



MEDIA STATEMENT

DWS joins the world in commemorating Global Handwashing Day

13 October 2020

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) will lead South Africans and join the world in celebrating Global Handwashing Day (GHD) on Friday, 15 October 2021 under the theme ***“Our future is at hand – Let’s move forward together”***.

Global Handwashing Day, which is celebrated annually on 15 October was proclaimed by the United Nations in 2008 as an annual global advocacy day dedicated to increasing awareness and understanding about the importance of handwashing with soap as an effective and affordable way to prevent diseases. GHD reminds people of the importance of washing hands regularly and encourages people to wash their hands with soap at critical times.

This year’s theme calls for institutions to prioritize hand hygiene infrastructure and policies within schools, healthcare facilities, workplaces and public settings. The unprecedented nature of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight the critical role hand hygiene plays in diseases transmission. Therefore, this year’s theme is a call to action which asks us to leverage lessons learnt and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to address the historic neglect of hand hygiene investments, policies, and programmes once and for all. A lot has been learned about promoting hand hygiene at scale, but much work is needed for the current momentum to be sustained.

Handwashing is key in the fight against COVID-19. Handwashing contributes to mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 and will remain an essential prevention measure while vaccines are being rolled out. Handwashing is key to reducing the burden of many diseases which pose chronic challenges to population health and development. Handwashing is a first-line defence in preventing outbreaks and reducing the toll of both current and future pandemics.

It is important to regularly wash our hands with soap and water as hands are the most common highways for the transmissions and spread of bacteria and viruses that cause diseases resulting in people being hospitalized for treatment and at worst death. In our daily activities, we usually touch many shared surfaces which makes us susceptible to contracting different





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forms of viruses, thus making it critical to frequently wash our hands to prevent us contracting and spreading diseases.

DWS also reminds the public that clean hands save lives therefore it is critical to regularly wash and keep our hands clean and healthy at all times.

End

Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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