GENEVA/NEW YORK, 13 May 2013 – Some 2.4 billion people – one-third of the world's population – will remain without access to improved sanitation in 2015, according to a joint WHO/UNICEF report issued today.

The report, entitled *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water 2013 Update,* warns that, at the current rate of progress, the 2015 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of halving the proportion of the 1990 population without sanitation will be missed by eight per cent – or half a billion people.

While UNICEF and WHO announced last year that the MDG drinking water target had been met and surpassed by 2010, the challenge to improve sanitation and reach those in need has led to a consolidated call for action to accelerate progress.

"There is an urgent need to ensure all the necessary pieces are in place – political commitment, funding, leadership – so the world can accelerate progress and reach the Millennium Development Goal sanitation target" said Dr Maria Neira, WHO Director for Public Health and Environment. "The world can turn around and transform the lives of millions that still do not have access to basic sanitation. The rewards would be immense for health, ending poverty at its source, and well-being."

The report echoes the urgent call to action by United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for the world community to combine efforts and end open defecation by 2025. With less than three years to go to reach the MDG deadline WHO and UNICEF call for a final push to meet the sanitation target.

"This is an emergency no less horrifying than a massive earthquake or tsunami," said Sanjay Wijesekera, global head of UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme. "Every day hundreds of children are dying; every day thousands of parents mourn their sons and daughters. We can and must act in the face of this colossal daily human tragedy."

Among the key findings from the latest 2011 data, the report highlights:

- Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of the world's population had access to improved sanitation facilities, an increase of almost 1.9 billion people since 1990.
- Approximately 2.5 billion people lacked access to an improved sanitation facility. Of these, 761 million use public or shared sanitation facilities and 693 million use facilities that do not meet minimum standards of hygiene.
- In 2011, 1 billion people still defecated in the open. 90 per cent of all open defecation takes place in rural areas.
- By the end of 2011, 89 per cent of the world population used an improved drinking-water

source, and 55 per cent had a piped supply on premises. This left an estimated 768 million people without improved sources for drinkingwater, of whom 185 million relied on surface water for their daily needs.

- There continues to be a striking disparity between those living in rural areas and those who live in cities. Urban dwellers make up three-quarters of those with access to piped water supplies at home. Rural communities comprise 83 per cent of the global population without access to improved drinking- water source and 71 per cent of those living without sanitation.

Faster progress on sanitation is possible, the two organizations say. The report summarizes the shared vision of the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector including academia, human rights and global monitoring communities for a post-2015 world where:

- **No one** should be defecating in the open
- **Everyone** should have safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home
- **All schools and health centres** should have water, sanitation and hygiene
- Water, sanitation and hygiene should be **sustainable**
- **Inequalities** in access should be **eliminated.**