

**SG remarks at the Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of
Sanitation
New York, 7 May 2007**

**Your Royal Highness,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to thank the Chair of today's session, His Royal Highness, Prince William of Orange.

Prince William has played a prominent role in raising awareness and galvanizing international efforts to improve the drinking water supply and the sanitation situation around the world.

In his present capacity, as Chair of my Advisory Board on these issues, he is providing his leadership, knowledge, stellar image and sheer energy to the work of the United Nations on water and sanitation. For all this, Prince William, I express my sincere gratitude.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to all the members of the Advisory Board. I will be looking to you as friends and trusted partners in the effort to advance the water and sanitation agenda and to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

It was at the Board's recommendation, in the Hashimoto Action Plan, that the General Assembly decided to declare 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation. We must make the most of this opportunity.

When tracking progress towards the MDGs, sanitation stands out as one of the critical areas where we are falling way, way behind. Around the world, some 2.6 billion people – roughly two out of every five of our fellow human beings -- lack access to basic sanitation services. That is simply unacceptable.

Access to sanitation is a fundamental issue of human dignity and human rights, and also of economic development and environmental protection. It is deeply and inextricably connected to virtually all the MDGs, in particular those involving the environment, education, gender equality and the reduction of child mortality and poverty.

I am encouraged to know that your meeting today has produced clear guidance about what we can do not only during the International Year, but beyond it, to bring the issue the attention and political priority it truly deserves.

I assure you that all parts of the UN system, with coordination by UN-DESA and UN-Water, will draw on the meeting's outcome in mobilizing their actions for the Year at the global, regional, and country levels.

But efforts by UN agencies are just one part of the equation. Real change demands resources, commitment, policy changes and other concrete steps by governments, civil society and all stakeholders.

Let us make this a remarkable Year of global sanitation achievement, one that generates real, positive changes for the millions and even billions of people who do not yet enjoy this basic ingredient of human welfare.

I thank you for your participation and contribution. And I look forward to our continued collaboration.