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## **New Delhi Statement, Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation, 1990**

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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Letter dated 10 October 1990 from the Permanent Representative of  
India to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the New Delhi Statement which was adopted by participants from 115 countries at the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held in New Delhi, India, from 10 to 14 September 1990.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this statement circulated as a document under agenda item 12 (Report of the Economic and Social Council).

(Signed) C. R. Gharekhan  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Annex

NEW DELHI STATEMENT

SOME FOR ALL RATHER THAN MORE FOR SOME

Safe water supplies and environmental sanitation are vital for protecting the environment, improving health and alleviating poverty. Disease, drudgery and millions of deaths every year are directly attributable to lack of these essential services. The poor, especially women and children, are the main victims.

Concerted efforts during the 1980s brought water and sanitation services to hundreds of millions of the world's poorest people. But even this unprecedented progress was not enough. One in three people in the developing world still lack these two most basic requirements for health and dignity.

Every developing country learned its own lessons during the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990). The global community must now more effectively combine these experiences with a renewed commitment to sustainable water and sanitation systems for all. Access to water and sanitation is not simply a technical issue; it is a crucial component of social and economic development. Sustainable and socially acceptable services can be extended by using appropriate technologies, adopting community management and enhancing human resources.

Political commitment is essential and must be accompanied by intensive efforts to raise awareness through communication and mobilization of all sections of society.

The challenge

Entering the 1990s, Governments face formidable challenges. Population growth continues apace. Infrastructure in many cities is stretched to the breaking point. Uncontrolled pollution is putting greater stress on the living environment. Depletion and degradation of water resources are causing the costs of new water supplies to escalate. Without fundamentally new approaches, the broad-scale deprivation will turn into an unmanageable crisis.

Creating the right conditions for accelerated progress will often involve profound institutional, economic and social changes, as well as reallocation of resources and responsibilities at all levels.

To achieve full coverage by the year 2000 using conventional technologies and approaches would require five times the current level of investment. However, there is a realistic two-pronged alternative:

(a) Substantial reduction in costs of services, through increased efficiency and use of low-cost appropriate technologies;

(b) Mobilization of additional funds from existing and new sources, including Governments, donors and consumers.

If costs were halved and financial resources at least doubled, universal coverage could be within range by the end of the century.

#### Guiding principles

For countries taking up the challenge - "Some for all, rather than more for some", the New Delhi Global Consultation recommends four Guiding Principles:

1. Protection of the environment and safeguarding of health through the integrated management of water resources and liquid and solid wastes;
2. Institutional reforms promoting an integrated approach and including changes in procedures, attitudes and behaviour, and the full participation of women at all levels in sector institutions;
3. Community management of services, backed by measures to strengthen local institutions in implementing and sustaining water and sanitation programmes;
4. Sound financial practices, achieved through better management of existing assets, and widespread use of appropriate technologies.

#### Principle No. 1: The environment and health

Safe water and proper means of waste disposal are essential for environmental sustainability and better human health, and must be at the centre of integrated water resources management.

Rapid population growth and accelerating urbanization threaten health and the environment, presenting Governments with daunting challenges in the 1990s. The poor, especially women and children, will continue to be the hardest hit.

Every day, water-related diseases cause the deaths of thousands of children, and untold suffering and loss of working time for millions. Safe water combined with improved hygiene and better nutrition can reduce, and sometimes even eliminate, these diseases.

The dramatic reduction of dracunculiasis (Guinea worm disease) has resulted from the provision of improved water supplies and hygiene education in endemic areas. The target of total eradication by 1995 should be fully supported. Affected countries should accord it high priority in investment programmes.

Toxic and industrial wastes pose increasing dangers to the environment in developing countries. They represent a significant threat to human health through direct contact and the pollution of water and soil. Governments and responsible agencies must take steps to control these health hazards.

Improvements to the household environment can best be achieved through the community's involvement as an equal partner with government and sector agencies. This means building on indigenous knowledge so that policies and programmes are credible and relevant to the beneficiaries. Emphasis must be placed on education, social mobilization and community participation.

Proper drainage and disposal of solid wastes have a major impact on the neighbourhood environment. New solutions are needed which are environmentally appropriate and affordable to the communities they serve and which also conserve water resources and minimize pollution.

Integrated water resources management is necessary to combat increasing water scarcity and pollution. This includes water conservation and reuse, water harvesting and waste management. An appropriate mix of legislation, pricing policies and enforcement measures are essential to optimize water conservation and protection.

#### Principle No. 2: People and institutions

Strong institutions are essential for sustainable development.

They require sound management, motivated people and an enabling environment of appropriate policies, legislation and incentives. Institutional development takes time. The short-term achievement of production targets should not take precedence over the need for capacity building. The overall objective is achieving sustainable facilities which are used effectively by the beneficiaries.

A changing role of Government is envisaged, from that of provider to that of promoter and facilitator. This will enable local public, private and community institutions to deliver better services. Decentralization demands a strong policy and support role from central governments, while local private enterprise can assist in improving the efficiency and expansion of service delivery.

The special role in development of non-governmental organizations and volunteers must be acknowledged and strengthened. Non-governmental organizations are flexible, credible, ready and able to experiment with innovative approaches. Governments should support non-governmental organizations in replicating these approaches, and include them, wherever appropriate, as partners in projects.

