

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO SIXTH WORLD WATER FORUM**  
**Marseille, 12 March 2012**

*Delivered by Mr. Michel Jarraud,  
Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization*

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water scarcity is increasing.

Rates of growth in agricultural production are slowing.

Climate change and political instability in some parts of the world are a cause of further risk and unpredictability.

These are among the many challenges that need solutions if we are to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Some solutions are already working.

Last week, we heard the welcome announcement that the MDG target for drinking water has already been met, well ahead of the 2015 deadline.

Improving access to water improves health and education outcomes.

It increases agricultural productivity.

It is a force for gender equality and women's empowerment.

But let us not forget that nearly 800 million people still lack safe drinking water.

Furthermore, large disparities exist between and within countries.

The sanitation picture is even more worrying.

With 2.5 billion people in need of improved facilities, the world is unlikely to meet the MDG sanitation target.

We cannot afford to relax our efforts.

I therefore commend those who are participating in the Sustainable Sanitation: Five Year Drive to 2015.

At this Forum, today, the United Nations will launch the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Water Development Report.

It shines a spotlight on water use, analyzes the question of managing water under uncertainty, and addresses gender issues throughout.

Realizing the right to water and to sanitation means removing inequity and discrimination that affect women, marginalized communities and the poor.

The report's findings should be seen by all as a call to action – to strengthen mechanisms of global coordination, to improve national institutions and to weave the two more tightly together.

We must also train our sights on making the most of the upcoming Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

For Rio+20 to succeed, it must renew political commitment to integrated approaches to intelligently managing the world's freshwater resources.

Water is a common denominator in some of the leading global challenges of our time: energy, food, health, peace and security – and, of course reducing the risk of disasters, such as droughts and floods.

It follows, therefore, that water must be at the heart of any new vision we forge for sustainable development goals post-2015.

So let us learn from experience.

Let us identify solutions that have worked and why.

Let us ask which solutions are transferable to other situations.

And let us also be innovative so we can respond to emerging global challenges.

Major achievements towards many of the MDG targets tell us one important truth.

When we pull together, we can achieve great things.

Partnerships for development work – they are a good investment.

As you know, we are in the final stages of preparing for Rio+20.

This milestone on the road to sustainable development is the most important conference of our generation.

Your deliberations – your solutions – will be an essential contribution.

I wish you a productive Forum.