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.”
- 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.
- 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. 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.”
- 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
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 privatisate 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**
- 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 Cameroun (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, Maçambique
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 Artivist 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