

Declaration of Water as a Human Right

Today, there are still over 1.4 billion people without access to safe drinkable water and 2.4 billion without access to adequate sanitation services. The consequences are devastating: 30.000 people are dying **everyday** from diseases due to the absence of safe water and adequate sanitation. The United Nations proclaimed the 1980s as the “The Decade for Drinkable Water and Sanitation” (1981-1991) with the aim to provide access to water for all by the year 2000!

The highest institutions of the international community have continued to deny the recognition of universal access to water as a human right from the International Water Conference in Dublin in 1992 onward. World leaders recognize access to water as a vital need, but prefer to consider water as a raw material and resource that can be bought and sold as an economic good. Accordingly, they give the preference to market oriented policies, to the privatisation of management of water services and to water commoditisation. In November 2002, the United Nations Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights declared that adequate water provision for personal and domestic use represents a fundamental human right of every person. “General Comment” 15 on the implementation of the 1966 International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that “the human right to water is essential to conduct an existence with dignity. It constitutes a precondition to the realisation of the other human rights”. The “General Comment” has no binding power on the 146 States that have ratified the international Convention. This is why the same States have stated in the Final Ministerial Declaration on March 2003 at the 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, that access to water is a vital need (not a right); that water has to be treated primarily as an economic good, not only as a social good; and that water must be given an economic value, determined by market price mechanisms according to the full cost recovery principle (profit included).

Fortunately, various participating organisations supported different position during the Forum in Kyoto. The Catholic Church presented a document in which they said that access to water should be

considered a **human right**. Its authors also provide some criticism on today's trend towards water privatisation. The international public service trade union presented a similar opinion.

Historically, **the right to water** has been mentioned in a few international acts and decisions. The Convention on Children Rights, for instance, makes an explicit reference to water. The first United Nations Conference on water in 1977 at Mar del Plata declared that every person has the right to access drinking water to satisfy their fundamental needs.

Unfortunately, the political, economic and technological leaders of the rich and powerful countries of the world – and very often, the governing class from the less “developed” countries as well – have moved in a different direction. In the last 20 years, institutional, financial, agricultural, industrial and commercial policies that have caused more harm than the few declarations of principles in favour of the human right to water.

The future doesn't appear to be more encouraging.

The commoditisation of water seems destined to expand.

Analyses and forecasts made by UN, FAO, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank over the last decade anticipate a further deepening of the “water crisis” throughout the world:

- *The worsening of the world's “water crisis”*. It is expected that by 2032, 40 years after the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 60% of the world's population will live in regions that lack reliable access to water.
- *Major agricultural water shortages in China, India and United States*. The water tables in these countries have gone dangerously down due to excessive agricultural and industrial (and energetic) abuse over the course of the last 50 years;
- *The proliferation and intensification of water conflicts; both within and among countries*. Water is increasingly

defined as “blue gold” in compared to oil’s “black gold” and public perception continues to be inundated with the idea of XXIst century “water wars”.

**THESE FUTURES MAY BE POSSIBLE,
BUT THEY ARE UNACCEPTABLE**

2003 was “the International Year of Water”. As the year ends we, the citizens of the different regions of the world, unite with the intention of avoiding that this year ends with the very meagre concrete political results evidenced at the Evian G8 meeting in June. G8 leaders promised to increase support for water. There was even discussion about tripling the increase of international aid to water programs to \$30 billion. Unfortunately however, the talk was greater than the commitment: the G8 ended with no serious commitment for water.

Given these circumstances we want to react against these inactions and invite all citizens to mobilize and advocate for the principles, goals and initiatives described herein below.

We declare that:

- Whereas, the formal recognition of the Right to Water as a major step towards the implementation of the right to life for all;
- Whereas, implementing a universal Right to Water as a necessary condition in the fight against poverty;
- Whereas, implementing the universal Right to Water for all (not only for half of the world’s populations that does not currently have access to water) by 2015, as a realistic economic target. In 1977, the United Nations Development Program declared that universal access to water was economically feasible within a 15-year period. We reaffirm that the main obstacle to its implementation is not the

absence or the inadequacy of financial resources, nor of competencies of technology rather, what is lacking is a political will and all related economic and social policy choices.

