

**ELIMINATING GLOBAL POVERTY MEANS PROVIDING SANITATION AND
WATER FOR ALL: THE PATHWAY TO ACHIEVING SDG 6**

**THE HONOURABLE KEVIN RUDD
26TH PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA**

**CHAIR, GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON SANITATION AND WATER FOR ALL
PRESIDENT, ASIA SOCIETY POLICY INSTITUTE**

**MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SANITATION CONVENTION, NEW DELHI
SATURDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2018**

Thank you very much Minister Bharti. And Arun Jaitley, my friend, colleague and Finance Minister India—it's good to see you here today. Along with other distinguished ministers and guests from around the world.

I think all of us are here from around the world for one core reason: if we are concerned about lifting the world's population out of poverty, we cannot do that in the absence of solving the world's problem on safe drinking water and sanitation for all. It is the fundamental precondition. Others are important. This is essential.

I've come here to Delhi today for a number of other reasons as well. The first is I'm a great admirer of the Mahatma. Those of us who see ourselves as global citizens see him as so much a symbol of what we hope for. For our international guests here today, it may be worth reflecting for just a moment on what Mahatma Gandhi has had to say specifically about sanitation over the years.

We know him as the father of India's independence. We know him as the author of non-violent political resistance around the world. But the passion which he had for sanitation and cleanliness and hygiene in India's rural villages is right up there as well. Gandhi said "sanitation is more important than political independence".¹ Imagine writing that in 1947.

Gandhi also wrote, reflecting on his observations of the sacred River Ganges in 1919, in *Young India*, the English weekly which he edited at the time, "I had gone there [to the Ganges] full of hope and reverence but while I realised the grandeur of holy Ganga and the holier Himalayas, I saw little to inspire me in what man was doing to this holy place."

¹ All Gandhi quotes from: <https://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/10/01/5-things-mahatma-gandhi-said-about-sanitation/>

"To my great grief," he said, "I discovered insanitation, both moral and physical...There is defilement of the mighty stream [the River Ganges] even in the name of religion... Thoughtless ignorant men and women use for natural functions the sacred banks of the river where they are supposed to sit in quiet contemplation and find God. They violate religion, science and the laws of sanitation."

In May 1925, in an edition of *Navajivan*, a weekly newspaper that Gandhi edited from 1919, he wrote too about the importance of keeping lavatories clean: "The cause of many of our diseases is the condition of our lavatories and our bad habit of disposing of excreta anywhere and everywhere. I, therefore, believe in the absolute necessity of a clean place for answering the call of nature and clean articles for use at the time."

In 1937, Gandhi received a letter from a villager living in Birbhum, a district in India's eastern state of West Bengal. The letter writer asked Gandhi how he perceived an "ideal village" and what problems he thought plagued the villages of India. Gandhi's response, in a 1937 edition of "Harijan," another weekly publication, he had begun editing was: "An ideal village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation...The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sanitation."

We're here today to discuss political leadership. I find Gandhi's leadership on these questions remarkable. Unique. There he is, with the great challenges of the time, getting rid of the British and cleaning up India, both noble causes in themselves, and doing it at the same time. Quite remarkable.

Mahatma Gandhi, for all of us, is seen as a great Indian nationalist. But as His Excellency the President of India reminded us this morning, he's also seen as a great Indian internationalist—a person for whom the world was also part of his conscience. And I think it would cause the Mahatma to smile today at the idea of a global Jan Andolan, or People's Movement, on global sanitation in honour of the memory of the Mahatma himself.

Another reason I'm here in Delhi is to honour not just the Mahatma, but to honour the contribution of this Government of India, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal Number 6. Swachh Bharat was launched, as Arun Jaitley just reminded us, four years ago. Just four years ago, at the Red Fort in Delhi, as a statement to the people of India. Modi said at the time "it takes time to change a mindset". It's a difficult task. And he said "but we've got five years". Well, whoever invented the logo for Swachh Bharat—the glasses of Mahatma Gandhi staring at you down the ages, seeing whether you're going to implement Swachh Bharat, whether you're going to clean up India—this is a vision for the ages, handed also to those of us charged with that responsibility today.

