

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO LAUNCH THE “WATER FOR LIFE” DECADE

22 March 2005

Dear friends,

Water is essential for life. Yet many millions of people around the world face water shortages. Many millions of children die every year from water-borne diseases. And drought regularly afflicts some of the world’s poorest countries. The world needs to respond much better. We need to increase water efficiency, especially in agriculture. We need to free women and girls from the daily chore of hauling water, often over great distances. We must involve them in decision-making on water management. We need to make sanitation a priority. This is where progress is lagging most. And we must show that water resources need not be a source of conflict. Instead, they can be a catalyst for cooperation. Significant gains have been made. But a major effort is still required. That is why this year marks the beginning of the “Water for Life” Decade. Our goal is to meet the internationally agreed targets for water and sanitation by 2015, and to build the foundation for further progress in the years beyond.

This is an urgent matter of human development, and human dignity. Together, we can provide safe, clean water to all the world’s people. The world’s water resources are our lifeline for survival, and for sustainable development in the 21st century. Together, we must manage them better.

Kofi A. Annan