

Joint statement on access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and freshwater ecosystem conservation: WWF, WaterAid and several of our corporate partners.

We call for a dedicated water and sanitation goal within the United Nation’s Sustainable Development framework and a holistic programme of action that recognises the interdependencies of WASH and freshwater ecosystems.

2015 is set to be a crucial year for the future of the world’s freshwater sources. As the effects of climate change become more prevalent, the resilience and reliability of the world’s freshwater is at risk. This September, the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be finalised and the outcome will determine how the world’s governments approach two of our most critical challenges: access to safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and freshwater ecosystem conservation.

Although progress has been made on drinking water access since 2000, when the United Nations agreed global development goals (the ‘Millennium Development Goals’ [MDGs]), there is still a long way to go. At present, at least 748 million people lack access to safe drinking water. Over the same period, progress on sanitation has been slow – 2.5 billion people do not have access to adequate toilets and sanitation facilities, and, of those, 1.1 billion people still practise open defecation (WHO/UNICEF 2014). Hygiene was ignored completely in the MDGs.

In parallel, our freshwater ecosystems are in rapid decline due to overuse, pollution and the effects of climate change. WWF’s Living Planet Index, a measure of the state of populations of freshwater species, has decreased by 76% since 1970 (WWF, 2014).

In January 2015, the World Economic Forum (WEF) published its Global Risk Report, which ranks water crises first among the global risks of highest concern for global growth because of the systemic importance of water for global economic activity (WEF, 2015). The drivers of these economic risks are the same as those for the decline in freshwater species: poor management of the rivers, lakes and aquifers which supply our water. To survive and thrive, many communities depend on access to the services these wetlands, rivers, lakes and aquifers provide: clean drinking water, flood and drought control, water for agriculture, water purification, fisheries, and numerous other services. If freshwater systems are not well managed, their biodiversity declines and they cannot continue to provide these services. This disproportionately affects poorer communities.

In short, a lack of access to and poor management of freshwater resources affects communities, ecosystems and business.

WASH development efforts and freshwater conservation reinforce each other and depend on each other to succeed. Well planned sanitation programmes ensure wastewater is treated and disposed of properly, which protects freshwater and coastal ecosystems downstream, as well as safeguarding the local communities' health. Freshwater conservation measures ensure a continued supply of good quality water that communities can access.

Prioritising the integration of WASH and freshwater conservation addresses serious threats to the vitality of global communities and our shared prosperity. Without WASH services communities are subject to devastating health impacts, such as increased diarrhoeal diseases that claim the lives of 1,400 children every day. Nearly one fifth of the world's population – about 1.2 billion people – are currently residing in regions where water is now physically scarce, which will rise to two thirds of the world's population by 2025 (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2007). We need to ensure that water withdrawals are sustainable, to maintain water supply for people whilst protecting our freshwater ecosystems.

As the UN finalises goals and targets for the global SDGs, we call for UN member states to ensure that these issues are addressed by the inclusion of a dedicated water and sanitation goal. We call on member states to ensure ambitious targets for universal access to WASH and conservation of freshwater ecosystems are explicitly represented in the final framework. Furthermore, we call on member states to commit to a holistic programme of action on water and sanitation, and to recognise the interdependencies between the proposed targets of the Open Working Group. Without this, we risk undermining any chance to make progress throughout the rest of the framework.



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Annex

The current proposal of the Open Working Group for a goal on water and sanitation includes the following targets:

- 6.1** By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- 6.2** By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
- 6.3** By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater, and increasing recycling and safe reuse by x% globally.
- 6.4** By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity, and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
- 6.5** By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through trans-boundary cooperation as appropriate.
- 6.6** By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.
 - 6.a** By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.
 - 6.b** Support and strengthen the participation of local communities for improving water and sanitation management.

Reference documents

1 WHO UNICEF (2014) Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation

<http://www.wssinfo.org/>

2 World Economic Forum (2015) *Global Risks report* <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-risks-report-2015>

3 Joint Statement

http://programme2013.worldwaterweek.org/sites/default/files/wash_joint_statementearthday.pdf

4 UNDP (2010) http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/water-governance/undp-goal-wash-programme-volume-2/goal-wash-nepal-country-sector-assessment-english/UNDP_UNDP001330_GoALWaSHVol2_MECH_Revised_081810_Nepal_hi.pdf

5 WWF (2014) file:///C:/Users/cbramley/Downloads/wwf_lpr2014_low_res.pdf