And the result, as Finance Minister Jaitley just reminded us, 86 million toilets have been built in India since October of 2014. 90 per cent of the population now have access to a toilet compared to less than 40 per cent back in 2014. And 419 districts in this country are now classified as open defecation free. It's estimated that the Swachh Bharat mission will help avert more than 300,000 deaths caused by diarrhoea, and protein energy malnutrition, between 2014 and when the program draws to its conclusion in October of 2019. And further, unsafe sanitation caused an estimated 199 million cases of diarrhoea annually before the start of Swachh Bharat in 2014. These figures are now coming down.

But as the Finance Minister also reminded us this morning, none of this happens for free. It costs. It costs budget, and that's where national political leadership comes in. It also requires us to deploy innovative sources of financing. Swachh Bharat has cost thus far some US \$30 billion. There's a message in that for all of us.

Friends, there's a further reason I'm in Delhi this morning: I have a deep affection for this country. I've been here to India many times before as a Prime Minister, a Foreign Minister, and simply as a global citizen. My wife and I are patrons of an Indian NGO called Barefoot College, founded by Bunker Roy back in 1972. It started in the village of Tilonia in Rajasthan. It too uses women to give its mission effect. Village grandmas. What does it do? It trains village grandmas to provide light and power through remote, simple solar technologies. Thus far it has done so for thousands of villages across India and now for more than 500,000 people across the world. This is a great demonstration of a community-up program led by local women, and empowering women to do so across the world. Perhaps there's a parallel between the "Solar Mamas" program, and the role of the women and grandmothers and mothers of the villagers of rural India today in delivering Swachh Bharat.

So in what capacity and I here today? I'm here as the Global Chairman of the Global Partnership on Sanitation and Water for All. This is an important global partnership. It is about what we do across the world to demonstrate that we can make a difference to countries across the world.

The global partnership includes: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine National Authority, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, The Gambia, Timor Leste, Togo, Uganda, Uruguay, Viêt Nam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

We are a global family. If I read that list to the Mahatma, if he was alive today, he would see this as his mission today, reflected in the fact that our Sanitation and Water for All Global Partnership embraces the sanitation and finance ministers of all these countries around the world. We're also supported by great development partners in the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the Gates Foundation and others. And more than 100 civil society partners around the world as well.

Our mission is simple, but it is hard: to turn Sustainable Development Goal 6 into reality. We can talk about it. We can think about it. We can have lots of conferences at the United Nations about it. But unless we make it work, then our peoples will continue to suffer. Sustainable Development Goal number 6 is about sanitation and water for all. And our challenge through the Global Partnership on Sanitation and Water for All is to turn this—one of the critical Sustainable Development Goals agreed to at the UN Development Summit of 2015—into reality. Which is why India is so critical.

But I'm here also to bring you good news. So many of our member states have seen great progress. In our recent ministerial meetings in Stockholm and elsewhere, for example, I've met with the Sanitation and Water Minister of Ghana, Joseph Adda, who was about six months into his job. After that he launched a national program with his minister for sanitation in Ghana. This was launched with great national acclaim. His mission statement, he said, was to "make Ghana the India of Africa". So India is already having an effect around the world. People are watching closely what you're doing.

But it's not just in Ghana. In Afghanistan, we now have developed separate budget lines for sanitation after the Afghan Finance Minister participated in our SWA High-level Meeting of Finance Ministers at the World Bank last year. The budget line helps them to clearly identify the resources necessary to turn this into reality. They've also developed a citizen's charter that includes WASH. It's now a National Priority Programme. We see the same in Burkina Faso. The ministers responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene and finance jointly created a single national platform for centralising WASH processes and for providing innovative finance.

