

**World Water Day 2015 Celebrations
Speed Dating event –
Geneva Environment Network
24 March 2015, Geneva, Switzerland**



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

It is such a pleasure to be here today at this event in Geneva to celebrate World Water Day. It is especially nice for us as part of the UN-Water Management team and Advisory Unit is based here.

I would like to thank the Geneva Environment Network and International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance for organizing this event. As most of you probably know, Sunday was World Water Day. This is a day to celebrate, a day to change and a day to prepare.

What we saw during this day and in the months leading up to 22 March is amazing. Many of the partners here today are the ones who have made the campaign such a huge success. Your devotion shows that water issues are more pressing than ever before.

The UN-Water led campaign for World Water Day has two aims: Raise awareness and inspire action. This is what we - united - have truly done on the topic of water and sustainable development. For several months, we have worked to raise awareness of water issues and it has paid off.

One of the major goals of this specific campaign was to contribute to water being presented as a stand-alone goal for the negotiations that will happen this year on the post-2015 development agenda. This is the case. In September this year, world leaders will meet at the United Nations to endorse the post-Millennium goals to guide the priorities of countries for the next 15 years.

These Goals will provide a framework for action and their impact will be felt for decades to come. We can only applaud the work that has been done up until now to ensure there is a goal devoted exclusively to water and sanitation.

The second objective of the campaign was related to ensuring that a large set of stakeholders understand what water and sustainable development means. For this, we created a website and a social media campaign that invited people to learn more, teach others and send us what water means to them under the hashtag #WaterIs.

We have gotten thousands of entries from people around the world. Including World Leaders and Celebrities such as the DSG, Jan Eliasson, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, UNICEF's Executive Director Tony Lake, UN-Water Chair Michel Jarraud. But also, Anglican Bishop and Social Rights Activist Desmond Tutu, Unilever's CEO Paul Polman, The World Bank's President Jim Kim, and stars Orlando Bloom, Justin Bieber, Fergie, Gisele Bundchen, Pharell Williams and Spanish football player Iker Casillas.

I am told by our fantastic social analytics company that has worked pro bono for the campaign that I am not to disclose any figures yet as they need to have a full analysis first. However, it seems that if we had a potential reach last year with 700 million people, this year, the numbers are counted in billion.

But, setting a goal and being aware is one step. Making it work across the water cycle and across political boundaries are two significant challenges.

This is why we need to work together to ensure that in addition to the political will, we have the most up to date information, the financing needed, the technological capacity and the global architecture to ensure that we succeed. The stakes are so high that we must succeed – whatever it takes.

Everyone has a role to play here: Civil society, governments, academia, private sector, the UN. We should do whatever it takes to strive for a present where there is justice and a future where there is opportunity.

Thank you.