PRESS RELEASE

World Water Day:

68 percent of Sudan’s population with access to basic improved drinking water

Despite good progress, much more needs to be done to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 6.1: “By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.”

Khartoum 22nd March 2017: Across the globe, March 22 every year is set aside to celebrate progress in water towards achieving global targets and to garner more political support. This year’s theme: Why waste water? Is in support of SDG 6.3 on improving water quality and reducing, treating and reusing wastewater.

Over 80 per cent of the wastewater generated globally flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused. According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme Report, 1.8 billion people use a source of drinking water that is contaminated with faeces, putting them at risk of contracting cholera, dysentery, typhoid and polio. Globally, unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene cause around 842,000 deaths each year. By 2050, close to 70 per cent of the world’s population will live in urban cities, compared to 50 per cent today. Currently, most cities in developing countries do not have adequate infrastructure and resources to address wastewater management in an efficient and sustainable way.

Wastewater presents an enormous resource, and such opportunity should be harnessed by countries. When safely managed, wastewater becomes an affordable and sustainable source of water, energy, nutrients and other recoverable materials. The cost of wastewater management are greatly outweighed by the benefits to human health, economic development and environmental sustainability.

In Sudan, only 68 percent of households have access to basic improved water, with disparities in access between rural and urban populations at 64 and 78 per cent respectively. There are also disparities between states, with just around a third of households having access to safe water in Red Sea, White Nile and Gedarif compared to 90 per cent access in Khartoum and the Northern States. Lack of funding, inadequate management and inadequate community participation are among the main reasons behind the system’s low functionality levels. An estimated 13 million people are still using unimproved drinking water sources.

About 32 per cent of the population is drinking contaminated water from unimproved water sources. The majority of these water sources are mainly surface water while some are groundwater sources (open wells and contaminated groundwater aquifers). Secondary sources of chemical and bacteriological contamination are seriously degrading the quality of water sources. These are mainly coming from industrial waste and domestic and commercial waste (mainly excreta, urine and grey water) which are washed into surface water bodies or injected into the groundwater aquifers. National and state level acts to prevent these pollutants exist, but need to be activated.

“For children, lack of access to safe water can be tragic”, says UNICEF Representative Abdullah Fadil. “Diarrhoeal diseases linked to unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation, or poor hygiene is one of the leading causes of malnutrition and child mortality in Sudan. With the current 68 percent access to basic improved water supply, significant investment and commitment is required from Government, donors and the private sector to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all”, Fadil emphasized.

UNICEF is working with the government and other key partners to support increased access to basic improved water supply for communities, IDP camps, and schools, with a focus on women and children. By the end of 2016 UNICEF and partners have succeeded in the provision of lifesaving improved water supply for over almost 2,000,000 vulnerable people in emergency and unserved rural areas including internally displaced persons, South Sudanese refugees and population
affected by or at risk to Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) population through operation, maintenance and water chlorination services for their water sources at community and household levels.

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