

World Water Day 2023 Press Statement

22 March 2023

Our Water, Our Right: Africans urge leaders to “accelerate change” away from false solution of water privatisation on World Water Day

In commemoration of World Water Day 2023, civil society, labour, and community activists leading the Our Water, Our Right Africa Coalition (OWORAC) call on local, national, and regional leaders to heed the lessons of history by once and for all abandoning the false solution of water privatisation under any guise.

The OWORAC – comprised of activists and trade unionists in Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda amongst other African countries – condemns the alarming rise of neocolonial efforts to turn over control of essential services to multinational corporations which seek to exploit our need for water to profit.

The theme for this year’s World Water Day is “Accelerating Change.” **It is abundantly clear, from the decades of failed experiments with water privatisation, that we must accelerate change away from this exploitative model and towards public ownership and control.** We must also accelerate public investments and ensure accountability of public officials who hold an obligation to serve the interests of the masses, not the privileged few.

This week, as governments, civil society, and the corporate sector convene in New York City for the United Nations Water Conference, the daily realities of the water crisis are felt by hundreds of millions throughout the African continent.

The continued role of water privatising corporations and their representatives in shaping the agenda and priorities of the UN Water Conference and UN Water more broadly undermine the legitimacy of these spaces. The involvement of AquaFed, the organisation representing this abusive industry on the world stage, in coordinating World Water Day is entirely inappropriate and must end. Preventing corporate capture is essential if the continent is to meet the Strategic Development Goal 6 which advocates for availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by year 2030.

The OWORAC, which launched in October 2021 in response to the deepening global water crisis and disaster capitalism which the pandemic opened the floodgates to, detailed the real world impacts of water privatisation on communities in its report [*Africa Must Rise & Resist Water Privatisation*](#).

Disturbing accounts of the abuses of multinational corporations such as Veolia and Suez, both members of AquaFed, have led communities across the continent to reject water privatisation in its many forms, including so-called “public-private partnerships.”

Akinbode Oluwafemi, Executive Director of Corporate Accountability & Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), speaking on behalf of the OWORAC said:

“The theme of this year’s World Water Day commemoration reinforces the need for governments to look unto proven solutions to the water crisis on the continent within the realm of democratic community controlled and publicly funded options. Water privatization is a failed option which only puts profits above people.”

Sani Baba, Regional Secretary for Africa & Arab Countries at global union federation Public Services International (PSI), said:

“Water privatisation robs communities of their right to life and wellbeing in the same way it also robs workers of their right to decent work. African governments must refuse to pander to the dictates of the World Bank and other institutions that want to colonize our water resources.”

The focus of the 2023 World Water Day is on accelerating change to solve the water and sanitation crisis. The global campaign, called Be the change, “encourages people to act in their own lives to change the way they use, consume and manage water.”¹

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¹ <https://www.unwater.org/news/world-water-day-2023>