

Speaking points for H.R.H. the Prince of Orange
Seminar on Practical Approaches to Pro-Poor Water and Sanitation Governance
Stockholm, Tuesday 14 August 2007, 2 p.m.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Among the greatest challenges facing us today are rapid urbanisation and increasing poverty. Half of humanity already live in cities. Projections indicate that by 2030 that figure will rise to two-thirds.

Global poverty is moving to the cities, a process now recognised as the ‘urbanisation of poverty’. Almost 1 billion people – 32% of the world’s urban population – live in slums, most of them in the developing world.

Slum dwellers often lack adequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Water supplies may be unreliable, expensive or contaminated.

Poor sanitation and drainage are crucial factors in the spread of malaria and waterborne diseases.

In such conditions, women and children suffer the most. Women spend long hours fetching and hauling water. Young girls cannot attend school regularly, as their labour is required for fetching and carrying water.

This has serious repercussions on people’s health and well-being. It undermines any investment in health care, education and other programmes that reduce poverty.

The international community must focus more of its efforts on improving the lives of the urban poor if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved.

Pro-poor water and sanitation governance is increasingly being recognised as essential in achieving the internationally agreed goals for water, sanitation and human settlements. We urgently need to move from debate to concrete actions on the ground that ensure adequate water and sanitation services for the poor.

The convenors of today’s session have set three challenging objectives:

- assess challenges and opportunities for providing water and sanitation services to the poor;
- share the experiences and lessons of past and ongoing initiatives for pro-poor water and sanitation governance;
- explore practical steps and workable strategies for achieving pro-poor water and sanitation governance.

By meeting these objectives, we can take a step forward in facing the enormous challenges in the field of water and sanitation. I look forward to an interesting discussion with active input from all participants.

Let's get to work!