

Official launch of the International Year of Sanitation (IYS) 2008
New York, 21 November 2007

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) welcomes the launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 through the UN in New York

The urgency for worldwide action in the sanitation sector is obvious considering the 2.6 billion people around the world lacking access to basic sanitation and the 2.2 million annual deaths, mostly children under the age of 5, caused mainly by sanitation-related diseases and poor hygienic conditions. The impact on women and girls is especially serious, as sanitation is a big issue for the dignity of women and their overall quality of life. The actual and opportunity costs of continued neglect of the sanitation sector in economic development, agricultural production, health, education, environmental degradation, livelihoods and poverty reduction terms are huge.

Although it is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to halve the proportion of people without access to adequate sanitation by 2015, the Joint Monitoring Programme of WHO/UNICEF and the UNDP Human Development Report (2006) have shown that the progress towards meeting the MDG sanitation target is much too slow. The reasons for this are numerous. A mayor issue is the fact that sanitation rarely benefits from the political attention given to other topics. Political will has been sorely lacking when it comes to placing sanitation high on the international development agenda.

Mobilisation of necessary resources and political will at all levels – in developed and developing countries alike - requires a major paradigm shift, integrating sanitation and waste control in water resources management, moving from 'disposal' to recycling and reuse, re-assessing the sustainability of conventional approaches, and accelerating and expanding investment in new technologies that can be up-scaled in urban and rural settlements. In addition to the enormous investment required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, with many developing countries falling behind, renewal of existing infrastructure and operation and maintenance aspects of sanitation and waste water management will need to be taken into account.

Motivated by the IYS 2008, a coalition of more than 50 multi and bilateral organisations, NGOs, businesses, governmental and research institutions active in the field of sustainable sanitation formed the "Sustainable Sanitation Alliance" and drew up a "joint road map for the promotion of sustainable sanitation within the International Year of Sanitation (IYS) 2008". SuSanA is open to others who want to join and be active in the promotion of sustainable sanitation systems and provides space for informed discussion and advocacy regarding the full range of sanitation and wastewater treatment and recycling options. SuSanA's growing number of partners are united in calling for much greater attention to be paid to social and environmental as well as economic sustainability, with added urgency in relation to the needs of developing countries, especially those most affected by increasing water stress and climate vulnerability.

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance looks forward to 2008 as a breakthrough year in partnership with the United Nations and other stakeholders to ensure that the International Year of Sanitation 2008 achieves its objectives, creating a platform for significant and sustained effort in future years.

For further information, please contact info@sustainable-sanitation-alliance.org

links: joint roadmap for the promotion of sustainable sanitation in the IYS 2008
SuSanA statement: 'towards more sustainable sanitation solutions'

website: www.sustainable-sanitation-alliance.org