

# Over 50 ministers to agree on decisive actions to end inequalities in access to water and sanitation at SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting

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**San José, 4 April 2019** – Over 50 ministers came together to agree on joint action towards achieving universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene at the two-day SWA 2019 Sector Ministers' Meeting. These discussions among ministers and their development partners mark a breakthrough in the global approach to the governance, financing and accountability of the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. 47 countries tabled commitments to action, with their civil society and private sector partners, donors and UN agencies making commitments to support them.

The SWA 2019 Sector Ministers' Meeting, the 6th of its kind, is organized by the Sanitation and Water for All global partnership and co-convened by UNICEF and the Inter-American Development Bank. It is being held for the first time in Latin America, hosted by the Government of Costa Rica. The Meeting is the result of ongoing joint work among partners and the culmination of a rigorous 6-month preparatory process.

A record number of ministers from all continents are gathering to discuss national, regional and global actions they will take to ensure Sustainable Development Goal 6 is reached by 2030, in particular how they will progressively eliminate inequalities in access. They also committed to raise global awareness of water, sanitation and hygiene problems, ranging from the effects of climate change to menstrual hygiene, and from open defecation to lack of financing.

The results of the Sector Ministers' Meeting will contribute to the discussions at the United Nations High-level Political Forum in July 2019, and the SWA Finance Ministers' Meeting in 2020.

According to the latest estimates, 30 per cent of the world's population – 2.1 billion people – still lack even a basic sanitation service, and 844 million people do not have access to a basic drinking-water service. Diarrhoeal diseases caused by lack of access to clean water and sanitation, coupled with poor hygiene practices, kill 700 children under 5 years old every day.

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S.E. Carlos Alvarado, President of Costa Rica said, *“For many years, people believed that water was an unlimited resource. Today we know it is not so. Our rivers and seas are sick, and this is happening around the world. In Costa Rica, one reality is that only 15% of the population is connected to the sewage system. The challenge is enormous, but we are facing it with responsibility in order to protect the health of our population.”*

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in a written statement addressed to the participants of the Sector Ministers' Meeting said, *“I commend your leadership and efforts to increase awareness about the root causes of inequalities in water and sanitation. I count on you to develop concrete plans and solutions to overcome this significant challenge and look forward to learning about the results of your discussions.”*

*“Lack of safe water, sanitation and hygiene poses huge risks for women and children,”* said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. *“When women and girls are sent to fetch water, they are vulnerable to violence and abuse. When girls are kept at home because their schools do not have toilet facilities, their education suffers. And when babies are born in health facilities that lack basic water services, the risk of deadly infections is high.”*

*“A record number of ministers are attending this Meeting, a clear indication that countries realize the Sustainable Development Goals will only be achieved by putting the furthest behind first. This can only be achieved by the full-scale mobilization of finance from all sources – national governments, development banks, private financial institutions and other creative forms of community funding for local sanitation water infrastructure projects”,* said the Hon. Kevin Rudd, SWA's High-level Chair. *“I am inspired by witnessing the water, sanitation and hygiene community engage in such wide-ranging discussions, share state-of-the-art knowledge, openly debate challenges, and commit to solutions.”*



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En español ([http://sanitationandwaterforall.org/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/SWA\\_Press\\_Release\\_-\\_Spanish.pdf](http://sanitationandwaterforall.org/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/SWA_Press_Release_-_Spanish.pdf)).

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