

**Recommendations of the UN-Secretary General's Advisory Board (UNSGAB)
on Water & Sanitation for the Achievement of the Sanitation Related Millennium
Development Goals**

**Keynote from DR. USCHI EID (Member of the German Parliament)
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ter and Sanitation**

Respected Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Chair of the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation I take great pleasure in being here today at the opening of this Forum and to be able to underline once again the importance this topic – the improvement of sanitation – has in the eyes of the UN. In this respect I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the dramatic nature of the worldwide lack of toilets and sustainable wastewater management systems, and to draw to your attention some of the proposals of the Hashimoto Action Plan, presented to the public by the Advisory Board this spring at the World Water Forum in Mexico.

In order to do something about the catastrophic global sanitation situation, a radical change is required and we must act quickly and decisively!

I also do not want to hide the fact that within the Advisory Board set up by Kofi Annan I am already known somewhat as an active promoter of sanitation, particularly of those innovative and sustainable systems that are often grouped under the heading of "ecosan". Six years ago, in 2000, I had the pleasure to be invited to open the first international symposium on ecosan, which had been organised in Germany by the German Development Agency GTZ.

I am happy that with the World Toilet Organisation (WTO) we have another international partner for the promotion of sustainable sanitation, what can be seen as well from the way in which this World Toilet Expo and Forum here in Bangkok is outlined.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To be forced to relieve oneself in public, half-hidden behind a bush or a tree, or looking for a dark corner between buildings, is the sad and shameful reality faced by more than 2 out every 5 people on this planet.

An unimaginable number of people have no other choice, than to defecate in the open – in places where there are neither the suitable facilities nor the space. Particularly in slums there are often far too few toilets. The lack of any kind of privacy results in a daily humiliation and environmental pollution and unbearable health risks are common. For women and girls this causes additional problems, exposing them to the risk of sexual violence when they go to relieve themselves.

How can it be that in the 21st Century, with all its wealth and advanced science, people still lack any other possibility than to defecate before the prying eyes of strangers, ashamed and contributing to catastrophic hygiene conditions? How can it be that today there are still 2.6 billion who do not even have the use of a simple toilet? The World Health Organisation have established that despite over 100 years of experience with centralised wastewater systems, almost all wastewater in Africa and 65% wastewater in Asia is still discharged untreated, or only very partially treated, into the environment. This situation contributes to the deaths of an unimaginable 6000 children per day - 6000 children who die of easily avoidable illnesses such as diarrhoea, caused by dirty water and poor hygienic conditions.

Let me state this very clearly: Yes, there is in many cases a lack of money for sanitation and hygiene, however there is much more often a lack of political will and readiness to address these issues, which are not usually considered prestige projects, despite the fact that they are essential to life.

There are various reasons for this:

Firstly, sanitation is often considered as requiring too much subsidies and bringing too small a return. This is a mistake. Today there are a wide range of innovative technologies available that make expensive, complicate sewerage and treatment works redundant. Here the international ecosan movement has made a major contribution by showing how a paradigm change can be made towards closed loop oriented systems in which wastewater and excreta become valuable raw materials for irrigation,

to produce fertiliser and to generate energy. The overall economic impact of such sustainable wastewater systems for a country can be immense – as recent studies have illustrated. Improved water supplies and basic sanitation generate returns ranging from 3 to 34 times the original investment – according to the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. One need only consider the huge number of people who are no longer incapacitated through illness caused by dirty drinking water and are able to contribute productively to the economic development of their neighbourhood, city or nation.

Secondly, improving water supplies – not only for drinking, but for washing, irrigation and industry – is still seen as being more important than wastewater management. However, as can be seen in many countries today, improving the water supply without an appropriate wastewater management can have a negative impact on both people and the environment. Rivers become increasingly polluted, storm water drains become open sewers and leaky water pipes allow water supplies to become contaminated with pathogens from infiltrating wastewater...

