

UN declares World Toilet Day

24 July 2013

The United Nations on Wednesday declared November 19 as World Toilet Day following a proposal by Singapore whose envoy said he did not care if jokes are made.

"I am sure there will be laughter among the press and the public when it is reported that the UN is declaring a World Toilet Day," said Singapore charge d'affaires Mark Neo before a unanimous UN General Assembly vote in favor of the measure.

"Their laughter is welcome, especially if they recognize the prevailing and unhealthy taboo that prevents an open and serious discussion of the problems of sanitation and toilets globally," Neo told the 193-member assembly.

The envoy went on to stress that 2.5 billion people around the world do not have proper sanitation, that 1.1 billion people defecate in the open and that providing toilets could save the lives of more than 200,000 children each year.

Singapore took up the [toilet](#) cause because of the efforts of Jack Sim, a citizen of the city-state known as "Mr Toilet" because of his efforts to improve sanitation around the world.

UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson praised Singapore's action. "Proper [sanitation](#) is a question of basic dignity," Eliasson said.

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