



**Briefing Statement**  
**Ms. Cecilia Ugaz**  
**Deputy Director**  
**Human Development Report Office**  
**United Nations Development Programme**  
**House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health**  
**United States Congress**  
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Chairman Payne, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, I would like to thank you for your invitation to brief you on the important issues of access to clean water and adequate sanitation addressed in UNDP's Human Development Report 2006, *Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*. I welcome this opportunity to share the findings of the report with you.

On the ground in 166 countries, UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience, and resources to help people build a better life. The annual Human Development Report is an editorially independent publication commissioned by UNDP. It focuses global debate on key development issues, providing new measurement tools, innovative analysis, and policy proposals.

The Human Development Report 2006 underscored the human development dimension to the lack of access to clean water and adequate sanitation faced by the world's poor.

The consequences of the water crisis in terms of human costs are manifested in lost lives, lost productivity and disease. Almost 50 per cent of all people in developing countries are suffering at any given time from a health problem caused by water and sanitation deficits. Every year, 1.8 million children die as a result. In 2004 alone, deaths from diarrhoea were about six times greater than the average number of deaths a year due to armed conflict for the 1990s. Some 40 billion hours a year are spent collecting water in sub-Saharan Africa. This is equivalent to a year's labour for the entire workforce in France. The costs of diseases and productivity losses linked to water and sanitation in least developed countries amount to 2% of GDP. In sub-Saharan Africa that figure rises to 5% – more than what the region gets in aid. This is only part of the picture.

Mr. Chairman, we are aware that the US Congress has already moved to improve work in this area. We hope that the recommendations made by the Human Development Report

2006 will provide helpful insight as you continue this important work.

Today, 1.1 billion people lack access to water worldwide; 2.6 billion lack access to sanitation. The reasons for these deficiencies are rooted in inequalities. This is a crisis that affects the poor above all. The implications for human development are diminished opportunities to realize people's capabilities and human potential.

Water for human consumption fulfils a basic survival need. Yet the divide between the access available to the wealthiest 20% of any population, versus the poorest 20% is striking. Not only is the disparity in the amount of water that can be accessed significant, so is the price paid for that water. And it is the poorest in society who are paying by far the highest prices for this precious commodity.

In cities in sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 10% to 30% of low-income households purchase water from neighbours and water kiosks. In countries such as Benin, Kenya and Uganda fees to connect to piped water exceed \$100. Such fees represent six months of income for a family in the poorest fifth of the population in Kenya and more than a year's income for a poor family in Uganda.

The vast deficit in sanitation affects half the developing world's population – 2.6 billion people. On average, only about 1 person in 3 in South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa has access to sanitation. In Ethiopia it is 1 in 7 people. Access to sanitation is one of the strongest determinants of child survival: the transition from unimproved to improved sanitation reduces child mortality by a third. Without it, increased child mortality is unavoidable.

Once again, the price paid by the poorest 20% of the population is significantly higher than what the richest 20% pay for access to sanitation. The increased risks to health affect all members of poor communities, with the most vulnerable – children – suffering the greatest impacts. But the infrastructure and policies needed for improved sanitation lag far behind even those of water. The reasons are many: a combination of institutional fragmentation, weak national planning and the low political status of the issue.

In summary, the Human Development Report 2006 found that inequalities based on wealth, and location, play a central role in structuring water markets. Water pricing reflects a simple perverse principle: the poorer you are, the more you pay. The debate over the relative merits of public and private sector has been a distraction from the inadequate performance of both public and private water providers to overcome the global water deficit. Finally, regulation is critical to the progressive realization of the human right to water.

The implications for the Millennium Development Goals along current trends mean that we will miss the MDG of halving the proportion of people without access to water by 235 million people. The sanitation target will be missed by 431 million people. Sub-Saharan Africa will reach the water target in 2040 and the sanitation target in 2076. For Sub-Saharan Africa to get on track, connections to access water will have to increase from 10

million a year in the past decade to 23 million a year in the next decade. Connections for sanitation will have to increase from 7 million a year for the past decade to 28 million a year by 2015.

Mr. Chairman, can we afford not to make the investments? The investment required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is an additional 10 billion USD per year. The estimated for sub-Saharan Africa is 2 billion. The economic benefits of meeting the Millennium Development Goals would amount to \$38 billion, \$15 billion of that in sub-Saharan Africa. Universal access to basic water and sanitation facilities would reduce the burden on health systems in least developed countries by \$1.6 billion annually and \$610 million in sub-Saharan Africa, which represents about 7% of the region's health budget. Water and sanitation, however, suffer from chronic under-funding. Public spending is typically less than 0.5% of GDP – 0.3% in sub-Saharan Africa. Water and sanitation constitute only 5% of total official development assistance (ODA). If we take action and meet the Millennium Development Goal targets, more than 1 million lives could be saved over the next decade.

In conclusion, putting an end to the global water crisis requires four pillars for success:

1. Make water a human right – and mean it. Every person should have access to at least 20 litres of clean water a day.
2. Governments need to draw up national strategies for water and sanitation.
3. Increase the amount of international aid for water and sanitation.
4. International leadership for water and sanitation through a Global Action Plan to address the inequalities currently inherent in access issues.

I would like to end by noting that UNDP is helping catalyze efforts toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through its Water Governance Program, and stands ready to work with all partners in advancing the Human Development Report's recommendations.

Thank you for permitting me to brief the Committee and I look forward to your questions.