



# SRI LANKA

*High Level Segment of the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.*

Statement by Mr. Thosapala Hewage, Secretary Ministry of Urban. Development and Water Supply of Sri Lanka

20<sup>th</sup> April 2005, United Nations, New York.

Mr. Chairman,  
t.

Sri Lanka has responded commendably in taking the spirit and objectives of the Millennium Declaration forward and launched a National MDG Campaign to promote broad national ownership and to build stakeholder participation for national action. The response of the Sri Lanka to this international call for action is to ensure placing MDGs at the center of national development; dialogue and setting of national and local priorities, promotion of enabling policies, provision adequate resources and setting goals and targets on the basis of local trends and specific needs. In several focus areas of MDG concerns, Sri Lanka in general records a good national level; performance especially in respect to social indicators such as education and health.

In the water and sanitation sector Sri Lanka had developed a national target to provide access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for all citizens by 2025. The road map for achieving the national objective was developed with innovative implementation strategies which role over from short term to mid-term and long-term work plans. The country has set the target of providing safe drinking water for 85% of the population by 2015 and basic sanitation for 82% by 2015 as mid term target. Sri Lanka has nearly 20 ml. people and 78 percent live in rural areas classifying 24% as poor and 18% as very poor (receiving less than US\$ 4.80 per month). National data revealed that prior to the Tsunami destruction 48% did not have access to safe drinking water while 52% was without access to proper sanitation.

The national strategies on water and sanitation were well focused to address regional discrepancies reflecting inequities of allocation and access to resources. It was well recognized the necessity of localizing the MEGs and designing strategically to support the process both at the level of local leadership and local stakeholders keeping the communities at the center. The Government has formulated the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Policy introducing **"people centered"** and **"demand driven"** implementation mechanism with the objective of creating access for rural communities while implementing urban sector mega water and sanitation projects.

However on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004 was the day of devastation for the nation. Sri Lanka has been shocked by a hitherto unknown natural phenomenon, acknowledged as the largest and most devastating natural catastrophe in the history of the country. The human settlements have taken the brunt of the tsunami. There were more than 30,000 Deaths, over 23,000 injured, 4,698 people missing. Destroyed Houses were 122,000 and more than 1 Million people were displaced. More than 100,000 people became unemployed. Social and economic infrastructure such as schools, health related facilities, roads and railways have been severely destroyed. The damage of Properties & assets were estimated to be in the region of \$ 900 - 950 Million.

In the area of water supply and sanitation, nearly, 50,000 wells have been abandoned and another 12,000 have become unusable due to salt-water intrusion. Large number of toilets and drainage networks were made unusable filled with mud, water and debris. There were 9 main water schemes damaged interrupting water supply in the townships.

The recovery cost to the water and sanitation sector is more than US 200; million. The response to the disaster has now gone beyond the initial emergency phase and efforts are now focusing on rebuilding the tsunami-affected communities, ensuring health care, adequate shelter, water and sanitation.

The catastrophe had forced the country to re-visit the national objectives on water and sanitation. We have to re-formulate the road map to achieve the country's national objective of providing access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation to all *citizens by 2025. A strategic way forward is to bring all stakeholders both at the center and the periphery to develop integrated implementation mechanism while empowering the communities to take over the management and ownership of the development activities. An important dimension of the new strategies is that MDGs will be placed at the center of the planning process.*

The new development strategies in the water, and sanitation sector have focused on the areas of demand responsive approaches, gender mainstreaming, public-private partnership development, capacity building of local authorities and community based organizations and sustainability issues. As the country look forward positively the key challenge in achieving national objectives in the water and sanitation sector is the resource inputs mainly source of capital investment. The provision of basic services to the tsunami affected communities is nothing but alleviating poverty improving the quality of life of the tsunami victims as the majority of affected communities belong to poor segment of the country's population.

The capital investment for the rehabilitation and provision of services to new elements is approximately US\$ 400 million. In order to achieve MDGs, positive response from the donor community is vital to address the issue of the resource constraints in the national efforts of translating the commitment into implementable action programmes in the water and sanitation sector.

Thank you.