Talking Points
Global Handwashing Day Celebration

October 14, 2011

- Honourable Minister of Health, Dr. Agnes Binagwaho
- Mayor of Gasabo District
- Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocol observed
- Dear Children,

1. It is an honour for me to be here today to represent the UN family at Rwanda’s third celebration of Global Handwashing Day since 2008. I am also pleased that we are launching a campaign today to promote hand washing with soap, hygienic toilets and safe drinking water.

2. As you know, poor sanitation and hygiene contributes to millions of preventable deaths every year, including of over 1.6 million people from diarrhoea alone. Here in Rwanda, we know that poor hygiene and sanitation is linked to 80% of the country’s disease burden and that diarrhoea is the second cause of death amongst children under the age of five.

3. We also know that whereas ensuring safe water can reduce diarrheal rates by 15% and health promotion by 35%, hand washing with soap can reduce diarrheal deaths by 47%. This is why this campaign today is so important because it encompasses everything that needs to be done to promote better health and hygiene for all.

4. Ladies and Gentlemen, Improving sanitation and hygiene is one of the most effective investments we can make in improving the lives of the world’s poorest people. This is embodied in both Rwanda’s Vision 2020 and the EDPRS, and why I would like to congratulate the Rwandan Government for not only inaugurating this campaign today to
promote hand washing, safe water and hygienic toilets, but also for moving forward with recommendations from the 3rd African Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene held in July this year and for subscribing to the five year drive for sustainable sanitation by 2015.

5. Dear Children, you are the best agents of change. If you talk to your family members and friends and ensure that everyone washes their hands with soap at all critical moments including before they eat and after they visit the toilet, you can help Rwanda achieve its Vision 2020 for a healthy and strong nation.

6. The United Nations family remains committed to doing what we can to support Rwanda to meet all the Millennium Development Goals, including the one related to improved sanitation.

7. Focusing on total sanitation and better hygiene will help us combat not only diarrhoea, but will enable children to stay in school, to learn and to become contributing citizens. It will improve productivity and reduce health related costs. Most importantly, it will help the country build the Rwandaful vision that we all want to see. I know we will all be united in taking this campaign forward.

8. Thank you. Murakoze Cyane.