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Agenda item 53 (a)

**Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21,  
the Programme for the Further Implementation of  
Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on  
Sustainable Development**

**Letter dated 12 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative  
of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation entitled "Hashimoto Action Plan: Compendium of Actions", which was presented at the Fourth World Water Forum held in Mexico City in March 2006 (see annex I), as well as a background paper dated August 2006 on the proposed draft resolution on the International Year of Sanitation 2008, which was circulated by Dr. Uschi Eid, Acting Chair of the Advisory Board, Member of the German Parliament, and former Deputy Minister for Economic Cooperation of Germany, at a briefing for delegations held at the United Nations on 13 September 2006 (see annex II).

I should be most grateful if you could arrange to have the present letter and its annexes circulated at the earliest opportunity as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 53 (a).

*(Signed)* Kenzo Oshima  
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations



**Annex I to the letter dated 12 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**



**Annex II to the letter dated 12 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Background paper dated August 2006 on the proposed draft resolution on the International Year of Sanitation 2008**

**1. Background**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide that the nations of the world should halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Particularly, progress in meeting the sanitation target has been slow and insufficient. Global sanitation coverage rose only 9 per cent from 49 per cent in 1990 to 58 per cent in 2002, leaving some 2.6 billion people — half of the developing world — still living without improved sanitation. Lack of tangible progress in this area may cause a substantial negative impact on achieving not only Goal 7 of the MDGs, sustainable development, but also other critical targets such as poverty reduction and health as a whole.

Certainly more concerted global action on sanitation is urgently needed to properly follow up the MDG target and relevant sections of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In this context, the Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, chaired by the late former Prime Minister of Japan, Ryutaro Hashimoto, put forward specific and concrete policy recommendations on the sanitation issue in its Hashimoto Action Plan, which was produced in March 2006. Among them is the recommendation to urge the United Nations to declare 2008 as International Year of Sanitation, with a view to raising global awareness and galvanizing necessary actions for this vitally important issue.

The year 2008 will constitute a critical juncture for the issue of sanitation and water in general. In 2008, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development is to hold its sixteenth session, whereby a comprehensive review will be conducted of the progress made on the policy decisions of the Commission at its thirteenth session, which squarely addressed those issues. Also in 2008, a world exposition on the water issue is planned to be held in Zaragoza, Spain. Thus, in the lead-up to the Fifth World Water Forum in Turkey in 2009, and along with the ongoing International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015, the timing of the year 2008 is considered to be desirable to provide a strong focus on and impetus to resolving the sanitation issue.

**2. Objective**

The main purpose for establishing the International Year of Sanitation will be twofold: for one thing, as stated above, the campaign of the International Year of Sanitation aims to raise global public awareness at all levels. Particularly, it will be very important to attract the attention of political leaders of the nations and relevant organizations worldwide, with a view to fully mobilizing much needed financial and human resources to improve the situation.

The second goal is to draw a concrete road map with specific steps for each stakeholder to take towards 2008 and beyond. Those stakeholders would include all relevant parties, i.e., international and regional organizations, national governments,

civil society, business, and so forth. It will be significant that each party concerned will have a clear sense and responsibility to accelerate its actions in defined timelines, which will be shared by all and reviewed in future sessions of the General Assembly. In formulating such plans of action, the guidance recommended in the above-mentioned Hashimoto Action Plan will be taken into account:

- National governments and donors should formulate strategic sanitation policies, in terms of a funding mechanism, technical solutions and integrated water resources management
- The regional development banks and United Nations organizations should design capacity-building programmes at regional workshops
- The United Nations regional commissions should organize regional high-level review meetings in 2008
- The United Nations should organize a global sanitation conference towards the end of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015.

### **3. Implementation framework**

As provided in the draft resolution, UN-Water will be invited to play a leading role in coordinating the efforts of related stakeholders, with a view to formulating preliminary proposals for consideration in the General Assembly on possible activities. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is in charge of the Commission on Sustainable Development, will be in a position to closely monitor the progress as to how the MDG targets and commitments of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation are being met.

### **4. Expected schedules ahead**

Shortly after the adoption of the draft resolution, UN-Water and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are invited to organize in early 2007 a preliminary meeting of major stakeholders to discuss potential elements of the road map as provided above, so that such an instrument will be prepared as early as possible. Also, future sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be considered as possible opportunities for interim review of progress.