- Whereas, the exclusion of water from being explicitly mentioned as a human right in the 1955 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has hampered citizens' abilities to put effective pressures on their governments to recognize this right. This omission has contributed, together with international policies increasingly influenced by neo-liberalism, to national policies that consider water an "economic good";
- Whereas, it is urgent and necessary to recognise water and water ecosystems as a global common, and not to consider it a "market good and service" that is only valuable as a tapped resource. Water must be considered a global common that is an essential and unsubstitutable element for other economic activities (agricultural, energetic, industrial) that are fundamental to life and living in community;
- Whereas, water and water services cannot be the subject of trade negotiations, but to global rules that define and promote the idea of water as a shared global common and as a universal human right;

Furthermore

1. Whereas, We believe that water is a global common belonging to humankind and all living species;
2. Whereas, We believe that access to water is a human, social right, individual and collective right;
3. Whereas, We believe that the financing costs for guaranteeing access to safe and reliable water is the responsibility for the public authorities.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that we propose that this Special Day of Water in Rome gives the priority to six goals, for implementation on the next 5 to 10 years:

First goal: give the Right to Water a constitutional status

- Including the Right to Water into the Universal Declaration on Human Rights
- Introducing the Right to Water into the new Constitution of the European Union and the Charter of the United Nations
- Incorporating the Right to Water into local statutes (Towns, Provinces, Regions...)

Second goal: transform water into an instrument of peace

- Promote a campaign of passing governmental resolutions (communal, provincial, regional and national) that declare the opposition to the use of water for political and military ends and as an instrument for oppression, exclusion and blackmailing.

Third goal: freedom for the “water children”

- Guarantee, by 2010, full-time school attendance to the 18 millions children (mostly young girls) who are denied the right to education because they are obliged to spend their day to “bring water” to the family and the village by covering a distance of several kilometres

Fourth goal: stop the devastating over pumping and over consumption

- Reduce, by 2010, global levels of excessive over pumping and water losses in agriculture, industry and in the distribution networks by 40%.
Additionally, to reduce domestic water wastes represented by the use of drinkable water (about 90%) for non-drinkable ends.
The resulting financial savings should be allocated to fund initiatives that are geared at expanding access to water in

all developing countries and promoting grassroots involvement.

Managing mineral water should be returned to public control.

Fifth goal: invent a new generation of cooperative financing for water

- Set up a world co-operative financial system that focuses on enhancing the development of a public and global water service and that finances local, national and international projects aimed at ensuring universal drinking water, particularly in the world's arid and semi-arid regions and at promoting public partnership of water resources in the poorest areas of the world's largest cities.

Sixth goal: local democracy for water

- Promote the creation of Citizens' Councils at all levels (villages, communes, cities, provinces, regions and transnational basins) that support, through representative democracy, the institutions that represent the diversity of cultures of their country.

SIGNED IN ROME BY

1. **MARIO SOARES** (Portugal)
*President of the International Committee
for the Global Contract for Water*
2. **WALTER VELTRONI** (Italy)
Mayor of Rome
3. **ENRICO GASBARRA** (Italy)
President of the Province of Rome
4. **RICCARDO PETRELLA** (Italy)
*Secretary of the International Committee on the Global Contract
for Water and President of the Italian Committee*
5. **DANIELLE MITTERRAND** (France)
*President of the France Libertè Foundation and Honorary President
of the French Association for the Global Contract for Water*
6. **ALEX ZANOTELLI** (Italy)
Cambodian Missionary
7. **SILVANO SAVERIO DA COSTA** (Brasil)
*President of the National Association of City Municipal Workers
(ASSEMAE) that represents 1800 cities in Brazil and the international
“VIDA ” working on water rights issues.*
8. **ELIO DI RUPO** (Belgium)
Mayor of Mons (Belgium) and President of the Belgian Socialist Party
9. **PIETRO FOLENA** (Italy)
*Italian Parliamentarian and Spokesperson for the Italian Association
of Parliamentarians and Elected Officials for the Global Contract for Water*
10. **TRAN HOAI** (Vietnam)
Representative of the Citizen’s Committee of the City of Hue
11. **ASMA CHAABI** (Morocco)
Mayor of Essaouira (Rabat)
12. **JACQUES PERREUX** (France)
Vicepresident of the General Counsel of Val de Marne
13. **MUNTHER HADDADIN** (Jordan)
*Ex Minister of Water and Irrigation
and Counselor to Prince El Hassan of Jordan*

