



East Asian leaders vow to ramp up investment in sanitation and hygiene

EASan Declaration calls for action to achieve MDG sanitation target

BEPPU CITY, Japan, 1 December 2007 – Ministers and policy makers from East Asia, capping a landmark meeting, pledged to raise investment in sanitation and hygiene and provide strong leadership for action, saying sanitation had a pivotal role to play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A Declaration adopted by consensus by participants at the end of the first-ever East Asia Ministerial Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene (EASan) contains a series of commitments aimed at broad-based, equitable, and sustainable progress – moves that would reverse years of under-investment in and low prioritization of sanitation and hygiene.

“EASan provides us, Cambodia, and the region, with a necessary platform to make progress on sanitation as a common good for everybody,” said Lu Lay Sreng, Cambodia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural Development.

Participants from 14 countries*, among them East Asia’s least developed, pledged to take the necessary steps to meet the MDG target for sanitation in their respective countries. They vowed to increase the level of investment in sanitation and hygiene promotion to benefit, in particular, the poor and marginalized who face the worst conditions and the most limited access to adequate facilities.

The Declaration commits its backers to include women, children and poor families in the planning and roll out of sanitation programs, stressing that the role of individuals, and particularly women, is crucial to realizing sanitation and hygiene gains. It also commits ministers and decision-makers to strive to ensure that schools, places of learning and health care facilities are equipped with sanitation facilities.

Governments have a “crucial” role to play in setting policy and steering public investments, the Declaration states. It commits countries to provide “strong leadership” through ministries responsible for finance and planning to create the necessary environment for effective national sanitation and hygiene programs.

The Declaration acknowledges that sanitation and hygiene are “fundamental to achievement of many other MDGs” and are necessary for the health, well-being, dignity and safety of the population. Conversely, it recognizes the heavy burden of death and disease linked to a lack of sanitation. An infusion of funding in sanitation would not only translate into direct health benefits, but have “significant” economic benefits, it states.

The two-day conference brought more than 135 delegates together in Beppu City, Japan, including ministers and senior government officials. The Conference outcomes will be reported to the Asia Pacific Water Summit, to take place in Beppu City on 3-4 December.

**Focus countries are Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, Philippines and Vietnam. Other participating countries are Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.*

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Information on the conference is available at: <http://wsp.org/easan2007/>



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