The same also in Ethiopia, where we see the government under the "One WASH" program gathering momentum across the country. The One WASH Program was revised in 2012 to include the Ministry of Finance as a key player in the sector. I simply mention these countries as a number among many where progress is being achieved, and taking inspiration from this great Indian program as well, Swachh Bharat.

The critical question we're asked to address in this conference is: how do you turn vision into reality? Well, we have a global vision. That's SDG 6. We all agreed to it and signed

on the bottom line. India has had its vision, announced on the ramparts of the Red Fort just four years ago. So what are the essential preconditions to making it work?

1. National political leadership—as we've seen through Prime Minister Modi's leadership. As we've seen through many countries represented here today. But we need more to bring about fundamental behavioural change. You know it never used to be fashionable to talk about sanitation politically in our countries. I've got something to tell you: I come from a developed country, but I grew up in a rural part of Australia where we had no inside toilet. And that was only 50 or so years ago. Talking about these things publicly and doing things about them publicly is one and the same thing. National political leadership: being able to talk about this effectively as a national political priority.
2. Finance, finance and finance. It's estimated that to bring about the implementation of SDG 6 will require an annual additional global expenditure of US \$114 billion per year. At present we are expending in these key countries some US \$35 billion each year. There is a gap to be made up through national budgetary allocations, but also innovative sources of finance from the social, community and private sectors, at a local, regional, state and national level. And in projects at scale, using international finance as well. Finance must also be made sustainable so that these investments in sanitation can be kept over time, so they're not simply left as white elephants. Finance, finance and finance.
3. We must also monitor our success, to make sure that our vision, through national political leadership, financed by public or private or community sources, is being measured on the ground. Again, this theme was addressed effectively by His Excellency the President of India this morning.

One final remark I would make today is the central importance of all the above for women. Unless we deal with this, as Arun Jaitley has just reminded us, we are failing our sisters across the world—fundamentally, comprehensively, and in so many different ways. On water alone, if we do have access to clean drinking water, there are now nearly 300 million people, almost all women, carrying water for most of the day. Which means young girls are not going to school. Or having gone to school, they have no opportunity to work because they're still acting as beasts of burden.

Secondly, if we don't provide adequate sanitation, women run the risk of not just it being inconvenient to go outside at night, but of being physically attacked or sexually assaulted or raped. This is a problem across the world. This is essential - to look after, to support and act in solidarity with our sisters across the world.

But there is another reason as well for women—a subject that in many cultures is often difficult to address. But I've done so in Addis Ababa from the public podium and I'll do it here as well. Its menstrual hygiene. Unless we deal with the problem of providing adequate sanitation facilities for our sisters and for young girls across the world, this will remain a massive problem. A recent World Health Organisation survey here in India said that 43 per cent of Indian women did not have access to sanitary essentials at the beginning of periods. 67 percent women have had to borrow a sanitary essential from a friend, colleague or family member. My brothers here today—we've got to become comfortable talking about these things in our politics and our communities because our sisters depend on us to do so. If it affected us as personally and directly as men across the world, it would have been fixed a couple of hundred years ago.

I conclude my remarks with this. We are here today to honour the great memory of Mahatma Gandhi. We're here today also to honour the singular contribution of Narendra Modi who has actually has made this happen. He stood up, announced it, through Arun Jaitley funded it—and through this great organization, Swachh Bharat, made it happen. And we're here today to resolve together to make a fundamental difference in implementing SDG 6 around the world.

On behalf of the Global Partnership on Sanitation and Water for All, we'll meet again in Costa Rica next year. We'll meet as Sector Ministers and separately later as Finance Ministers. My invitation, Arun, through you and to the Indian Government, is to join us as a full member of Sanitation and Water for All. We need your leadership, we need your encouragement, and we need your voice. And we need your membership. So on behalf of the international community, welcome on board India. You have done so much to help us through the visionary inspiration of this Swachh Bharat program.

###