



Statement by Mr. Zephirin Diabre  
Associate Administrator of UNDP  
at the High-Level Segment of the Thirteenth Session of the  
Commission on Sustainable Development

*21 April 2005*

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join the High level Segment of the Thirteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to have the [opportunity to](#) discuss the policy decisions and practical measures for implementation in the areas of water supply, sanitation and human settlements. The United Nations Development Programme has closely followed the deliberations of CSD-13 over the last couple of weeks. We welcome the policy decisions of CSD-13 and the contribution these decisions will make to the Millennium Summit Review later this year.

2005 is a very important year for the international community to make accelerated progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Halving the proportion of people without access to water and sanitation by 2015 will require commitment and action by all countries - rich and poor - not only in terms of increased resources but also a global effort to unleash the huge human, institutional and societal capacity of programme countries' to achieving the MDGs.

The United Nations Development Programme supports programme countries to develop national capacity to take an integrated approach to water resource management through effective water governance. UNDP is working at the country level in partnership with national and local public sector institutions, civil society organizations, bilateral and multi-lateral organizations, the private sector and our UN partners to support Governments to implement their commitments in the areas of water supply, sanitation and human settlements. We recognize the importance of water to poverty alleviation, human health and ecosystem protection, from global to grassroots levels. One example of our work to ensure a nexus between poverty and environment issues is the UNDP Poverty and Environment Initiative. This is a programme that aims to help countries

address the ways in which access to environmental assets affects the livelihoods, health, security and empowerment of people living in poverty. UNDP also provides support to integrate environmental concerns of poor and vulnerable groups into national policy and planning frameworks for poverty reduction and sustainable, pro-poor growth.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to briefly comment on the ways in which UNDP supports programme countries to make progress on the specific areas of action agreed upon here at CSD-13.

Firstly, access to basic water services. As we are all aware the world has an extraordinary challenge to address with 1.1 billion people lacking safe drinking water. This means connecting up to 275,000 people a day to clean water supply between now and 2015. Building on experience of UNDP's Local Initiatives for the Environment (LIFE) and the GEF Small Grants Programme, UNDP has initiated the Community Water Initiative to support communities and households to build on their own skills, capacities and resources to identify and implement affordable solutions to local water resource challenges and link local management of services with sustainable livelihoods. For example, UNDP has supported communities in Guatemala to pump ground water for drinking using solar energy and in Olkinyei, Kenya natural springs have been protected. Through the Community Water Initiative we have helped communities to promote dialogues and facilitated South-South knowledge exchange so countries can draw on lessons learned elsewhere and make informed choices on policy options that are best adapted to their own circumstances.

Secondly, access to basic sanitation. 2.6 billion people currently lack basic sanitation. Conventional sewage systems, based on flush-toilets, have failed to solve the sanitation needs for developing countries. Over 95% of sewage in developing countries is discharged untreated, polluting rivers, lakes and coastal areas. UNDP supports access to sustainable sanitation for the poor through a mechanism called 'Ecosan'. These are ecological sanitation systems in Mexico and several other countries that are designed to safeguard human health as well as the health of the environment: saving water, protecting the environment, and improving soil fertility and food security.

Thirdly, Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). Like many of you here, we believe that integrated water resource management (IWRM) is a key to achieving the MDGs and to reducing vulnerability to natural disasters. UNDP approaches development issues through a multisectoral lens and has been fully engaged in helping to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes for the preparation of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) Plans as well as actions to carry them forward.

Given the lessons learned from supporting riparian countries in basin-wide dialogues, UNDP will enhance its efforts to support countries, at their request, to develop mechanisms for shared river basin management. We believe that UNDP has a role to play as a neutral partner and facilitator in these dialogues.

IWRM can also be used as a tool for identifying and filling critical gaps such as the linkage between water and disasters. In too many parts of the world we are seeing an increase of vulnerability to natural disasters as droughts and floods take a devastating toll on human life and dignity. Adaptation to climate change must be one facet of our response, but focusing attention on other aspects of natural resources management - such as watershed and soil protection, preventing the overexploitation of aquifers, reduction of pollution of freshwater and oceans and the protection of mangroves is equally urgent. UNDP's corporate priority in crisis prevention and recovery works to prevent natural disasters and manage natural resources and our position and role within the GEF enhances our ability to support countries efforts to this end.

Fourthly, human settlements. Support in the area of local governance is closely linked to the challenges of human settlements. In partnership with various organizations, particularly UN-HABITAT and other UN agencies, UNDP is assisting governments to address issues such as participatory budgeting, urban agriculture, strengthening secondary cities, promoting healthy rural-urban relations, and addressing the challenges of urban and rural poverty.

As the questions of land, property and resource rights emerge as a particular challenge, UNDP is joining a number of partners in a new multi-stakeholder effort to bring asset security for the poor into the mainstream of the development dialogue. We consider asset security as the means to provide people living in poverty with access to services, legal protection and the means for them to become significant players in national development and emerge from poverty. In addressing asset security we must reflect gender equality issues and the empowerment of women.

Fifthly, a few words on 'UN Water'. UNDP supports a coordinated approach to the implementation of the water and sanitation agenda and we have been actively participating in 'UN Water' since its inception. We welcome efforts underway to ensure that coordination, information sharing and monitoring of the water and sanitation agenda is carried out by the appropriate UN agencies.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, meeting the MDGs is an enormous challenge, but one that is within reach if both developing countries and the donor community step up commitment and action to implement agreements in the areas of water supply and management, sanitation and human settlements and ensure that country policies and practices reflect this priority. We trust that the conclusions of the deliberations here this week will provide renewed impetus to these efforts and strengthen their impact.

Thank you.