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## **New York - 19 November 2013, "We Can't Wait" – Governments, civil society and business should work together to tackle sanitation for women's health; say United Nations organisation, Unilever and WaterAid**

A collaborative approach between governments, civil society and business is essential to getting the Millennium Development Goal sanitation target back on track. This is critical to improve the health and prosperity of women worldwide, says a new report jointly published by the United Nations hosted organisation Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, international development organisation WaterAid and Unilever's leading toilet brand Domestos.

The report, [We Can't Wait](#) ( 4.2MB ), was presented today at a UN event in New York which celebrates recognition of the first official World Toilet Day. The day serves to remind the world that over 2.5 billion people lack access to an adequate toilet, with devastating consequences in particular for the well-being, health, education and empowerment of women and girls worldwide.

The report highlights the stark consequences for women and girls of the lack of access to toilets or use of good hygiene practices. One in three women worldwide risk shame, disease, harassment and even attack because they have nowhere safe to go to the toilet and 526 million women have no choice but to go to the toilet out in the open. Women and girls living without any toilets spend 97 billion hours each year finding a place to go.

This is the first time the three organisations, representing the worlds of business, UN and NGOs, have come together in this way on sanitation. The report brings together real life case studies of people in the developing world, alongside research from a variety of organisations and agencies that examine the impact of a lack of sanitation on women and girls.

In the report, UN Deputy-Secretary General, Jan Eliasson, and Paul Polman, Unilever Chief Executive Officer, declare:

"One person in three lacks access to adequate sanitation. The result is widespread death and diseases – especially among children – and social marginalisation. Women are particularly vulnerable.

"Poor sanitation exposes females to the risk of assault, and when schools cannot provide clean, safe, toilets girls' attendance drops.

"We simply cannot wait. By acting decisively we can now make a positive impact on global health, education, women's safety, social equality and economic growth for generations to come".

The report puts forward a number of recommendations including the following:

- Governments (of both developing and donor countries) make strengthening the sanitation sector and bringing the Millennium Development Goal target on sanitation back on track an immediate and urgent political priority.
- Governments across the world keep their promises and implement the commitments made at national level, regional level (AfricaSan, SACOSAN) and global level (Sanitation and Water for All). Furthermore, they must significantly increase financial resources to the sector, use these resources wisely and ensure that the most marginalised and vulnerable people are targeted.
- The post-2015 development framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals needs to address water, sanitation and hygiene as priority issues, set ambitious targets to achieve universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and gradually reduce and eventually eliminate inequalities in access and use.
- Sanitation should be integrated into education policy supported by sufficient resources and concrete plans to ensure that:

- All schools have adequate sanitation facilities including hand washing facilities and separate toilets for boys and girls with access for students with disabilities.
- Specific provision is made at school for establishing proper menstrual hygiene management facilities.
- Hygiene promotion is featured as an important part of the school curriculum from primary level.
- The role for public private partnerships in addressing the sanitation crisis has been formally recognised. More actors in the private sector must realise the social and business opportunities and invest in social development. More frequent and cross-sector collaboration is essential to achieving real progress.

WaterAid Chief Executive, Barbara Frost, said:

“At the turn of the millennium, world leaders promised to halve the proportion of people living without access to a basic toilet by 2015. At current rates of progress, around half a billion people will have to wait another decade before they get this basic service they were promised. Every hour 70 women and girls die from diseases brought about from a lack of access to sanitation and water. We can and should be doing better – it is basic services we are talking about that can transform lives.”

Jean-Laurent Ingles, Unilever Senior Vice President Household Care said:

“We need a concerted effort that combines the experience, knowledge and resources of both public and private sector organisations to bring safe sanitation to hundreds of millions of people. Domestos has over 90 years of experience in toilet hygiene and germ protection and is committed to working in partnerships to help build a ‘clean, safe toilet for all’. By doing this we aim to grow our business and help to improve the health and wellbeing of 1 billion people around the world.”

Dr. Chris Williams, Executive Director, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council:

“Sanitation and hygiene are motors which drive health, social and economic development around the world. An environment that lacks sanitation and clean water is an environment where achieving other development goals is an impossible dream. The time to act is now.”

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## Note for editors:

### About World Toilet Day

The decision to mark [World Toilet Day on 19 November\(Link opens in a new window\)](#) was aimed to help the UN raise awareness and mobilise action that can save millions of lives. 2.5 billion people lack toilets and poor sanitation is a leading cause of disease and child deaths. Adopting a new resolution, the General Assembly urged UN Member States and relevant stakeholders to encourage behavioural change and the implementation of policies to increase access to sanitation among the poor, along with a call to end the practice of open defecation.

### Domestos on WTD

This World Toilet Day, [Domestos](#) is asking stakeholders and the public to help raise awareness of why we can't wait to improve sanitation by using the #toiletday and #wecantwait hashtags.

### About WaterAid

WaterAid's vision is of a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. The international organisation works in 27 countries across Africa, Asia, Central America and the Pacific Region to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in some of the world's poorest communities. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 17.5 million people with safe water and, since 2004, 12.9 million people with sanitation. For more information, visit [www.wateraid.org](http://www.wateraid.org)([Link opens in a new window](#)), follow [@wateraid on Twitter\(Link opens in a new window\)](#) or visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wateraid](https://www.facebook.com/wateraid)([Link opens in a new window](#)).

### About the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council

[The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council \(WSSCC\)\(Link opens in a new window\)](#) is a global multi-stakeholder partnership and membership organisation that works to save lives and improve livelihoods. It does so by enhancing collaboration among sector agencies and professionals who are working to improve access for the 2.5 billion people without safe sanitation and the 780 million people without clean drinking water. Through its work, WSSCC contributes to the broader goals of poverty eradication, health and environmental improvement, gender equality and long-term social and economic development. WSSCC supports coalitions in around 20 countries, members in more than 160 countries, and a Geneva-based Secretariat hosted by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

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