

## **Presentation to International Freshwater Conference, Bonn, December 3, 2001**

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Paris, France

### **Business and Industry Group**

#### **Session #1**

##### **Equitable Access and Sustainable Supply of Water for the Poor**

The world faces many challenges that must be met in order to achieve global water security, and ranked high amongst these is without doubt the provision of water supply and wastewater services to the burgeoning urban population. Statistics underlying this concern include the estimate that while half of the world's population is already urban, this proportion will reach two thirds in 30 years' time, with by far the greatest shift occurring in the southern hemisphere. And of particular concern is further expansion of low-income areas around the major town and cities.

At the beginning of 2000 one-sixth (1.1 billion people) of the world's population was without access to improved water supply and two-fifths (2.4 billion people) lacked access to improved sanitation

According to WHO, approximately 4 billion cases of diarrhea each year cause 2.2 million deaths, mostly among children under the age of five. This is equivalent to one child dying every 15 seconds, or 20 jumbo jets crashing every day.

Access to water may be one of the most vital of the issues involved to underpin development and prosperity, and to provide hope. This is the reason why, more than ever before, we need to find new answers and new forms of solidarity, and we need to get rid of opposing economic and ideological standpoints.

High financial investment is needed to expand access to water and sanitation to all, and in developing countries the necessary financial investment capacity is often out of the reach of local or national governments. The challenge lies not only in the level of investment needed, but also in the sound management of the utilities, including setting appropriate tariffs to cover both capital and operational costs. Another primary challenge is to ensure equitable access to and control over this resource, based on the needs of all members of a given population, not only the needs of those with the power to speak. The interests of all must be represented at a decision-making level.

We share the view that has been growing for the past ten years, and supported by some governments and international institutions, that public-private partnerships are a very good way to renew water infrastructure, to lever new sources of finance and apply more efficient management methods.

We think that business and industry have a lot to contribute to global dialogue needed now on how to make this happen now.