



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**FOREWORD TO PUBLICATION ON WATER AND SANITATION
BY THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE HUMAN RIGHT
TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION
December 2011**

Water and sanitation are central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At present trends, however, the MDG target for sanitation appears to be out of reach. And even though the MDG target on drinking water has been met, that is still likely to leave more than 10 per cent of the world's population lacking access in 2015. It is simply unacceptable that almost half the population of developing countries suffers from health problems caused by inadequate water and sanitation, or that slum-dwellers pay five to ten times as much for water as wealthy residents of the same cities, or that more than one billion people in rural communities live without toilets and have to defecate in the open.

These trends and circumstances explain why the 2010 recognition of the human right to water and sanitation by the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council was so important. Governments and the UN system now have a solid legal framework underpinning our work in this vital area. Our collective task now is to translate the recognition of rights into specific obligations at the international and national levels.

This book offers solutions, ideas and pragmatic examples of legislation, policies, programmes, advocacy approaches and accountability mechanisms that are helping the voiceless, excluded and forgotten to enjoy their rights. It shows what States, UN agencies, service providers, civil society organizations and other stakeholders can achieve by working together to address discrimination, ensure that services are affordable, promote health and empower women and girls.

Many States have already included the human right to water and sanitation in their constitutions and domestic legislation, but there is more to be done. States must ensure that the right policies are developed, that financing is available to fund their implementation, and that discriminatory practices against women, minorities, the elderly or the sick are identified and eliminated. I also encourage States to seize the opportunity offered by the June 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20 – to advance on these issues.

I welcome the publication of this book and take this opportunity to reaffirm the support of the United Nations system to reaching the MDG target of reducing by half, by 2015, the proportion of people living without basic sanitation that is part of the UN "Drive to 2015". In a world of plenty, no one should have to suffer the deprivation and indignities linked to the lack of access to sanitation and water. I look forward to working with all partners in common cause to ensure this human right for all.

Signed on 15/12
Foreword to publication
On water and sanitation
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