

Letter of the European Water Movement to the EU Parliamentarians about next 2023 UN Water Conference

In view of the convocation by the UN General Assembly of the Conference on the complete mid-term review of implementation of the goals fixed in the International Decade for Action “Water for a sustainable development 2018-2028” (**2023 UN Water Conference**), to be held in **New York from the 22nd to the 24th of March 2023**, we, **movements, networks, NGOs, trade unions, that are members of the European Water Movement (EWM)**, invite the **EU Parliament and all the MEPs to actively contribute and participate to the events of the aforesaid UN Water Conference.**

The European Union's Department of International Relations has developed a common position paper for Member States (MS) with topics to be addressed in the interactive dialogues of the Conference. The suggested topics include governance, climate adaptation and financing.

Regarding this position paper, the European Water Movement (EWM) shares the EU stance on the necessity to **implement a Human Rights-based perspective for water management and governance, ensuring the affordability of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation (HRWS) and the good ecological status of water bodies**, underlining the need to **improve accountability and transparency**, and to **regulate and control the involvement of the private sector and its risks for the HRWS guarantee.**

In this regard we would like to mention the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) “Right2Water”**, promoted by the **European Public Service Union (EPSU) and the EWM in 2012. ECI collected more than 1.8 million signatures advocating for the recognition and guarantee of the HRWS in the EU.** The Resolution of the EU Parliament of 8 September 2015 on the follow-up to the ECI and the vague inclusion of the right to water in the recent Drinking Water Directive constitute a small step forward. However, ten years after the ECI, the EU still does not fully recognize and guarantee the HRWS as stipulated in the UN Resolution 64/292 and in the ECI.

We also value the recognition of the urge to adapt water management to climate change and thus protect essential productive sectors such as agriculture, energy and urban planning, among others. However, **restoring the natural water cycle must first be understood as the key to mitigate climate change itself, providing sufficient water in flow and quantity for healthy and sustainable ecosystems, and ensuring access to water and sanitation services for all.** And thus guarantee the viability of productive systems, which depend on humans and nature. In this sense, access to water and sanitation services for all must be prioritised over productive uses.

The EU itself acknowledges the negative impacts on European rivers ecosystems caused by hydropower production and development. To the same end, **we call for compliance with the Water Framework Directive, whose environmental objectives require the achievement of "good ecological status" of all water bodies, prior and sine qua non condition for energy generation or any other form of production.**

In this context, we demand that the issue of water be addressed at the top of the UN agenda, in its quality of essential substance of life, as a natural Human Right and as

a common good excluded by any commodification, financialisation and privatisation. It is imperative that debates on water as a common good and human right be oriented towards the public interest and not shaped by the interests of corporations and global markets. To this regard, **the EU and its positioning must abandon the mantra of private and innovative financing schemes. The water cycle management must be undertaken publicly through public funding.**

From the EWM and in coordination with the international water movement, [the People's Water Forum](#), we have been following and participating in the process towards the UN Water Conference.

It's urgent and necessary to maintain and deepen the dialogue among all the social and institutional actors that strive for water as human right and common good so as to assure them a full participation and to avoid that the 2023 UN Water Conference be co-opted by private interests and environmental looters. In view of our experience, the risk of ending up in an undemocratic debate is real given the exclusion from participation in the Conference of many social realities and networks from all over the world, despite their consistency, relevance and recognized global value. In fact, **no member of the European Water Movement has been invited to the EU Informal Water Expert Group that elaborated the EU position with the supposed participation of Civil Society Organizations.**

All of us must mobilise in order to find socio-ecological alternatives that preserve life on our planet and assure the well-being of our communities and cities. **We ask your participation in this task and your firm support for a democratic governance framework of the water cycle out of any commodification, financialization and privatisation. We urge you to participate in our initiatives and to invite us to those you will set up at Community level or in individual Member States. We ask for your best effort for the implementation of the HRWS both on our continent and worldwide as well as at the proceedings of the UN Water Conference that many of you will surely attend.**

EUROPEAN WATER MOVEMENT