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Secretary-General's remarks at launch of UN MTV Jay-Z collaboration to raise awareness on the worldwide water crisis

Most of us take water for granted: we turn on the tap and there's plenty of it. Or, if we prefer, we can buy hundreds of different brands in the supermarket.

But for more than a billion people who lack access to safe drinking water, this is an inconceivable dream. And some 2.6 billion people have no access to proper sanitation. The consequences are devastating.

Nearly 2 million children die every year because of unclean water and poor sanitation - far more than the casualties from violent conflicts.

All over the world, pollution, over-consumption and poor water management are decreasing the quality and quantity of water.

Competition among nations for fresh water is already a factor in many conflicts, and has the potential to become much, much worse in the future. In fact, nearly a half-century ago, late President John F. Kennedy said that "Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel Prizes – one for peace and one for science."

The water crisis -like many issues confronting our world - can only be fully addressed with the active participation of young people everywhere.

I am therefore very pleased to announce today a groundbreaking collaboration between the United Nations, MTV and Jay-Z to raise awareness about the world's water crisis.

All of us at the United Nations are excited about this initiative. Working with MTV and Jay-Z, we hope this campaign will motivate youth to take action both in their own lives, and in support of broad eco-friendly initiatives.

MTV's global reach and credibility can play an important role in educating and empowering its audience.

Jay-Z, through his enormous influence, will inspire young people everywhere to care, conserve, and join in the search for solutions to our water crisis.

Together, we may yet inspire a young viewer to take up President Kennedy's challenge, and claim both those Nobel Prizes.

[MTV President] Christina Norman, Jay-Z - we're really proud to have them here as partners with the UN, to get this important issue launched and to energize young people to become engaged. I see so many young people here, and I am sure they did not only come for this event, and they are going to be very active in this water campaign.

Thank you very much.