

Keynote Speech	UNSGAB + 5 Online Conference	Friday, 12 February @10a.m. CET
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Scenario

ED is called to give a 6-minute keynote speech at the 5th anniversary of the close of the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. (UNSGAB) GWOPA was established on the recommendation of the UNSGAB.

His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands (former Chair of UNSGAB) and Dr. Uschi Eid, President of the German-Africa Foundation (former Vice-chair and Chair of UNSGAB) who are Chair and Vice Chair of the UNSGAB+5 Online Conference will be in attendance.

(PROTOCOL)

Your Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands

Your Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan

Honourable Ministers, fellow UN Principals, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour to join you today as we mark this important anniversary – five years since the completion and close of the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation.

I am very pleased to join this conference to mark our support to the Legacy of the UNSGAB – A legacy that has been so well articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

I congratulate the organizers – the Friends of UNSGAB, UNDESA and the UN Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), together with the hosts of this event - the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) and High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP), for enabling this discussion. I am confident that the discussions today will contribute to the renewal of the global framework of action on water and sanitation created by UNSGAB as a means to support the Water Action Decade in accelerating efforts towards achieving SDG6 of ensuring access to water and sanitation for all.

As you know, the recommendations of UNSGAB continue to inspire successful efforts in the United Nations to increase sustainable access to water and sanitation for all. UN-Habitat's Global Water Operators programme is a specific example of this lasting impact and legacy.

You may recall that the first Hashimoto Action Plan highlighted the effectiveness of peer-support between water and sanitation utilities. It recommended that the practice be scaled-up to address the lack of progress on water and sanitation.

As a result, UN-Habitat established the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance in 2009 at the request of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The Water Operators' Partnerships practice has truly stood the test of time. Hundreds of successful partnerships have helped build the capacity of utility

workers to do their jobs better. In turn, operators have improved the services they provide to millions of people in their cities and communities.

As an Alliance, GWOPA continues to grow and evolve. More and more organisations acknowledge and invest in solidarity-based action to address our water and sanitation-related challenges. Today, almost 500 members are active in the network, and WOPs are receiving more financial support than ever before. With the strong support of the Government of Germany, GWOPA's host at the UN Campus in Bonn, the European Commission and the Government of the Netherlands, more utilities than ever are improving their operations with the help of their peers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite considerable progress, the enduring water and sanitation challenges in the world are more critical than ever.

Urbanisation continues to accelerate, putting increasing pressure on our cities to provide basic public services. There are still more than a billion people worldwide living in slums and informal settlements. More than two billion people do not have adequate access to water and some 4.2 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services. The current Covid 19 pandemic has made it even more urgent to tackle the lack of these services, which are absolutely essential to prevent the spread of infection, now and in the future.

In this context, I would like to share four key messages with you today:

1. We must act quickly to address the lack of service coverage among the urban poor. It is crucial that we work **together** to address the WASH needs of slum dwellers and other vulnerable populations.
2. We need strong water and sanitation operators now more than ever. The current crisis has shown that peer-to-peer exchanges through Water Operator Partnerships can fill critical gaps in capacity and lead to more finance being available for basic services for all.
3. We need to address the crisis of poor water quality in our rivers and watersheds, and invest in better wastewater management now, backed by disaggregated data that unmask inequalities in urban areas.
4. We echo calls for a body of eminent peoples with diverse voices to carry on the UNSGAB legacy in raising up the political profile of water and sanitation to accelerate action towards the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance is a clear testimony of the relevance and legacy of UNSGAB. The Alliance has demonstrated the importance of a broad-based and multilateral partnerships for effective action in our globalised world. Let us consider what bold new steps we can take to respond to these challenges together.

When national and local governments, service providers and other stakeholders work in a coordinated and integrated manner, we can fully

leverage the potential that urbanisation and sustainable water and sanitation services holds for a better life for all.

Thank you.

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