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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**KEYNOTE SPEECH AT UN GLOBAL COMPACT EVENT: “CORPORATE
WATER STEWARDSHIP AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA”**

New York, 19 September 2013

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

I am honoured to join you.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and promoting sustainable development will demand the engagement of all sectors of society.

Business has a major role – from embracing corporate social and environmental responsibility to practicing philanthropy; from developing the solutions of the future to helping them find a place in the global marketplace.

Where social environments are fragile, you can and must be central players -- reinforcing respect for human rights and the rule of law; making jobs available to youth; and supporting the provision of basic services such as energy, water and sanitation.

I commend you for choosing water stewardship for your theme.

As the global population grows, so do the pressures on water resources.

Sound and fair water management is clearly an imperative – for business sustainability, for peace within and among nations, for eradicating disease and poverty, and enabling a life of dignity for billions of people around the globe.

The MDG target on improved water sources was met in 2010.

But some 800 million people still lack access to improved drinking water sources, and many more remain without a safe and sustainable water supply.

Pollution from wastewater is expected to worsen due to increasing urbanization, and industrial and agricultural activities.

Today, roughly 80 per cent of global wastewater from human settlements or industrial sources is discharged untreated into oceans, rivers and other water bodies.

Water quality in most major river systems still fails to a lesser or greater degree to meet basic World Health Organization standards.

The sanitation picture is even less encouraging.

More than 2.5 billion people, mostly in rural areas, do not have adequate sanitation -- more than one third of humanity.

Of these, 1.1 billion people practice open defecation.

Nearly 5,000 children under five years of age die every day because of unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation and lack of basic hygiene.

That is why water is prominent in the discussions on the post-2015 UN development agenda.

The Secretary-General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda gave prominence to water.

Their recent report suggests a dedicated goal which encompasses universal access to safe drinking water, with targets that address wastewater and water resources management.

The UN Global Compact proposes goals and targets on water and sanitation and highlights the important role of corporate water stewardship-- as embodied in the CEO Water Mandate.

The Secretary-General's own report "A Life of Dignity for All", which he submitted to the General Assembly ahead of the next week's Special Event on the MDGs, builds on these contributions.

It calls for a single, coherent, and ambitious post-2015 agenda with sustainable development at its core and poverty eradication as its highest priority.

It emphasizes the crucial role of clean water and sanitation, and that they are human rights.

But translating rights into reality needs action and partnership.

That is why the UN General Assembly declared the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation.

And it is why Member States adopted the Sanitation for All resolution in July, declaring 19 November each year as World Toilet Day.

In many countries, 95 per cent or more of the poorest people practice open defecation because they have no alternative or have not been educated about the dangers.

We need to break the taboo around this subject.

By providing clean, safe toilets, we can ensure better health for all, particularly children.

We can make it more comfortable for teenage girls to attend school, and ensure that women and girls do not have to risk sexual assault while attending to basic needs.

Open defecation was a crucial component in the Call to Action on Sanitation that I launched in March this year on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The Call to Action identifies 2025 as our target to end open defecation by providing all people access to sanitation.

In order to achieve universal coverage, our sanitation solutions need to be affordable and achievable.

We know that households, even the poorest, are ready to pay for affordable sanitation.

So, we need your help in developing and spreading innovative low-cost solutions.

I applaud the CEO Water Mandate for promoting the Call to Action, and for its other initiatives, such as its global Water Action Hub.

Through initiatives such as the CEO Water Mandate, more and more companies are embracing the holistic concept of corporate water stewardship.

This means understanding how their business activities reverberate throughout their supply chains and in the communities and watersheds where they and their partners operate.

In the past six years, Mandate member companies have achieved significant results in water efficiency, community access and wastewater management.

Now, by accepting my Call to Action, the Mandate will give more attention to the sanitation challenge.

Companies – in whatever industry – can start by examining sanitation in their own factories and operations, as well as the challenges in the communities in which they and their partners operate.

For example, if your business is labour intensive and townships grow up due to the employment you generate, what is the sanitation situation?

Often settlements are informal and sanitation inadequate or non-existent.

Is this your problem? Are you part of the solution?

I say: “yes”.

The business sector can play a major role on many water related issues

First, by setting and complying with the highest standards.

Second, by supporting action by the UN system and our partners.

I urge you to find out more through the Global Compact and UN Water which coordinates the UN’s work on all water-related issues.

In this International Year of Water Cooperation, let us all commit to work together to address water management and sanitation challenges for the common good – for sustainable development, enhanced security and a life of dignity for all.

Thank you.