



SANITATION & WATER ACTION
NETWORK CANADA
RESEAU D'ACTION POUR
L'ASSAINISSEMENT ET L'EAU CANADA

CONTACT: Erinn Steringa
Tel: (613) 230-5182, ext. 228
Cell: (613) 889-9865
321 Chapel Street, Ottawa, ON K1N 7Z2
esteringa@watercan.com
<http://www.swanacanada.org/>

NEWS RELEASE

News – National/International
Thursday, November 15, 2007

***Embargo until Monday, November 19, 2007**

SWAN Canada Calls on PM to Boost Canada's Role in Ending the Global Sanitation Crisis

Coalition of leading NGOs wants increased funding for sanitation and water initiatives in the developing world

OTTAWA, ON – Sanitation & Water Action Network (SWAN) Canada, a newly-formed coalition of Canadian non-governmental organizations, is calling on Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Canadian government to make sanitation and water initiatives a priority in the global fight against poverty.

In an open letter slated to appear in the November 19th edition of *The Hill Times* and the November 21st edition of *Embassy*, SWAN Canada urges the Prime Minister to contribute Canada's fair share to end one of the world's most lethal and least reported humanitarian crises – the global sanitation crisis.

"Most people are shocked to learn that 2.6 billion people – 42 per cent of the world's population – don't have access to basic sanitation like toilets or safe latrines," said George Yap, coordinator for SWAN Canada. "It's not a glamorous issue, but you cannot begin to fight global poverty without first addressing the sanitation crisis."

Each year, some two million people – the majority of whom are children - die from diseases caused by poor sanitation and dirty water. At any one time, half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from sanitation and water-related diseases, making it the largest cause of sickness in the world.

The United Nations estimates that with sustained funding from the international community, basic sanitation for the entire world could be achieved within one to two decades. In relative terms, the cost of such investment (approx. \$10 billion globally per year) is less than one percent of annual world military spending, or about one-third of yearly spending on bottled water.

Currently, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) devotes two per cent of its annual disbursements (approximately \$70 million) to sanitation and water-related projects.

SWAN Canada's appeal to the Prime Minister for increased sanitation and water funding comes on the eve of World Toilet Day (Nov. 19), as well as the official launch of the United Nations "International Year of Sanitation 2008" (Nov. 21).

-END-

Sanitation & Water Action Network (SWAN) Canada is a newly-formed and growing coalition of Canadian non-governmental organizations united in the belief that water and sanitation initiatives must be a foreign aid priority for Canada. Through SWAN Canada, like-minded groups are able to come together with one voice to engage citizens and governments on the critical importance of water and sanitation in the fight against global poverty. To learn more, visit www.swanCanada.org.

SWAN Canada members:

- [CARE Canada](#)
- [Canadian Physicians for Aid & Relief](#)
- [Harbinger Foundation](#)
- [Oxfam Canada](#)
- [Results Canada](#)
- [Ryan's Well Foundation](#)
- [WaterCan](#)
- [Water for People Canada](#)
- [Water & Sanitation Rotarian Action Group](#)

Additional Resources:

- Advance Copy: SWAN Canada Open Letter to PM (abbreviated version) – attached
- Advance Copy: SWAN Canada Open Letter to PM (full version) – attached
- United Nations "International Year of Sanitation 2008" - <http://esa.un.org/iys/>

Images (attached):

Image 1: What is essentially an open sewer runs through the heart of a community in Nairobi, Kenya, spilling over into surrounding areas during heavy rains, flooding homes and spreading disease.

Image 2: An informal settlement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - one of many communities affected by the global sanitation crisis.

Image 3: Women and children in rural Uganda often walk for miles each day in search of water, which even then, is often highly polluted.

Image 4: A poorly built latrine in Kampala, Uganda; during heavy rains, the contents often spill out and pollute the surrounding area.

Image 5: A schoolgirl in Nairobi uses the hand-washing facilities at her school; hand-washing can reduce diarrhoeal diseases by up to 45 per cent (World Health Organization).