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An Agenda for the 2008 G8 Summit in Japan: Asia and the Pacific's Water Distress

World's Leading Authorities Weigh In: Need to Make Water and Sanitation Issues the Region's Priority

Water and sanitation problems still figure desperately low in many of the region's national priorities, with millions still underserved and at great cost to several of the region's national economies. This is the brunt of the message that some of the world's leading authorities on water delivered in Tokyo earlier this week, while attending the 2nd Steering Committee meeting of the 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit. This group of eminent people are inviting the region's political leaders to the 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit (to be held in Beppu, Japan, 3-4 December 2007), making the bid to commit the highest spheres of the region's political arena to discuss these issues together, in a significant event in the lead-up to next year's G8 Summit.

Former Prime Minister of Japan Yoshiro Mori (President, Asia-Pacific Water Forum), who chaired the meeting, stated that, "national governments have been too insensitive to the need to develop their water resource management systems."

Water supply, sanitation, water-related disaster prevention, pollution – all have technical solutions but lack the strong political will required to tackle them. "Water problems can be managed," highlighted Dr. Han Seung-Soo (President of Korea Water Forum / Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Climate Change). And Mr. Saif-ud-Din Soz (Minister of Water Resources of India) to add, "the 1st Asia-Pacific Water Summit can create the political climate needed for the adoption of practical solutions." The water and sanitation challenge requires "concerted efforts by the [region's] stakeholders, including its Governments, its civil societies, and all development partners," Mr. Liqun Jin (Vice President, Asian Development Bank) said. And Mr. Kyosuke Shinozawa (Governor, Japan Bank for International Cooperation) confirmed JBIC's ongoing support for enforced financing of the water sector.

The Asian continent supports 60% of the world's population with only 36% of the world's water resources and despite great strides in economic growth in some countries, the region still accounts for an inordinate proportion of suffering, with some 655 million people still without safe drinking water, 1.9 billion without access to basic water sanitation, and with some 80% of the world's total deaths due to water-related disasters (for the period 2001-2005).

The Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) is working to increase the region's access to improved water supplies and sanitation, protect and restore river basins, and reduce people's vulnerability to water disasters. The APWF champions efforts aimed at boosting investments, building capacity, increasing public outreach and enhancing cooperation in the water sector at the regional level.

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