



Remarks

by

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General Assembly

Thematic Debate on Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy

in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Opening Ceremony

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Please check against delivery

Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Thematic Debate on Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy in the Post-2015 Development Agenda – it is the first in the series of thematic debates and high-level events, which I will be hosting to provide a platform for member States and other stakeholders to set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda.

Let me begin by informing you that I will be hosting three (3) Thematic Debates and three (3) High-level events between now and June, which are designed to identify some of the greatest developmental challenges that we in this Assembly of Nations will need to collaborate on and work efficiently on if we are to devise a post-2015 development framework in which we are all deeply invested, and which is vital for the well-being of our planet and all the people who occupy it. So make no mistake, your active participation in today's debate and your efforts in shaping its outcome will go a long way in helping us create a shared development agenda with the potential for far-reaching and lasting impact for many outside of this hall and many more who are still to come.

Excellencies,

Today's debate is a curtain raiser for our discussions on setting the stage for the post 2015 development agenda. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, both established under the General Assembly, are beginning to turn their individual attention to processes that will ultimately result in sustainable development goals, as well as strategic pathways for financing sustainable development, respectively. Additionally,

with a view to giving greater support to the process, you, the Assembly, will soon begin your inter-governmental consultations on the organizational modalities for the September 2015 summit, and the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

It may also be recalled that during the upcoming 69th session, this Assembly will begin intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome of the post 2015 development agenda and there is an urgent need for maintaining coherence and coordination amongst these interconnected processes. As the dialogue and negotiations processes continue, I encourage all Member States to remain engaged and ready to collaborate with the various stakeholders who can contribute to making sustainable development and poverty eradication a reality for all members of the global family.

Prior to the conclusion of this current session of the General Assembly, I will be convening a high level stock taking meeting in September, to allow this Assembly of Nations to conduct a collective and honest assessment of our efforts, and to lay the groundwork for the negotiations that will begin in the 69th session. With your support, I hope to see the various processes conclude and merge smoothly and to fulfill the goal I set out at my election last June: to set the stage for the post 2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

The water, sanitation and sustainable energy crises ARE the pre-eminent development challenges of our world. We can no longer remain either resigned or silent whilst a lack of access to water, sanitation and sustainable energy services takes a tragic and daily toll on the lives of millions of poor people especially women and young girls. Addressing this nexus of water – sanitation and sustainable energy is not just a matter of grave concern, it is a matter of moral imperative for the entire international community because we need to ensure that access to clean and safe water, sanitation services and sustainable energy services are provided without any further delay.

Lack of access to water, sanitation and sustainable energy services is a compound magnifier of poverty, ill-health and mortality, and gender inequality. Lack of access to water, sanitation and sustainable energy services, invariably worsens existing development concerns in the poorest nations and communities and exacerbates the vulnerabilities of those who are already disadvantaged. And so today and throughout this process, let us not forget that we are working on behalf of countless millions who are currently consigned to eking out a living in the dark, who watch their infants die of dehydration, and who are mothers and wives, fathers and sons suffering the adverse effects of indoor air pollution that accrues from the use of inefficient energy services.

The magnitude of the problem is great; the number of affected people is equally great, well known, but nevertheless worth repeating: 783 million live without clean water, 2.5 billion have no adequate sanitation and 1.4 billion people are without access to electricity. Compounding this problem is the fact that in many countries across the globe there is severe water stress and water scarcity. About 80 percent of the world's population lives in areas with high water security threats.

We are already in agreement that energy, water and sanitation are essential to the achievement of many development goals. They are inextricably linked to climate change, agriculture, food security, health, gender and education, among others. Ongoing discussions have indicated that there is interest in a sustainable water goal, with a possible target for sanitation.

Universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation services would lead to a healthier, more just world and would spare the lives of more than 3000 children who die every day due to water-related illness. Today, you will be called upon to look at some diverse and challenging questions such as: what are the gaps and obstacles to accessing safe water and sanitation; how can we manage our water resources sustainably; what is the role of various actors, including the private sector and how can we leverage each for the best possible outcome; and given the world's diverse needs and the many facets of water

management – what would a water goal look like, and what kind of target(s) could it have?

Deeply tied to the water challenge, is the sustainable energy challenge. Reliable and affordable energy is essential to our lives and livelihoods. It is a prerequisite for development and has been referred to as the “forgotten Millennium Development Goal”. Energy, like water, affects numerous other areas of development – economic growth, health, security, food, gender and education and sustainable livelihoods. Yet the energy we use can and must support these areas of development without damaging our planet and the livelihoods of the world’s people. For this reason, there is also broad support on the need for a sustainable development goal that addresses energy. Here you will be asked to look at what kinds of programmes have already led to affordable and accessible access to energy; what are the costs involved; where and how are the opportunities for technology transfer; and – as I asked you above – what could a global goal look like, and what could possible targets be?

The issues of water, sanitation and energy are so closely interconnected with socio-economic development, human health, food security and agriculture, climate change and the overall well-being of both people and planet, that the nexus between these issues is undeniable and crucial to our shared quest to find sustainable solutions for development challenges. Addressing these issues simultaneously provides us with significant challenges in terms of capacity and resource constraints, but also with unique opportunities for an integrated dialogue and approach to share resources and build capacities in order to address problems that are integrated and intrinsically linked at the ground level.

The International Energy Agency has informed that 15% of annual global water extraction is used in energy related processes and is second only to that used in agriculture. Water is used in energy extraction, production, processing, transport, fracking, the cooling of power plants, and in other related applications and processes.

Similarly, energy is used in many processes connected with water supply including extraction and distribution, treatment, heating, sewage disposal and sanitation.

Water producers are often the single largest customers of electricity-generating and supply companies, and in the developing world electricity is predominantly produced from fossil fuels. The carbon emissions that result from fossil fuels are the cause of climate change, which then causes further water and environmental problems. Water constraints can negatively impact the reliability of energy operations, and using water for energy production affects both the availability and quality of freshwater resources. The problem is complex and self-reinforcing. The growing global population and rising demand for energy and water put the issues into stark relief. So today, I ask you to consider how we can develop a more integrated approach to problem-solving so that we can best address this development nexus of water – sanitation – sustainable energy services.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are here for this debate because we believe in a post 2015 world that is just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable, where every citizen of every country is able to drink clean water and access sanitation that promotes health and hygiene, both of which our General Assembly has recognized as basic human rights. All people deserve to share in the myriad benefits of reliable electricity. Every school and health center around the world should have access to safe and clean water, sanitation and sustainable energy services. And all of us, irrespective of where we are born or where we live, should have equal access to these resources which are essential to human development and well being.

Today, I ask you to dig deep, to express your creativity, to share your experiences and to provide your guidance and inputs in collaborating to achieve these goals, and in creating a post 2015 world that allows every member of the global family to live in dignity.

I wish you great success in your deliberations.

Thank you.