14. **MARC BUREAU** (Quebec)
City Counselor of the City of Gatineau. President of the Quebec Environmental Commission (the city Gatineau has approved a resolution of water rights in honor of the December 10 Day)
15. **ROBERTO CONTI** (Italy)
Vicepresident of ANCC Coop (Water for Peace Campaign)
16. **PEDRO ARROJO** (Spain)
Founder and President of the Association for New Water Culture
17. **ALBERTO VELASCO** (Switzerland)
Geneva Councilperson and President ATTAC Geneva
18. **BERNARD J. WOHLWEND** (Switzerland)
President of the International Water Law Association
19. **SELIM BESLAGIC** (Bosnia)
Parliamentarian, Mayor of Tuzla
20. **AHMED SEBAI** (Morocco)
National Parliamentarian
21. **MIRELLE VOLPATO** (France)
Aquitaine Regional Councilor and Vicepresident of the Association for Elected Republican Communists of France
22. **MAJ FIIL FLYNN** (USA)
“Public Citizen” Water for All Campaign
23. **JORGE NASCIMENTO** (Brasil)
Forum Internacional das Aguas
24. **JEAN LUC TOULY** (France)
President ACME France
25. **CLAIRE PIERSON** (Belgium)
Director Oxfam Belgium’s Campaign for Water Action
26. **MASSIMO ROSSI** (Italy)
City Council President Grottamare (AP)
27. **ROSARIO LEMBO** (Italy)
President of CIPSI e Secretary ACME Italy
28. **EMILIO MOLINARI** (Italy)
Vicepresident ACME Italy
29. **PATRIZIA SENTINELLI** (Italy)
City Counselor Rome

**ADDITIONS TO THE DECEMBER 10 DOCUMENT
BY INVITED PARTICIPANTS OR PEOPLE WHO
WERE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND**

Private Citizens

- 1) **VANDANA SHIVA** (India)
Director Foundation for Scientific Research
- 2) **JEAN ZIEGLER** (Switzerland)
*Special informer of the United Nations Commission
for Human Rights*
- 3) **RUDOLF AMENGA-ETEGO** (Ghana)
Coordinator of the movement against water privatization
- 4) **WALTER BONAN** (Italy)
President of the Dolomiti Bellunesi National Park
- 5) **FEDERICO MAJOR** (Spain)
President of the Foundation for the Culture of Peace
- 6) **EDUARDO GALEANO** (Uruguay)
Author
- 7) **CARLA MONTERMAYOR** (Philippines)
Coordinator of the Asian Committee for Water Vigilance Network
- 8) **ROBERTO FUMAGALLI** (Italy)
Circolo ambiente di Merone
- 9) **FRANCESCO FERRANTE** (Italy)
Director Legambiente
- 10) **STEFANO LENZI** (Italy)
Director WWF Italy
- 11) **LORENZA ZAMBONI**
ATTAC Italy
- 12) **RODOLFO SCHIAVO** (Italy)
Cittadinanza Attiva
- 13) **MARCO IOB** (Italy)
*CeVI – Centro di Volontariato internazionale
/ Campagna Acqua bene comune*

Parliamentarians

1. Francis WURTZ (France)
European Parliamentarian - President of the GUE /NGL
2. Paul LANNOYE (Belgio)
European Parliamentarian. Greens/ALE. Author of the European Parliament Report “Water and Politics for Development”
3. Fidèle HIEN (Burkina Faso)
Member of the National Parliament
4. Francesco MARTONE (Italy)
Senator, Association of Parliamentarians and Elected Officials for the Global Contract for Water
5. Aloisio MERCADANTE (Brasil)
Senator and Head of the PT
6. Ernst Ulrich von WEIZSÄCKER (Germany)
Parliamentarian and President of the Environmental Commission

European Parliamentarians who abide by the principles

7. ENRIQUE BARON CRESPO (E) - *President of the PSE*
8. MICHEL SCARBONCHI (I) - *National Secretary of the MRC*
9. ELENA ORNELLA PACIOTTI (I) - *PSE*
10. HAREM DESIR (F) - *PSE*
11. DANIELLE DARRAS - *PSE*
12. CLAUDIO FAVA (I) - *PSE*
13. ANTONIO DI PIETRO (I) - *ELDR*
14. ALAIN SAVARY (F) - *PSE*
15. MASSIMO CARRARO (I) - *PSE*
16. FAUSTO BERTINOTTI (I) - *GUE/NGL*
17. LUIGI VINCI (I) - *GUE/NGL*
18. LUISA MORGANTINI (I) - *GUE/NGL*
19. GIUSEPPE DI LELLO FINUOLI (I) - *GUE/NGL*

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