



Media Invitation, 15th of March 2012

The Human Right to Water and Sanitation – Vision or Utopia?

«Challenge the Best» 2012: Students discuss the problem of global water scarcity

In several parts of the world, water is a scarce resource due to population growth and climate change. As an attempt to approach the issue, the United Nations declared the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in July 2010 – without success, as we can state today. Which measures promise improvements to the situation, what shall be done to help the affected people effectively? These are the questions being discussed at the «Challenge the Best» 2012 Conference on March, 26th at the Swiss University of St.Gallen (HSG). The event will be organised by the University's Student Union.

«After the declaration of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, a lot of people questioned the benefit of this symbolic act », states Kassian Pause, International Affairs student and Vice-Chairman of the Organising Committee. «It is only the most recent chapter in a history of failures, and its dimensions can be clarified with uncomfortable numbers», Christian Tjaden, Chairman of the Organising Committee, says.

«Currently there are 800 million people without access to clean water. At the same time, the world population is growing rapidly. By the year 2050, seven billion people could be affected by water scarcity.»

The reasons of our global community's failure to face global water scarcity will be discussed by 40 students from March 23rd to 26th. Through an international Essay and Project Competition on the topic «Facing Global Water Scarcity», Student Participants from 26 universities all over Europe were selected.

Water scarcity is perceived as an urgent problem across European borders and academic disciplines. This is shown by the students' backgrounds as they are originating from 14 different countries and representing over 20 fields of study.

University students and intergenerational dialogue

Among the Honoured Guests are distinguished personalities such as **Robert Mardini**, Vice Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Prof. Dr. **Alexander Likhotal**, President of Green Cross International and former Advisor to Mikhail Gorbachev. The organising students feel extraordinarily honoured to welcome Hon. **Maria Mutagamba**, Minister of Water and Environment of the Republic of Uganda, at their conference this year.

Additionally, experts such as Dr. **Amer Mokbel** (Director Area Sales Gulf, WILO SE), Dr. **François Münger** (Head of the Global Water Initiatives Division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), **Dieter Rothenberger** (Head of the German government's development agency "Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit") and Prof. Dr. **Christoph Stückelber** (Founder of "Globethics.net" and the anti-corruption agency "Transparency") are going to visit St. Gallen for an intergenerational dialogue.

From March 23rd to 25th, the Student Participants will take part in an intense three-day Preparation Seminar for the conference, led by experts in their fields. Among the Guest Lecturers is **Ian Johnson**, Secretary-General of the “Club of Rome” and former Vice-President of the World Bank.

During the main event on the 26th of March, the Student Participants will take part in parallel group discussions in which no more than six students and one Honoured Guest will debate the question how our globalised society is supposed to handle water scarcity. This will give the students a unique opportunity to directly challenge the experts’ opinion by seeking for dialogue and exchange of ideas.

At the Public Panel Debate, moderated by BBC World News anchor **Lucy Hockings** and taking place in the afternoon of the 26th of March, the students will discuss their approaches for actions with the Honoured Guests in front of an audience of 600 visitors. In an Outcome Booklet, the lines of action developed at Challenge the Best 2012 will be documented and handed out to decision-makers in politics, society and economy.

Media representatives are invited to join us for the following events:

Conference Opening «Challenge the Best»

Monday, 26th of March 2012, 8.30 - 10.00, Executive Campus of the University of St.Gallen (HSG)

Public Panel Debate

Monday, 26th of March 2012, 15.30 - 17.30, Audimax of the University of St.Gallen, [Library Building](#)
Addresses by University President Prof. Dr. Thomas Bieger and Ambassador Walter Fust (Chairman of the Event); Panel Debate of our honoured guests with student participants, Apéro

For questions and accreditation, please contact:

Student Union of the University of St.Gallen (SHSG) – Challenge the Best

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Programme und further information: www.challengethebest.org

Campus plan and [directions](#)

Notes to editors:

Challenge the Best

Challenge the Best is an initiative of the Student Union of the University of St.Gallen (HSG). The event is chaired by Ambassador Walter Fust. The student organization team is supported by an Advisory Board made up of HSG professors and the head of HSG Alumni, Daniel Bargetze. www.challengethebest.org

Student Union of the University of St.Gallen (SHSG)

The Student Union (SHSG) is an official body of the University of St.Gallen (HSG) and makes active contributions to the HSG’s development. It is based entirely on voluntary student commitment and channels this motivation into two directions: the representation of interests, as well as services and projects for students. www.myunisg.ch

University of St.Gallen (HSG)

Internationality, practical relevance and an integrative perspective have been the trademarks of education at the University of St.Gallen in Switzerland ever since it was established more than a century ago. Today, the University of St.Gallen (HSG) educates 7,100 students from 83 nations in the fields of Business Administration, Economics, Law and Social Sciences. The HSG has shown itself to be highly successful, having been consistently ranked among Europe’s leading business universities.

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