



## **OUR WATER, OUR RIGHT AFRICA COALITION** **POSITION STATEMENT**

13 October 2021

We, the representatives of civil society organisations and labour activists working towards water justice across the African continent, stand opposed to the privatisation of water in Africa under every guise.

In recognition of October 11-15 as Africa Week of Action Against Water Privatisation, we hereby make the following statements:

- ◆ As declared by the United Nations (UN) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “The right to water clearly falls within the category of guarantees essential for securing an adequate standard of living, particularly since it is one of the most fundamental conditions for survival.”<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Water, water facilities and services ought to be affordable for all— according to the UN, the cost of water should not exceed 3 percent of household income.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ Safe water is a human right and should be so considered by governments across the continent.
- ◆ Water should never be controlled by corporations or run for profit, especially to the detriment of the people.
- ◆ Governments must do everything in their power to meet their obligation to fulfil and protect this right for all people.
- ◆ Lack of access to water has grave implications for poor communities, women, and girls, and the most vulnerable in our society.
- ◆ According to UNICEF and the World Health Organization, 2.2 billion people – many of them in Africa – do not have access to safe water services, while nearly double that number do not have access to safe sanitation services.<sup>3</sup> This leads to millions of people falling ill to preventable diseases. This is a tragic reality.
- ◆ Privatisation, under every guise, consistently undermines the ability of the poor to access these services and fails to address water access issues.
- ◆ The World Bank Group’s promotion of the privatisation myth has given leverage to corporations to seize control of water systems and resources that most Africans rely upon. This is detrimental to the people.
- ◆ We agree with Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), and Sergio Vieira de Mello, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, that “The right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water, and it must be enjoyed without discrimination and equally by women and men.”<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Women, excluded communities, and the vulnerable must be part of decision-making processes that seek to increase water access and address the political, social, and economic inequalities inherent in the present scheme of things.

1 United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 15, 2003

2 United Nations, Global Issues: Water, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/water>

3 World Health Organization and UNICEF, “Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2000-2017: Special focus on inequalities,” 2019

4 *The Right to Water*, World Health Organization, 2003, pg. 3

## **We hereby make the following calls:**

### **To African States**

- ◆ Reject all forms of corporate control of water and privatisation of water services, including through so-called “public-private partnerships.”
- ◆ Rise to your obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil the human right to water for all people by prioritising robust public investment, ensuring meaningful public participation in water governance (with particular focus on the perspectives of those typically left out of decision-making, namely women, low-income, and rural communities), and enshrining the human right to water in law.
- ◆ Respect and protect the livelihood of workers by ensuring safe working conditions, protection from retribution for raising complaints, and investment in salaries and pensions reflective of the public service these workers undertake every day.
- ◆ Resist pressure from international financial institutions, private water corporations, and other financial actors to commercialise the water sector and, instead, ensure universal access to safe water regardless of the ability to pay.
- ◆ Prohibit public officials from holding positions in the private water industry for 10 years preceding and after their tenure in the public sector to prevent a revolving door or conflict of interest.

### **To Private Water Corporations**

- ◆ Stop all attempts to privatise Africa’s water systems, including through so-called “public-private partnerships,” as they are a direct threat to our human right to water.
- ◆ Revert control of all existing private water contracts and assets to the public sector.
- ◆ Withdraw any existing legal challenges against states for decisions made in the public interest and discontinue the use or threat of investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) action as it undermines state sovereignty and the ability to regulate in the public interest.
- ◆ Desist from undermining the human right to water through closed-door deals with states.

### **To International Financial Institutions and Multilateral/Bilateral Development Banks & Agencies**

- ◆ Stop pushing water privatisation, commercialisation, and financialisation on African states through advisory services, loans and grants, or other programs.
- ◆ Divest from all private water corporations and end all financial support for the private water industry, including through financial intermediaries, as this represents a glaring conflict of interest.
- ◆ Cease all promotion of water privatisation, including so-called “public-private partnerships,” given the private water industry’s well-documented track record of human rights and labour abuses.
- ◆ Excise privatisation of essential services from all COVID-19-related recovery initiatives and long-term plans.
- ◆ Halt all efforts to impose the neoliberal agenda of austerity, deregulation, and privatisation on states, in recognition of this model’s devastating impacts on public health, the environment, workers, and human rights.
- ◆ Immediately and unconditionally forgive the debt of states facing sovereign debt crises, especially where this debt is related to water sector loans.
- ◆ Stop standing in the way of states’ ability to raise the tax revenue necessary to invest in essential services and fulfil their human rights obligations.

### **To Regional Intergovernmental Bodies**

*The African Union, Economic Community of West African States, Economic Community of Central African States, East African Community, and Southern African Development Community, among others*

- ◆ Foster regional solidarity and collaboration by supporting Public-Public Partnerships in the water sector and other essential services.
- ◆ Intervene when the human right to water is under threat in your member states with financial and diplomatic action.

