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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Accelerating progress on safe sanitation and hygiene for all: Countdown to 2030

Friday, 24 March 2023: 12:30 -13:45; UN Headquarters; ECOSOC Council Chamber

Organized by:

1. Permanent Mission of Tanzania to the United Nations
2. Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations
3. Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the United Nations
4. United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations
5. Permanent Mission of Namibia to the United Nations
6. Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations
7. Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations
8. African Ministers' Council on Water
9. United Nations Children's Fund
10. World Health Organization
11. The World Bank
12. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
13. BMZ/GIZ
14. WaterAid
15. LIXIL
16. Unilever
17. AMREF

Background on the event

The world is alarmingly off track towards achieving universal access to safely managed sanitation and hygiene. Nearly half of the world's population lives without a safe toilet, nearly a third does not have a place to wash their hands with water and soap, and one-third of the world's health facilities lack hand hygiene facilities at the point of care. Almost 500 million people practise open defecation. This global crisis has a profound impact on public health, economic productivity, environmental integrity, and educational attainment. Girls and women are disproportionately affected by the lack of safe, private sanitation facilities in homes, workplaces and public spaces. Children, especially the most vulnerable, bear the heaviest disease burden, and it is estimated that every day, more than 700 children die from illnesses caused by unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene. Poor sanitation also contributes to a heavy disease burden from soil transmitted helminths (worms) which undermines children's growth and ability to learn. This side was aimed at:

- Creating awareness on the poor state of sanitation and hygiene and mobilize actions for accelerating progress.
- Sharing knowledge, experiences and innovations to catalyze action towards strengthening systems for accelerated delivery of safely managed sanitation and hygiene for all.

- Providing a platform for commitments from national governments, development partners and the private sector to accelerate progress on safely managed sanitation and hygiene for all

Key Issues discussed

- The world is off track towards achieving the universal access to safe sanitation and hygiene and there is need to accelerate progress
- Recognize the far-reaching consequences of the sanitation crisis on public health, the economy, the environment, and education, especially for vulnerable groups.
- Strong political will and leadership required for achieving national targets for safely managed sanitation.
- Strengthening sanitation systems (Governance and Policy, Financing, Capacity development, data and information, Innovation) for accelerated and sustainable delivery of safe sanitation and hygiene.
- Successful country models for accelerating progress on safe sanitation and hygiene exists and this needs to be scaled up.
- Need for increased investment in sanitation and hygiene to support a healthy workforce and promote economic growth
- Increased engagements and collaboration with private sector to provide innovative solutions for sustainable sanitation and hygiene services.

Key recommendations for action

1. Increased political commitments and urgent investment in sanitation and hygiene are critical to transforming health, economies, and the environment by 2030.
2. The sector needs to have and disseminate appropriate tools, approaches and foundational interventions that can be adapted to any context and deployed to accelerate progress towards SDG 6.2.
3. To accelerate efforts for achieving universal access to safe sanitation and hygiene, it will require sustained partnerships and harmonized collaboration across donors, implementing partners, private sector, and national governments.
4. Strengthen mechanisms for enhancing the capacity of sector professionals to effectively respond to the needs of service provision for both sewerred and non-sewerred sanitation systems.
5. Strengthen national data systems for policy, planning and decision making and for effectively monitoring progress on SDG6.2
6. Incorporate climate resilience in sanitation policies, plans, budgets, systems and services; and increase political commitments for the provision of climate-resilient sanitation services as part of the overall efforts of accelerating progress to safe sanitation.