In taking a broader perspective and adopting a holistic approach to water and wastewater management, and connecting household hygiene, environmental protection and sustainable resource management, sustainable sanitation approaches also can make an important contribution to resolving this problem

Thirdly, due to its association with dirt and impurity, sanitation and wastewater management remains a taboo topic in many countries, which is not discussed in public. But of course, cleanliness is only possible if as a precondition a certain infrastructure is in place, and for this it is necessary to address the issue and to plan and provide funds for the required sanitation infrastructure. Here hygiene awareness and education is an important topic and it is good the WTO and this World toilet Expo and Forum are that active in these fields.

Sanitation marketing approaches, such as community-led total sanitation (CLTS), hygiene marketing, such as WASH, and ecosan approaches complement each other here.

While CLTS and WASH contribute to raising hygiene awareness and stimulate demand for sanitation, ecosan systems highlight the economic potential of innovative sanitation systems. By setting a focus on the products themselves – for example bio-

gas, irrigation water, fertiliser or electricity – the taboos surrounding sanitation have been seen to disappear into thin air. For Nepalese farmers, in the face of an innovative, hygienically safe and economically productive sanitation solution, a taboo theme became a source of income, with cow dung and domestic wastewater being transformed into biogas and fertiliser in in-house treatment plants, whilst at the same time creating a branch for the local construction industry, which is actually producing new biogas treatment plants at an impressive rate of 20.000 units per year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I said in my introduction, I am a member and the chair of the UN Water and Sanitation Board, an advisory council of the General Secretary on the theme of water and sanitation supply. The board of internationally recognised experts develops recommendations for action on all important aspects of water and wastewater management aimed at regional and national government authorities, the United Nations, international and regional financing institutions and organisations, the governments of industrialised nations and private enterprises, and hope to contribute to reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

For sanitation, one of our main tasks is to draw urgently needed international attention to the crisis we are facing.

The Board has placed a focus on:

- mobilising those responsible around the world to finally implement existing internationally agreed accords and measures for the improvement of basic sanitation,
- creating the necessary public awareness and mobilising the required political will,
- highlighting areas where we are already making significant progress, but also to call for more engagement when, as is the case for sanitation, more is needed to reach the goals we have set; and
- calling for basic sanitation to be understood in a comprehensive manner: and this includes hygiene promotion, toilets, and wastewater treatment.

The Hashimoto Action Plan, “Your contribution – our contribution“, that we have developed, contains recommendations that describe how, in our view, breakthroughs can be made in central themes. The six central themes are:

- Finances,
- improving the performance of public utilities,
- sanitation supply,
- monitoring,
- integrated water resources management and the theme
- water and catastrophes.

Under the heading "Your contribution" the expected actions of key figures are described – with several of the figures being clearly identified and named. Under the title „Our contribution“, the Board describes how it can help remove or overcome obstacles, in cooperation with others or with individual actions.

The 4th World Water Forum in Mexico, in March of this year, made the Hashimoto Action Plan a central strategy paper. This was made evident by the approving reference to the Hashimoto Plan in the Ministerial Declaration and the roundtable reports of the ministerial meetings.

Here I would like to stress that the Board has taken concrete actions to implement the Action Plan since its announcement last March. For example, we conducted dialogue session with OECD in Paris last July. As a result of the meeting, Mr. Gurria, Secretary General of OECD, has announced that OECD will organise a series of workshops to discuss how to improve the overseas development assistance policy of its members states. He also made clear that OECD will organize High-Level Dialogue on Water and Development possibly in 2008.

In August, the Asian Development Bank and the Global Water Partnership signed an agreement to implement a project to build Water Operators Partnerships in Asia based on the Hashimoto Action Plan. The Inter-Parliamentary Union will organize a dialogue with the Board next May to discuss necessary legislative changes for enabling the breakthrough.

Dialogue between the Board and African Ministers will be held in Tunis in December to discuss African actions to realise actions based on the Hashimoto Plan. Dialogue with Asian ministers is expected to be held in Shanghai in May next year with dialogue with the Americas taking place in autumn next year.