## **The Our Water, Our Right Africa Coalition**

**African Center for Advocacy**, Cameroon

**Amalgamated Union of Public Corporation Civil Service and Recreational Service Employees (AUPCTRE)**, Nigeria

**Biodiversity and Biosafety Association of Kenya (BIBA)**, Kenya

**Centre de Recherche et d'Action sur les Droits Economiques Sociaux et Culturels (CRADESC)**, Senegal

**Confédération de Syndicats Autonomes du Sénégal**, Senegal

**Corporate Accountability & Public Participation Africa (CAPPA)**, Nigeria

**Corporate Accountability**, International

**Génération Eau Claire**, Gabon

**Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC)**, Ghana

**Justiça Ambiental Moçambique**, Mozambique

**Public Services International**, International

**Public Utility Workers' Union of Trades Union Congress**, Ghana

**Syndicat National Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Energie et de l'Eau du Cameroon (SYNATEEC)**, Cameroon

**Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development**, Uganda

**Uganda Public Employees Union**, Uganda

**Union of Kenya Civil Servants**, Kenya

### **This position statement is endorsed by:**

1for3.org, USA

350 Seattle, USA

Advocacy Coalition for sustainable Agriculture, Uganda

Africa Education Watch, Ghana

Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network (AEFJN), International

African Center for Advocacy, Cameroun

Alliance for Water Justice in Palestine, USA

Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees, Nigeria

Ambiente, Desarrollo y Capacitación (ADC), Honduras

AMOCA, Moçambique  
ASEED, The Netherlands  
Asha Parivar, India  
Asogapa, Colombia  
Associação UKULA, Moçambique  
Association des Jeunes Volontaires pour l'environnement , Cameroun  
Association For Promotion Sustainable Development, India  
Ayni Institute, USA  
Biodiversity and Biosafety Association of Kenya , Kenya  
Blue Planet Project, International  
Cadre de Concertation sur la Réforme des Services de Sécurité et la Justice (CCRSSJ),  
République Démocratique du Congo  
Center for Sustainable Community Development (SCODE), Vietnam  
Centre for Environmental Justice Togo, Togo  
Centre for Research and Advocacy Manipur , International  
Centro de Jornalismo Investigativo, Mozambique  
Centro di Volontariato Internazionale (CeVI), Italy  
Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation, Nigeria  
Civil Rights Activism Centre (CRAC), South Africa  
CNS, UK  
Codesa, Moçambique  
Comite Ecumenico Para o Desenvolvimento Social - CEDES, Moçambique  
Community Action Works, USA  
Comoserpopayán, Colombia  
Coordination EAU Île-de-France, France  
Corporate Accountability, International  
Corporate Accountability & Public Participation Africa, Nigeria  
Earth Thrive, Europe  
Eau Secours 34, France  
Educar Consumidores, Colombia  
EMPOWER INDIA, India

End Water Poverty, UK  
Environmental Defender Law Center, USA  
Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN), Nigeria  
Fannie Lou Hamer Institute, USA  
Federacion de Trabajadores del agua Potable del Perú (FENTAP), Perú  
Femmes Côte d'Ivoire Expérience (FCIEX), Côte d'Ivoire  
Fenceline Watch, USA  
Firelight Foundation, USA  
Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, France  
Food & Water Action Europe, Europe  
Food & Water Watch, USA  
Foundation for the Conservation of the Earth (FOCONE), Nigeria  
Frente de lucha ambiental Delia Villalba, Uruguay  
Frontera Water Protection Alliance, USA  
Grupo Semillas, Colombia  
GSB, Moçambique  
IDEALSAFRICA, Uganda  
Institute of the Black World 21st Century, USA  
Institute of Church and Society, Ibadan (CCN), Nigeria  
International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) Pax Romana, Asia Pacific, The Philippines  
International Movement of Catholic Studnets IMCS Pax Romana Pan African Coordination, Africa  
International Student Environmental Coalition, Cameroon  
Joint Action Front, Nigeria  
Jornal Ikweli, Moçambique  
Jubilee Scotland, UK  
Justiça Ambiental, Moçambique  
Justiça Global, Brasil  
Kalangala District NGO Forum, Uganda  
Katleb Engineering and Building Contractors Ltd, Uganda

Koyenum Immalah Foundation, Nigeria  
Ladlad Caraga Inc., The Philippines  
Legal Resources Centre, South Africa  
Les Amis de la Terre-Togo, Togo  
Media Alliance, USA  
Municipal Services Project, Canada  
Nataraj Family Foundation, USA  
National African American Reparations Commission, USA  
National Coalition for Education India (NCE), India  
National Fisheries Solidarity, Sri Lanka  
North-East Affected Area Development Society (NEADS), India  
PAIRVI, India  
Participatory Research Action Network (PRAAN), Bangladesh  
Peace and Development Projects (PEDEP), Nigeria  
Pittsburgh United, USA  
Possible Futures, The Philippines  
Resource Generation Philly, USA  
Revenue Mobilization Africa (RMA), Ghana  
RIGHTS Foundation, Indonesia  
RISC, Moçambique  
Rural Development Media & Communication, Uganda  
SETEM Catalunya, Spain  
Small Planet Institute, USA  
Social Action International, Nigeria  
Socialist Party, India  
SODECA, Kenya  
Solidaire Network, USA  
South Worcestershire Methodist Churches, UK  
Sudanese Community Malta, Malta  
The Artist Network, Malaysia

The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, France

The Karibu Foundation, Norway

Thubutu Africa Initiatives (TAI), Tanzania

Transnational Institute, Belgium

Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development / East African Sustainability Watch Network,  
Uganda

UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab | People of African Descent & the SDGs E-Team, Europe

Uprooted & Rising Boston, USA

Walking Water, USA

Water Citizens Network, Ghana

Windrose Fund, USA

Women's Leadership Centre, Namibia

YOUNG WOMEN DESTINATION, Rwanda