Human resources development at all levels, from community members to politicians, is essential to institutional development. Training of professionals, managers, technicians and extension workers builds competence and confidence. Information, education and communication strategies must be integrated within human resources development policies. Women must be trained and guaranteed equal employment opportunities at all levels of staff and management. National professional associations can play an important role in better human resources development.

Education is a key part of the new approach. Schools offer a vast, most receptive audience for hygiene education. Polytechnics and universities already include water and sanitation-related subjects in their curricula, but must be encouraged to respond to this sector's needs for multidisciplinary skills. Sanitary and environmental engineering curricula should incorporate substantial elements of community development, communications, appropriate technology and project management.

#### Principle No. 3: Community management

Community management goes beyond simple participation. It aims to empower and equip communities to own and control their own systems.

Community management is a key to sustaining services for the rural poor and is a viable option for poor urban settlements. Government should support community management through legislation and extension and give it priority in national sector strategies for the 1990s.

Communities should have prominent roles in planning, resource mobilization and all subsequent aspects of development. Within these strategies, gender issues will be all important. Women should be encouraged to play influential roles in both water management and hygiene education. Capacity building is necessary to make community management effective and enable women to play leading roles.

Linkages must be established to ensure that national plans and programmes are responsive to community needs and desires. Methods for evaluating community management have been developed for rural areas. They should now be adopted at the national level and implemented through participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques.

#### Principle No. 4: Finance and technology

Given the number of people unserved and the growing demand, more effective financial strategies must be adopted in the 1990s for the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Current levels of investment in the sector are about \$US 10 billion per year. It is estimated that approximately \$US 50 billion a year would be needed to reach full coverage by the year 2000, using conventional approaches. Such a five-fold increase is not immediately feasible.

New strategies should aim towards two key objectives:

(a) Increased efficiency in the use of available funds;

(b) Mobilization of additional funds from existing and new sources, including Governments, donors and consumers.

Substantially increased effectiveness in the use of financial resources can yield major gains in sustained coverage. This will require changes in the way service agencies operate to make them more cost-effective and responsive to consumer needs and demands. Involving consumers in choice of technology and service levels has proved to have a positive impact on cost recovery and sustainability.

A powerful case can be made for greater government and external agency support. However, economic and social benefits need to be better quantified. Clear sector strategies and action plans increase the likelihood of water and sanitation programmes receiving higher priority in national planning processes. They may also make the sector more attractive for support from external support agencies.

The high debt burden of many developing countries makes it particularly difficult for them to consider loans at market interest rates for all investments in this sector. With this in mind, lending agencies and donors are urged to look favourably on requests for grants or soft loans to support water and sanitation programmes. External support agencies can also help by developing procedures or guidelines which will reduce project preparation and approval time. Support should also be given for the establishment of financial intermediaries to make credit more widely available.

Restructuring the utilization of funds for sector investments and setting user charges are key issues in sector finance. Maximum benefits can be accrued by allocating a higher proportion of funds to affordable and appropriate projects in rural and low-income urban areas, where needs are greatest.

Rehabilitation of defective systems, reductions in wastage and unaccounted for water, recycling and reuse of waste water, and improved operation and maintenance can often be more effective than investment in new services. Choices of technology and levels of service are major factors in determining construction, operation and maintenance costs of new projects. Due attention must be given to operation and maintenance arrangements which will ensure sustainability before investments are made.

Higher budget allocations and recovery of recurrent costs of operation and maintenance to ensure system sustainability are the primary goals to be achieved. Effective cost recovery requires that sector institutions be given autonomy and authority. Further, there must be widespread promotion of the fact that safe water is not a free good. Appropriate charging mechanisms must be adopted, which reflect local socio-cultural and economic conditions. Collection should be decentralized so that revenues are available for management and operation of services.

Public sector institutions frequently default on payments for water supply and waste disposal services. For reasons of financial viability and equity, this practice is unacceptable. Increasing collection efficiency must be part of better financial management.

Research and development in developing countries has resulted in widespread application of much improved handpump and on-site sanitation technologies. The momentum established during the 1980s must be maintained and increased in the next 10 years. Among the priority needs for the 1990s are improved household technologies for protecting water quality from source to mouth and low-cost waste-water disposal systems for low-income urban areas. Exchanges of information and experience among developing countries (South-South co-operation) must be further developed.

#### Follow-up

Implementation of the approaches outlined in this Statement will need to be part of country specific strategies.

Countries and external support agencies are urged to formulate and implement action plans for water and sanitation incorporating the Guiding Principles of the New Delhi Statement. The United Nations Development Programme is invited to take a leading role in this process, in collaboration with other agencies of the United Nations system.

The Water and Sanitation Collaborative Council, created immediately prior to the New Delhi Global Consultation, offers a new global forum for the exchange of information and promotion of the sector.

This New Delhi Statement will be reflected in a document to be presented to the World Summit for Children in late September 1990, along with a statement initiated by the United Nations Children's Fund on behalf of children, which was adopted at the Global Consultation.

The New Delhi Statement will be presented by the Government of India to the forty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly in October 1990.

In addition, it is recommended that this Statement be brought to the attention of the organizers of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil, with a request that it be tabled to emphasize the special importance of water and sanitation in environmental management.

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