



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**\*\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*\*\***

**International Year of Sanitation 2008 launched for the Asia-Pacific region**

From the small island States in the Pacific Ocean to the countries of the Himalayan plateau, Asia-Pacific leaders committed themselves to tackle the region's severe sanitation crisis.

Although one out of five people in the region do not have access to safe drinking water, half of the population in the Asia-Pacific region, equating to a staggering 1.6 billion people, are still without adequate sanitation.

At the Regional Launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008, His Royal Highness Prince Willem Alexander of The Netherlands, Chairperson of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, stressed that "access to basic sanitation and water supply, and the practice of hygienic behaviors, are all necessary for the health and well being of the population and are necessary for people to live in dignity and safety".

Meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of reducing by half the number of people without basic sanitation by the year 2015 would require providing sanitation services to 100 million people every year. Participants to the Asia-Pacific Water Summit called upon Governments to take the necessary steps to achieve the MDG target for sanitation, including improving the level of investment in sanitation and hygiene promotion while maintaining adequate investments in domestic water supply. The Government of Japan was specifically requested to include sanitation on the agenda of the 2008 Hokkaido Toyako G8 Summit.

In the closing ceremony of the Summit, the Chair of the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, highlighted the political commitments made during the Summit towards improving the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people in the Asia-Pacific region through providing better access to safe water and adequate sanitation.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit, held 3-4 December 2007, in Beppu, Japan, was attended by ten Heads of State and Government, 31 Ministers, and representatives from over 36 Asia-Pacific countries, in a bid to mobilize the political will and commitment required to put water higher up in the region's national agendas. In addition to Mr. Mori (Chair), H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President, Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang Dorji, Prime Minister and Minister for Works and Human



Resettlement, H.E. Mr. Anote Tong, President, Republic of Kiribati, Hon. Mr. Lim Kean Hor, Minister of Water Resources and Meteorology and H.E. Hu Siyi, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Water Resources served as Vice-Chairs of the Summit. The Summit's opening ceremony was attended by 880 people, including 140 invited Summit participants (72 from abroad) and attracted 260 member of the press (40 from abroad).

In parallel to the Summit, an Open Event forum held in Beppu attracted an additional 5000 people in and around the B-Con Plaza, with a broad participation from civil society stakeholders, multilateral organizations, and many others.

The Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) is working to increase the region's access to improved water supplies and sanitation, protect and restore river basins, and reduce people's vulnerability to water-related disasters. The APWF champions efforts aimed at boosting investments, building capacity, increasing public outreach and enhancing cooperation in the water sector at the regional level.

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