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**“Better Water for a Better Life”, Foreign Policy Centre Seminar**  
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**Meeting our promises- scaling up to meet the MDG for water and sanitation**

Many thanks for inviting me to talk to you here this afternoon.

Today I want to talk about two things – about how much more we have to do and what we feel needs to be done to meet our promises to provide water and sanitation to some of the world’s poorest people.

Over a billion people lack safe water to drink and half the population of developing countries are without proper sanitation.

It’s hard to digest these statistics isn’t it?

So what impact does this have on the life of just one person?

Take Sarah, who lives Nogra, Sudan – a village devastated by twenty-one years of fighting, but which Sarah still calls home.

Incredibly, Sarah, spends a quarter of her life walking for water.

Under a searing Sudanese sun, she walks for seven and a half hours every day to fill up her 20-litre container before walking home to face the cleaning and cooking.

The trip is full of hazards.

Sarah could be attacked in the lonely bush in an area riven by violence.

The nearby Moro hills are peppered with landmines and Sarah has to be very careful to stick to the path and avoid mines and unexploded ordnance.

And it’s always women and girls who walk huge distances - an average of 4 miles each day - to collect water; often carrying 20 litres on their heads.

Can you imagine doing this for yourself? - carrying the equivalent of a five-year old child on your head from Portcullis House to Paddington Station...every day

Young people miss out in two ways.

Lack of water means they spend their time collecting water, and not where they should be in school.

And, according to UNICEF, one in 10 school-age African girls either skip school or drop out entirely because of lack of sanitation, and in Pakistan half of the girls age 5 to 6 drop out of school because the schools have no latrines.

For most people in the UK, water hardship is about using a bucket to clean the car rather than a hose, 20 litres is two flushes of the toilet and a long journey to fetch water is the walk from bedroom to kitchen.

So...Imagine the challenge of expanding the supply of water to a city the size of Birmingham every week, every month, every year for the next decade.

Well, that’s what we have to do.

At any given moment, half the population of developing countries are sick from unsafe water and sanitation, and over 5,000 children die each day from diarrhoea as a result, that’s why many of the programmes we fund target water, sanitation and hygiene education in schools.

And people are on the move.

Already two thirds of the population of African cities live in slums.

Urbanisation is a dominant trend.

Within three decades, the urban populations of Africa, Asia and Latin America will double to nearly four billion.

This raises the challenge not just of water but sanitation too – especially in city slums.

People deserve the dignity of decent sanitation near to home. 2.6 billion people don't have it.

For most of sub-Saharan Africa and for Asia, half of the population has no decent sanitation.

On current trends they'll have to wait almost 100 years to get it. This is unacceptable.

If you are a child under the age of five in a developing country, you are just as likely to die from diarrhoeal disease as from malaria – two killers completely absent from our own societies.

Already in many areas competition over available water at a local level is increasing and threatens livelihoods and food security, with the poorest most vulnerable to these changes, for example in Southern India.

Climate change is a growing challenge and makes water availability even more uncertain.

Already two billion people are affected by water shortages in 40 countries, and predictions are that by 2050 at least one in four people will live in countries affected by recurring water shortages.

With climate change, water availability will become more unpredictable and extreme events like floods and droughts more common.

This presents another challenge for service delivery.

In response, our own White Paper, published last year we promised to...

Increase spending on essential public services – education, health, water and sanitation, and social protection – to at least half of the UK's direct support to developing countries.

And to double support for water and sanitation in Africa to £95 million per year by 2007/08, and to double it again to £200 million per year by 2010/11.

Better water management is a driver of sustainable growth and poverty reduction, as well as being central to coping with the effects of climate change.

Developing countries need to establish minimum standards for water resource infrastructure (water storage, irrigation, drainage systems, and navigation channels).

There is progress.

But if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in water, we need to supply clean water to an extra 300,000 people and sanitation to 450,000 every day, every year for the next 10 years.

We must – collectively – scale-up our actions.

In terms of the next steps, we need to create an international system that works more effectively than it does now.

Last November, our global call to action was published. It sets out to do three things:

- to invest more money in clean water and sanitation;
- to ensure the money is spent fairly and effectively and
- to make sure the right structures are in place to help us in this fight.

Action is needed at two levels, international and in-country.

At the international level the call to action advocates:

One annual report to monitor progress towards achieving the MDG water and sanitation targets.

An authoritative annual water and sanitation report would be produced for the UN Secretary General.

This report would monitor progress being made at national and international levels to achieve the MDGs; monitor funding; show what works and what does not, and would point out where national governments and the international community need to do more.

We can learn lessons from UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report in education.

And One high-level global annual meeting to decide on action, review what's being done, highlight the gaps and monitor progress.

There are too many meetings on water - I think we need just one - a meeting of national and donor ministers, heads of the regional development banks and others to review the recommendations of this report and to take action.

**Then, within each country, there three things need to be in place:**

One national water and sanitation plan.

This should set out current levels of access and what's required to meet needs.

One water and sanitation coordinating group.

This should bring together people from government (national and local), civil society and donors to identify the blockages and address them.

One lead UN body for water and sanitation at national level.

This would be the only UN agency through which the UK would put our money for water and sanitation.

It would work with other donors to help countries achieve ambitious country plans to meet the MDGs in water and sanitation

In truth there is no alternative but to make this work, not least because it's vital for achieving the MDGs.

We need global action, and global accountability if we are to meet the needs of billions of people across the globe who face an uncertain future without sustainable supplies of clean water and a reasonable standard of sanitation

These are our ideas, what do you think?

**ENDS**