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**Opening Speech Mr. Thomas Stelzer
The IYS Follow-up Conference
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Your Imperial Highness Crown Prince of Japan, representatives of the Japanese government, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be here representing the United Nations and the UN family. In the presence of the Crown Prince of Japan, Honorary President of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, I would like to sincerely thank the Government of Japan and the co-organizers of this event, the Asian Development Bank and United Nations University, for organizing this important dialogue and for inviting me to join your discussions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Your Imperial Highness Crown Prince of Japan for your dedicated engagement with water issues globally. Your keynote lectures in fora such as the Zaragoza Expo and 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul bring a dynamic perspective to these deliberations. On behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, I would like to ask for your continued guidance and advice, not only as Honorary President of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, but also to help the world achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In 2006, in response to the urging of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB), the United Nations General Assembly designated 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation (IYS). The overall objective of the Year was to build public awareness and political will to provide basic sanitation for the 2.6 billion people worldwide who lack access to a decent, safe and clean place to defecate.

It is beyond dispute that access to sanitation is vital to ensuring health, dignity and sustainable social and economic development for the world's poorest citizens. This is why governments agreed on the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target to "halve, by 2015, the proportion of the world's population without sustainable access to basic sanitation." Sadly, however, at current rates of progress this target will not be met in all regions of the world.

The IYS had sought to position the issue of sanitation more prominently on the global agenda by raising the issue's profile with politicians, civil society, the media and the general public.

Throughout the year, Member States, supported by agencies of the United Nations System, focused on the need to take immediate, effective action in order to accelerate progress and put the global community on track to meet the MDG target on sanitation.

Was the IYS a success? Was public awareness created and political will built? I think we can all agree that, by these and other criteria, the year was indeed an inspiring success. Here are a few of the achievements of the IYS.

A world record for hand-washing with soap was set. Governments allocated more funding to sanitation. Parliaments committed to incorporating sanitation as a basic human right in national constitutions. Coordinating bodies for sanitation were established. Policies and action plans on sanitation were signed. Soap packaging in some countries was redesigned to include sanitation messages. Community approaches to sanitation were integrated into national planning.

And perhaps most critically a great many more people from the general public to politicians, celebrities and decision makers around the world finally overcame their traditional reticence about sanitation and talked openly about toilets and decent, clean and safe defecation. This in itself is a critical achievement for as long as we refuse to talk openly about this issue - both amid the general public and at the highest political levels - we will not make the progress needed.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs has recently launched an online information clearinghouse which documents local, regional, and global IYS events, provides extensive data and links to You-Tube videos on sanitation education. I encourage all of you to visit and contribute to this interactive website which can be found by searching "IYS, 2008 and beyond."

In addition, sanitation conferences were organized in seven regions with nearly ninety countries involved. These conferences resulted in declarations and commitments on the part of governments to act. The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council created a Global Sanitation Fund to pool resources for sanitation financing. And in this region, the Asian Development Bank released their Sanitation Strategy with a commitment to allocate 20% of the Water Financing Programme funds to sanitation.

We urgently need more financing to expand basic sanitation coverage. Investments in sanitation make good economic sense. A recent study released by the World Bank estimated that Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam lose approximately 9 billion annually due to a poor sanitation coverage. Poor sanitation negatively impacts sectors such as health, tourism, water supply, and environment. We hear a lot about the green economy and green jobs these days. Countries need to look no further than expanding basic sanitation coverage as a way to green their economies!

So much has been accomplished, and yet we remain off-track to meet the MDG target for sanitation. It is therefore of great importance that we maintain the momentum generated by the IYS and ensure that governments, the UN family and NGOs deliver on their commitments to act.

Agencies of the United Nations system, coordinated by the Chief Executives Board and UN-Water, and advised by UNSGAB, are supporting Member States to put into practice on the ground the promises made during the IYS Regional Sanitation Conferences. Monitoring mechanisms are in place and we are already seeing progress. This very week, in Manila, countries are gathering for the Second East-Asia Ministerial Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene to review progress, exchange lessons and renew pledges to expand sanitation coverage in this region.

And in September, countries will gather in New York for the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Summit, which will take stock of progress made towards achieving the MDGs, identify gaps, build further political commitment and engage a broader range of stakeholders in order to advance towards the 2015 milestones and beyond.

The MDG sanitation target focuses on basic sanitation. But it is also time to consider the other side of sanitation – the collection, treatment and reuse of wastewater which is an increasingly urgent issue globally. I am happy to see the UN family galvanizing around this issue, with UNSGAB reflecting wastewater in their Hashimoto Action Plan II, and UN-Water having created a task force to coordinate all its work on sanitation.

In my role as the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Interagency Affairs and Secretary of the Chief Executives Board, I support operations for the Secretariats of both UN-Water and UNSGAB. I have advised both these mechanisms to seek additional ways to

complement and reinforce each other's work, particularly as the Chairmanship of UN-Water rotates to UNU, the co-organizer of this IYS event, and as UNSGAB marks the completion of its Hashimoto Action Plan II. For my part, I assure you that the United Nations will demonstrate the necessary leadership on sanitation issues, with the support of UN-Water and UNSGAB, so as to assist Member States in meeting their sanitation goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, this session will afford an opportunity to review internationally agreed sanitation goals and could help set us on the right course for achieving the MDG targets for water and sanitation. I look forward to illuminating discussions and to gaining new wisdom on sanitation. Thank you for inviting me here and on behalf of the Secretary-General, please accept our very best wishes for a successful meeting.

Thank you.