shanty towns and in the rural areas.

But how can we raise the profile of hygiene, the neglected element in the great public health triad of water, sanitation and hygiene? As part of its WASH campaign, the WSSCC urges all individuals and communities to promote the « **Hygiene Code** » as part of the information environment in which all communities live and which all children grow up. The Code, backed by the UN family of agencies including UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNESCO, WFP and the World Bank, presents a massive challenge that can be met through social mobilization and communications. Schools and public health centres should become learning and demonstration centres - this is why UNICEF and the WSSCC are launching a new « **WASH in Schools** » campaign to promote hygiene education and safe water and sanitation facilities in primary schools, with separate toilets for girls and boys.

The WSSCC would like to contribute to the many important debates during the Third World Water Forum including its Ministerial Conference. On this World Water Day all of us can think of new and imaginative ways to alleviate poverty and improve the health and well-being of the less fortunate among us. We ask the international community to respond to the following challenges:

- How can integrated water resources management (IWRM) incorporate the new sanitation imperative? Good water management is threatened almost everywhere by faecal pollution. But rapid progress towards a new sanitation goal will not be possible unless those responsible for water management make a major contribution. How can IWRM contribute to people-centred household technologies that can help meet people's water and sanitation needs?
- How can IWRM serve the needs of low-income groups? How can the rights of the poor to an equitable share of water resources be guaranteed? How can IWRM also serve the needs of agriculture and industry while combating poverty, improving health and productivity, preventing further degradation of the environment?

What must be done to accelerate progress to the Millennium Development Goals for Water and Sanitation especially in sub-Saharan Africa and in countries of other regions not yet on track to halving the proportions of people without access by 2015.

I welcome the announcement from WHO to celebrate this year's **World Health Day** on 7<sup>th</sup> April as the "Day for Healthy Environment for Children". Coupled with World Water Day, this demonstrates the critical importance of safe water, sanitation and hygiene for sustainable development.

The WSSCC and its partners do not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. But what is at stake here is not just 'one issue among many' but a renewed attempt to achieve the greatest of all public health breakthroughs: better water, sanitation and hygiene were and are the basis of better health in the industrialized nations. Without them, no amount of drugs, doctors or hospitals will lift public health onto an equivalent level in the developing world.

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*Sir Richard Jolly and Dr. Jan Pronk, Special Advisor of the UN Secretary-General to the WSSD and the incoming WSSCC Chair, will join other personalities in three dialogues at the Forum (16-17 March) on « **Sanitation, Water Supply and Water Pollution: for better health and sustainable environment** ». Featuring internationally-known policy and technical experts, the sessions will debate and discuss the links between the Millennium Development Goals on water and sanitation and the WWF3. One of the expected outcomes of the sessions is a Ministerial Statement that will be conveyed to the Ministerial Conference at the Forum from 21-22 March.*

*For more information about WSSCC's events at the Third World Water Forum, check its website at [www.wsscc.org](http://www.wsscc.org). For details on press conferences and interviews, pls. contact Ms. Eirah Gorre-Dale, Tel.+1(917) 367-2420 ; Fax.+1(917) 367-3391 . E-mail : [gorre-dale@un.org](mailto:gorre-dale@un.org) At WWF3, c/o Kyoto Nikko Princess Hotel, Tel.+81-75-342-2111; Fax: +81-75-342-2410*

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