



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Sustainable Development

Local  
Chair

4 March 2009

Your Highness,

I wish to thank you for your letter of 26 January 2009 on the Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for your leadership and the dynamism that you bring to the Board as Chair.

Your valuable suggestions to put in place robust monitoring tools to measure progress made in the area of water and sanitation are very much appreciated. We are consulting the relevant agencies, including the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, to give careful consideration to your proposals. I shall keep you informed of any further developments following the consultations.

Water and sanitation is an urgent, multi-dimensional issue. It will require the expertise, resources and innovative solutions from the United Nations system and beyond. Your continuing support is critical in mobilizing the international community to reach the Millennium Development Goal of reducing, by one half, the number of people without access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation by 2015.

Please accept, Your Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration.

*Ki Moon Ban*  
BAN Ki-moon

His Royal Highness  
The Prince of Orange  
Chair of the United Nations Secretary General  
Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation  
Wassenaar

29-01365



**Note to Mr. Nambiar**

Re: Draft response letter to the Prince of Orange

1. Reference is made to the letter from H.R.H. The Prince of Orange dated 26 January 2009 on the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation.
2. The letter contains specific recommendations on monitoring tools to measure progress in the achievement of MDG on water and sanitation. These involve coordinating with the relevant UN system organizations such as WHO and UNICEF. DESA, which is the substantive office on water and sanitation, is consulting these agencies and will revert with a draft response further elaborating on the proposals. In the meantime, we suggest a short response acknowledging the letter.
3. Please find attached a draft response to His Royal Highness for your consideration.



Parfait Onanga-Anyanga  
27 February 2009

29-01545



**Note to the Chef de Cabinet**

H.R.H. The Prince of Orange, Chair of the Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB)

I am pleased to transmit a letter addressed to the Secretary-General from H.R.H. The Prince of Orange, Chair of UNSGAB.

I would appreciate if the letter could be brought to the attention of the Secretary-General.



Sha Zukang  
6 February 2008





NO action → DCA to provide support  
CL BH

United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation

Wassenaar, 26 January 2009

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
UN Headquarters  
First Avenue at 46th Street  
New York, NY 10017

ACTION DSG  
COPY ✓N



Your Excellency, dear Mr. Ban Ki-moon,

On behalf of your Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB), I wish to extend our very best wishes for a peaceful and productive year.

With a mere six years until world leaders gather to determine if the Millennium Development Goals have been met, it is urgent that we have in place robust monitoring tools to empirically measure progress on the ground.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> UNSGAB Board Meeting in Riyadh last November, Board members agreed that heightened attention was required from the UN to upgrade the quality of monitoring policies and actions in the water and sanitation sectors. In particular both Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) and the Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) need to be reinforced and strengthened so that they deliver on neglected issues, such as the expectation by many to more than access to "improved water sources", which in urban areas may not be sufficient to guarantee "sustainable access to safe water"; and assessment of quality, accessibility and affordability of drinking water.

To this end, we would like to seek your support in the following:

1. Widen the scope of the WHO-UNICEF JMP within UN-Water to the production of all global data describing the situation of water supply and sanitation services.



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## United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation

2. Instruct JMP to immediately use available country data about access to water and sanitation to report on more indicators at the global level.
3. Require UN-Water to work with other global institutions to develop a better economic and institutional knowledge of the water and sanitation sector, especially through strong and continued support to the GLAAS initiative conducted by WHO on behalf of UN-water.

Mr. Secretary-General, allow me to stress that as we close in on 2015 the UN family must redouble its efforts to monitor water and sanitation progress. Our members are committed to working with you to ensure this happens as expediently as possible.

*With many heartfelt regards & best wishes  
Sincerely yours*

H.R.H. The Prince of Orange  
Chair of UNSGAB

Cc: Mr Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary General  
Mr Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary General





January 2009

**Subject: Assessing progress of access to water and sanitation**

At its inception in 2004, our Advisory Board was assigned detailed tasks by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Two of them are related to global monitoring of access to water and sanitation:

- 1- *“to advocate for and encourage maintaining and upgrading the quality of data and statistics and the capacity of governments and the international system to monitor policies and actions in the water and sanitation sectors.”*
- 2- *“to assess progress made towards the water and sanitation goals.”*

After including a full chapter on “monitoring and reporting” in our Hashimoto Action Plan, we identified and scrutinised the various monitoring tools currently available that provide information about access to water and sanitation at the global level. Our analysis is detailed in a report<sup>1</sup> that describes current challenges and develops recommendations. It was written following exchanges with many experts, including UN agencies, multilateral financial institutions, bilateral agencies and government representatives.

**1. Monitoring tools**

*1.1 Our findings about monitoring systems.*

We have found that the available global data about the drinking water and sanitation sector used by UN-Water to depict the sector is scarce.

- Regarding access by individuals to water or sanitation the only global data issuer is the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme of UN-Water [JMP]. This provides very useful information about progress on a small number of indicators. This program is the reference issuer of global data in the sector and its data is used by all other international institutions. This program mainly aims at following progress towards the water and sanitation MDG targets. The JMP is very useful for measuring global progress and identifying gaps with respect to the current global goals. However, it provides limited knowledge of the various situations experienced by individuals. Despite recent improvements, it is still insufficiently detailed to detect the significant progress made in some countries and to allow for the adoption of different goals or more ambitious policies in the future.
- Knowledge of other characteristics of the sector at global level is very limited; in particular global data about water sector economics is not available.

Monitoring systems that support national policies often use datasets supplied by water service providers. Country governments would benefit from comparing these datasets with those produced by household surveys since in many cases they are significantly different.

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<sup>1</sup> Available on <http://www.unsgab.org/hapi/moni/index.htm>





## United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation

### 1.2. Proposals to improve monitoring tools

We highly recommend that UN-Water aims at depicting the water and sanitation sector more precisely. This would include that:

- the UN Secretary-General and other relevant organisations widen the scope of the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme within UN-Water to the production of all global data describing the situation of water supply and sanitation services,
- The WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme immediately uses available country data about access to water and sanitation to report on more indicators at global level.
- UN-Water works with other global institutions to develop better knowledge of the water and sanitation sector in the economic and institutional areas. The UN-Water GLAAS initiative that is conducted by WHO for UN-Water should be encouraged.

We also recommend that international institutions encourage country governments to set up and monitor their policies by using both data supplied by water service providers and surveys measuring water uses together.

### 2. Assessment of progress towards the Water and Sanitation Goals

The last report of the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme shows significant progress in the world between 1990 and 2006 both for water and sanitation. However, increased efforts should be made in the field.

*For sanitation*, progress towards sanitary toilets guaranteeing privacy is significant but it is too slow to achieve this part of the MDGs related to basic sanitation by 2015. The population not benefiting from access to “improved sanitation” has increased to 2.5 billion people while this number should decrease by one third by 2015 to achieve the MDG target.

*For drinking water*, progress is far more significant. Halving the proportion of population not having access to “improved water sources” between 1990 and 2015 seems achievable. The affected population has been reduced to less than 900 million by end 2006. This is excellent news. However, many people expect more than access to “improved water sources” and in urban areas this may not be sufficient to guarantee “sustainable access to safe water”. Quality, accessibility and affordability of drinking water need a more detailed assessment.

The increase from 2.7 billion in 1990 to more than 3.0 billion in 2006 of the number of people not having access to tap water at home or in the immediate vicinity is an additional concern.

All this confirms that the need for acceleration identified by the thirteen session of the Commission on Sustainable Development is real.