



STATEMENT

Chef de Cabinet of the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly

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Statement on World Toilet Day

Conference Room 12, UN Headquarters

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Introductory Remarks

Her Excellency Amina Mohammed, Distinguished Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you Ambassador Gafoor for your invitation and for hosting this important event. **Singapore** continues to be an advocate for water and sanitation including through initiating the “**Sanitation for All**” **resolution**.

The statistics should alarm us. According to the **World Health Organization**, **at least 2 billion** people use a **drinking water source contaminated with faeces**.

In 2015, 892 million people still defecated in the open.

These two problems are interlinked and affect billions of people. Providing **access to a basic toilet** for all **will alleviate a lot of wastewater problems**. However, it will **not be a cure-all**. At the same time, we **need to improve our sanitation systems** to ensure that waste is properly treated and disposed of.

I would like to make three points today.

Specific remarks

I. Raising awareness

First, **raising awareness** is very important. This event today does just that. It brings together governments and other stakeholders to share information and experiences.

Everyone deserves the **dignity. In many corners around the world it may be a basic toilet. Or proper sanitation.**

We must manage our waste in a way that protects both the environment and people. I will **convene an event to launch the decade of water** on the **22nd of March 2018.**

This event is to build support for all water-related SDGs and targets. It will reinforce the importance of cooperation and partnerships towards achieving our shared water goals. The **partnership we see in action today** – between the **Mission of Singapore, UN agencies and the private sector** – is a shining example.

I am confident the **outcomes of this event will feed into the SDG 6 review** at the **High Level Political Forum** in **July.**

II. Taking Action

The second step is to take action.

This afternoon, we will hear a presentation on the **WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme Report**. The overall finding of the report is clear: we have come a long way on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. But the work is far from being done. Implicit in this finding is a call for action.

We must answer this call by meeting the water targets in the **2030 Agenda on time**. We must also be able to **update our water score card by the end of the decade on water for sustainable development** in **2028**.

We need **more commitments** and **more funding** to be dedicated to this issue.

III. More than just a toilet

Third, access to basic toilet facilities has **far-reaching consequences** – it goes **beyond the convenience and dignity of using a toilet.**

The **safety of women**, in particular, when using **outdoor toilet facilities remains a serious concern.** **Three years ago, I was pained by the loss of two young women in India.** They were **brutally killed while searching for a place to relieve themselves.** We can protect women and girls from horrendous assaults by providing them safe access to a toilet. **This does not absolve the perpetrators of their heinous actions.** But **it emphasises how important access to a basic toilet is – it can literally save lives.**

Toilet access, safe drinking water and an environment safe from faecal matter **affect people at a very personal level.** Many of us may take these things for granted. But **roughly one-third** of the world's population does not have that peace of mind.

Likewise, **improper disposal of wastewater creates serious issues downstream.** It leads to **contamination of water supplies, spread of diseases, and destruction of fisheries.** These things, in turn, affect the dynamics and survival of whole communities.

Conclusion

On a brighter note, the **significant challenges around the toilet reveal opportunities**. Human innovation is **turning wastewater into a source of energy** while **protecting our environment and people's health**. Also, dirty water is being made clean through innovative technology – including in Singapore.

Thank you for putting a spotlight on the plight of billions of people around the world and spurring action on toilets and wastewater.

Toilets are important and are an essential element of water and sanitation. A **decent life for all** includes **access to a basic toilet for all**. And **proper wastewater disposal** contributes to a **sustainable planet** .

Thank you.