The call for the United Nations to declare an International Sanitation Year is one of the most important recommendations of the Hashimoto Plan. We need the attention

that an International Sanitation Year will create in order to seriously address the dramatic consequences of dirty water. The “dirty side” of the water crisis is still being overlooked in favour of “clean” drinking water supply. The international year should help stimulate more involvement. An international sanitation year could also allow us to tackle the problem at the roots, because if we do not reach the sanitation target in a sustainable manner, then other Millennium Targets will also slip further out of reach. Health protection, poverty eradication, environmental protection, and even gender equality and the empowerment of women – all these are areas that cannot be truly addressed without a hygienically safe and ecologically and economically sustainable sanitation system.

The chances are very good that the calls for a sanitation year will bear fruit. In mid-September I was in New York on the edges of the UN-General Assembly to lobby for support to have 2008 declared “The International Year of Basic Sanitation”. Influential states, including Japan, China, France, Brazil, Egypt and Italy, are behind this initiative and have agreed to vote for 2008 being named International sanitation year.

The Hashimoto Plan also proposes the creation of a regularly awarded international “Sanitation Prize”. Similar to the Stockholm Water Prize, which helped bring the topic of water to public attention, this prize could clearly focus on “Sustainable Sanitation Supply”. Such a prize could, for example, be awarded for the first time at an international and prominent “Global Sanitation Conference”. The preparation and holding of such a conference is a further recommendation of the Action Plan.

There are two further points that I would like to highlight in the framework of this World Toilet Expo and Forum:

Firstly:

The action plan calls for a critical reflection on what good and sustainable sanitation actually is. If you look at the definition of so-called “improved sanitation” used as the basis for monitoring the MDGs, then you will see that flush toilet are considered as a good sanitation solution, even if the wastewater is discharged nearby into a drinking water pond for a village. On the other hand, public toilets and school toilets – even when extremely comfortable designed, well managed, and attached to a biogas di-

gester, thus producing renewable energy and hygienically safe fertiliser – are not considered in the monitoring figures because in the definition used in the monitoring process, public toilets are not considered as “improved sanitation”.

You can therefore see how important the further development of this definition, called for by UNSGAB, is.

Secondly:

The Action Plan calls for a broad dissemination of knowledge on sustainable sanitation, together with initiatives such as WASH and ecosan or the WTO. Particularly now, when the community of nations and an increasing number of organisations and businesses recognise that „business as usual“ and centralised end-of-pipe systems will not allow us to reach the MDGs, it is becoming clear that certain skills are missing. There is a shortage of people who can think across sectors, who can plan systems together with those affected, and who can rapidly spread information on successful examples, and adapt them quickly to the ever changing boundary conditions.

You have organised this World Toilet Forum to promote the topic of sanitation, in order to make sustainable solutions more widely known and to further develop these systems that are so urgently needed. To increase the number of toilets, to make them more hygienic and comfortable to use, and to improve the treatment and reuse of human excreta and wastewater – these are all important step in the right direction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to summarise: It is the declared goal of the UNSGAB – and it must be a common goal for us all – to have sanitation and wastewater management firmly anchored at the top of the political agenda. As Chair of the Water Board I engage myself for effective action, such as this Forum. I m personally very interested in the results of this Forum: You will be discussing the further development of sustainable and holistic approaches to sanitation in which we place great hope, and that we believe will really help us reach our goals.

It must be clear to us all that the majority of the Millennium Development Goals cannot be reached if the worldwide sanitation situation does no decisively improve

through the dissemination of sustainable solutions. Otherwise too many children will continue to die each day, women and girls will continue to fall victim to sexual violence whilst visiting dark corners that serve as toilets, and half the hospital beds in developing countries will continue to be occupied by patients with water related illnesses. Patients who can neither look after themselves nor contribute productively to the economic development of their country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This afternoon you will be focussing on different aspects of ecological sanitation. And tomorrow you will discuss important topics around sanitation in detail such as health, accessibility and safety. All this to further develop sustainable sanitation systems and to be able to offer them as a real choice to families around the world.

I wish you great success in this endeavour!

Thank you for your attention.