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OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS*

WATER AND SANITATION

*STATEMENT OF H.E. JEAN-FRANCIS R. ZINSOU
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON BEHALF OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES*

New York, le 24 mai 2013

Distinguished Co-Chairs
Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the least developed countries. This statement supplements the presentation made by Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation are basic human rights. Without these basic necessities, hundreds of thousands of lives are lost, boys and girls don't attend school and economies are crippled. To put it simply, without water and sanitation, the fight against poverty will not be won.

According to UNICEF's Global Drinking Water Trends 1990-2010, the MDG drinking water target has been reached. Over 2 billion people gained access to improved water sources from 1990 to 2010, and the proportion of the global population still using unimproved sources is estimated at only 11 per cent. This is less than half of the 24 per cent estimated for 1990.

Despite remarkable progress at the global level, still 800 million people are without access to an improved water source and 2.5 billion people live without improved sanitation. The progress is also uneven and holds huge disparities within and among countries. Around 580 million people in LDCs have still no access to sanitation and over 325 million have no access to clean drinking water.

While the overall coverage of improved water supply sources in the developing countries stands at 86 per cent, it is only 63 per cent in least developed countries and the proportion with improved sanitation facility was 59 per cent in other developing countries in 2010, which was merely 34 per cent in LDCs. While 54 per cent of the global population use piped water on premises, it is a convenience enjoyed by only 11 per cent of the people living in LDCs and 3 per cent of their rural populations.

Currently, LDCs don't have wastewater infrastructure in many of their fastest growing cities. It is outdated, not designed to meet local conditions, poorly maintained and entirely unable to keep pace with rising urban populations. Appropriate investments and a comprehensive integrated water and wastewater planning and management at national and municipal levels are vitally important.

Agricultural water withdrawal accounts for over 90% in the least developed countries. FAO estimates an 11% increase in irrigation water consumption from 2008 to 2050. Although this seems a modest increase, much of it will occur in regions and countries already suffering from water scarcity especially in LDCs. This will also have impacts on the availability of water for consumptions.

High population growth, fast urbanisation, rapid industrialisation, droughts and desertification, intensifying food production, illicit utilization and unregulated discharge of contaminated water within and beyond national borders are all putting pressure on water resources. This presents a serious threat to the wellbeing of the global community especially those living in LDCs.

The future agenda should build on and go beyond the MDGs. We need to act now to end the sanitation and water crisis globally with differential and preferential treatment to LDCs (DPTL) and we recommend undertaking the following measures in the context of the SDGs:

First: The Istanbul Programme for Action made a commitment to aim for sanitation and water for all by 2020. We need to make this as a universal goal in the SDGs.

Second: The group of LDCs, which starts from a low baseline and are facing rapid population growth and other structural constraints, need special treatment in the international development assistance to fulfil their high target in absolute terms. The future development agenda should overcome and eliminate inequalities by setting ambitious global targets

and by requiring the disaggregation of data by country, gender and age so that they can be monitored separately.

Third: We need to set an investment target for water and sanitation. An investment in water and sanitation would not only provide an enormous return, but also prevent huge expenses on addressing various negative consequences. According to an UNDP study, for every \$1 invested in water and sanitation, \$8 is gained in economic returns through increased productivity. The investment in water and sanitation will also free up overburdened health resources as 10% of the global diseases burden could be prevented through improved water, sanitation and hygiene.

Fourth: Cost-effective technological solutions for safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene are highly desirable. LDCs need meaningful international support in building their technological base to ensure access to safe and clean water both for consumption and irrigation. Globally, there are a lot of effective technological solutions in these fields, which need to be transferred to LDCs.

Fifth: Enhanced South-South, regional and sub-regional cooperation over water issues are vitally important, which can contribute to more efficient management with positive impacts on access to high quantity and quality of water.

Finally: As it has already been pledged in the IPoA, we call upon the development partners to provide financial and technical support to LDCs to improve and expand water and sanitation provisions, including water pipelines and sewage networks, preserve and develop water sources, manage water sheds and enhance water productivity as well as support to strengthen the capacity of local institutions for service delivery, quality monitoring, financing, operations and maintenance.

I thank you all.