



UN World Water Day Press Release

## Why World Water Day is more important than ever



**22 March, London, UK** - On World Water Day, people, charities, NGOs, businesses, schools and governments were expected to come together with a series of events, activities and conferences focusing on the issue of water and climate change.

Sadly, many of those planned events will now have been cancelled as the world faces the threat of Covid-19. However, at this moment, more than ever, the message of World Water Day needs to be heard and acted upon.

World Water Day celebrates the essential role of water in society and raises awareness of the 785 million people who still lack basic water services. <sup>1</sup> These are the services that are vitally important when it comes to preventing, stopping and reducing the spread of illness and epidemics.

We are now told that the simplest, most effective way to combat Covid-19 is to wash our hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. For those living in the developed world, sinks, taps, soap and clean water come in abundance. But, as we wash our hands while singing happy birthday, we should spare a thought for the millions of people in marginalized communities for whom this single, most important way to stop disease is not available.

Of course, Covid-19 is currently occupying the minds of people, politicians and businessmen. Retailers have been responding to ensure supplies are maintained in the face of panic buying and that vulnerable members of communities have access to the groceries they need with initiatives such as early opening hours for elderly and at risk groups.

However, this is an opportunity to also think of the wider global community and how it's equipped to deal with a crisis like Covid-19. So, on World Water Day, Water Unite Chair Lord Malcolm Bruce is asking retailers and their customers to do something simple, achievable and impactful to ensure millions of people around the world will, in future, have access to the water that could change and save lives.

*"World Water Day and Water Unite have a vital opportunity at this crucial time to show how retailers and their customers, via a simple micro levy of 1 cent for every 1 litre bottle of water bought, can help finance clean water solutions that protect lives in marginalised communities around the globe, now and into the future."*

The 1 cent for every 1 litre bottle of water micro levy is an inspirational approach that uses an innovative investment vehicle to leverage the proceeds and multiply the funds available for sustainable and entrepreneurial projects tackling water poverty around the world.



Water Unite estimate that key grocery retailers, if they adopted the micro levy, could help raise over US\$5 billion per year to invest in projects that will make a major contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all, by 2030.

Building on the commitments made on World Water Day, Water Unite are hosting meetings at both the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the United Nations where governments, NGOs and retailers will come together to discuss the micro levy and its potential role in effecting global change.

However, we also believe that it is customers and shareholders who want to support retailers and brands committed to the greater social good that will ultimately drive the adoption of Water Unite's groundbreaking micro levy investment approach.

<sup>1</sup>2018 UNESCO Report

## ENDS

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

A long-read thought piece on this topic, entitled 'Water, women and the war against disease' can be found at: <https://www.waterunite.org/blog/post/10332/WATER-WOMEN-AND-THE-WAR-AGAINST-DISEASE/>

## About Water Unite

Water Unite is a UK based, non-profit organisation that works in partnership with the private sector to raise and invest funds for clean water sanitation and plastics recycling. Funds are raised via voluntary donations of around one cent per litre from retailers of bottled water. Started in 2018, Water Unite is supported by The Co-operative (UK), Elixir UK, The Rockefeller Foundation, Stone, Vitrol and One Foundations. Water Unite aims to raise US\$100-\$200 million in the next 2 years.

Explainer Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eGMv2\\_6TIU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eGMv2_6TIU)

Brochure and Data downloads available from <https://www.waterunite.org/page/research-and-papers/>

For more information please visit [waterunite.org](http://waterunite.org)

## About Lord Bruce

Lord Malcom Bruce has been Chair of Water Unite since early 2019. He was the Member of Parliament for Gordon from 1983 until his retirement in May 2015. In that capacity he carried a number of portfolios and served on many committees notably covering economic affairs, energy and the environment and chaired the International Development Committee from 2005 to 2015. Lord Bruce brings a wealth of political leadership and partnership creation experience across the political private and international development sector.



Lord Malcom Bruce (high-resolution photo available on request)