

Statement by Sector Minister, Minister Jabulile Mashwama, Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, Swaziland

President Kim, Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Damon, honourable ministers, ladies and gentlemen.

Drinking water, sanitation and hygiene are essential to building healthy lives and strong economies.

Over the past day and a half, the Sanitation and Water for All global partnership gathered together 38 ministers responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene. Other participants included civil society, development partners and the private sector. In total, 53 countries were represented.

Together they addressed the challenges of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, exchanged learning and solutions, and agreed concrete actions for developing and implementing robust national programs, suitable for the investment of public funds as well as for domestic and international commercial finance. This Sector Ministers' Meeting was convened by UNICEF, on behalf of the SWA partnership, and hosted by the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).

Ministers' discussions were anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals: achieving safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene for all, leaving no one behind.

The SDG targets are indeed ambitious and go beyond the basic level of service associated with the MDGs. But, they are achievable.

The focus should be on leaving no one behind and moving everyone immediately to at least a basic level of service, with quality – what we called “Basic Plus”. This should be the priority, while we also move on to the higher benchmark of the safely managed services proposed in the SDGs.

We also considered no regrets, low-cost actions to improve the efficiency of the sector. We looked at four aspects of efficiency: operational, capital, financial and pricing efficiencies.

We heard from China and India on their success in rapidly increasing access to rural sanitation, at scale. We recognized their sustained political leadership, emphasis on local level engagement and we noted the importance of holding people accountable for results.

We engaged in three ministerial dialogues on the following themes:

- Achieving safely managed sanitation whilst leaving no one behind: we have made progress in getting communities open-defecation free...we need to scale this up and we agreed the need for there to be long-term support to communities maintain this status and to move up the sanitation ladder towards the SDGs;
- Maintaining progress in the face of risks and vulnerabilities, including climate change and disasters: we recognized the importance of setting up robust capacity and systems for preparedness and response with clear lines of accountability (many countries have already done this), financing these in innovative ways, bridging the gap between humanitarian response and recovery; and,

- Progressing towards universality whilst addressing financial sustainability: we'll expand on that discussion during this meeting.

The Ministerial Dialogues provided an opportunity for recognizing shared challenges, learning from others' experience and considering how they could be applied in our own national contexts.

This is what we, the sector ministers, decided.

We will improve the efficiency of the sector and make it suitable for investment. We will put in place the key Building Blocks for an effective sector that delivers results. We will use our public resources to support the poorest and most vulnerable and to leverage investment from other sources, especially domestic private capital. We will use support from development partners to build strong institutions and capacity. We welcomed the willingness of partners from civil society and the private sector to support government-led national programmes in line with the SWA Collaborative Behaviours.

In this way, our sector will make a contribution to the overall economic development of our countries as well as supporting key outcomes in health, education and gender equality. And we will make sure that the limited public resources allocated to the sector are well used.

We know that we have a strong investment case. Research shows that for every dollar spent on water and sanitation, the return on investment is around four dollars. We would like to talk with you about how we could realize this investment in each of the countries represented here.