



PRESS RELEASE



UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

**UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL APPEALS FOR INTERNATIONAL
ASSISTANCE TO SAVE CHILDREN DYING FROM DISEASES CAUSED BY
UNSAFE DRINKING WATER AND POOR SANITATION**

**GLOBAL WATER SCARCITY WILL IMPACT BOTH LEAST DEVELOPED
AND LANDLOCKED COUNTRIES**

United Nations, 11 April 2005: At the opening of the 13th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Anwarul K. Chowdhury today called for a renewed commitment by the international community to focus attention on the specific needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDC), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements.

“The lack of resources, capacity and technology in these countries highlight the need for increased support and cooperation of the international community in their efforts. We must keep their concerns high on the agenda, if these countries are to become sustainable in their development efforts,” he emphasized.

Mr. Chowdhury reminded the delegates that the Least Developed Countries contributed to more than 2 million people in developing countries, most of them children, dying each year from diseases associated with unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. “Half a billion people are now living in countries, many of them in Least Developed Countries, defined as water-stressed or water-scarce.”

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Referring to acute water shortages in Africa, he said that in 20 years the number of people without access to clean water could double to over 600 million. “This would force the continent into an even greater reliance on food aid,” he warned. “It is predicted that within 25 years, population growth and economic development will lead to nearly one in two people in Africa living in countries facing water scarcity or experience ‘water-stress’,” he added.

Mr. Chowdhury underscored the fact that in sub-Saharan Africa, with the largest concentration of Least Developed Countries, the problem was getting worse. “Already afflicted by periodic droughts, the region will suffer more widespread water shortages as the population grows,” he said.

To mobilize domestic resources for water investment that would benefit both the Least Developed and Small Island countries, he recommended establishment of local, national or regional funding mechanisms, such as national water funds, the African, Caribbean and Pacific-European Union Water Facility, and the African Water Facility. “Microcredit schemes could play an important role in providing finance to households for investment in sanitation facilities,” Mr Chowdhury suggested.

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