

## **Water Is Life**

### A Civil Society World Water Vision for Action

The signatory groups to this Civil Society World Water Vision for Action reject the founding principles of the World Water Council Vision Statement which was adopted at the 2nd World Water Forum in The Hague and which underlie the policies and plans for the 3rd World Water Forum in March 2003, for the following reasons:

- The Vision proposes a model for water management that relinquishes all control over water resources to the private sector through commercialization, privatization, and large-scale development;
- It prioritizes water use for large-scale industrial agriculture at the expense of small-scale, communal, and traditional practices of indigenous and peasant peoples;
- It promotes the expansion of genetically modified seeds for the purpose of "economizing" water use, thereby threatening the biodiversity and cultural integrity of the planet and its peoples;
- The World Water Council is an unrepresentative and undemocratic body that derives its influence from an exclusive membership of international financial institutions, large multinational water corporations, and non-governmental organizations tied to these interests;
- The WWC and its Vision proclaim to have achieved a "consensus" on the future of the world's water without any consultation, discussion, or approval by grassroots organizations that represent the peoples of the world.

This model is being standardized globally, thereby destroying the diversity of water ecosystems and the peoples who rely on them, and will lead to the cartelisation of the world's freshwater resources, ecological devastation, and the death of millions, perhaps billions, of the world's people.

Water belongs to the earth and all species for all time. It is an inalienable human right and a public trust to be protected and nurtured by all peoples, communities and nations, and the bodies that represent them at the local, state, and international level. Based on these unwavering principles, we make the following claims:

Water is not a commodity and must not be left to the whims of the market because no person or entity has the right to profit from it. Water must not, therefore, be commodified, privatized, traded or exported for commercial gain. Water must be excluded as a "good", a "service" and an "investment" in all international, regional and bilateral trade agreements.

Every human being has the right to clean water. We demand that governments of the world substantially increase spending on clean water and sanitation for poor people with little or no access. We affirm that by reducing current astronomical levels of military spending that clean and safe water can be provided for every living person on this planet. We maintain that debt cancellation is essential for water security in poor countries, and demand that privatization cease to be used as a condition on international lending.

We proclaim that the key to the sustainable provision of water for life is the maintenance and protection of the ecological integrity of all ecosystems. We call for the adoption and implementation of a restoration agenda for the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems. Further, we proclaim that a water-secure future is incompatible with industrial farming and the monopoly control of food and seeds by a small number of corporations. We support the goal of self-reliance in food production. We also consider large-scale water development projects such as mega-dams to be ecologically and socially unsustainable. As such, a water-secure future is dependent upon the acknowledgement, respect, and protection of the rights of indigenous, peasant, and fisher peoples and their traditional knowledge. We insist that the voices of these groups and of women around the world be given a central place in water management issues, as these are the communities most affected by water insecurity.

Water, as a public trust and an inalienable human right, must be controlled by the peoples and communities that rely on it for their lives and livelihoods. The management of water services must not only remain in public hands, but must be revitalized and strengthened to make community and worker participation central in order to democratize decision-making processes and ensure transparency and accountability. This participation must be extended to the state, regional, and international level in all decisions pertaining to water resources. Furthermore, all water resource development projects must be based on respect for the rights of

affected communities and must provide full and meaningful participation in decision-making.

Finally, we proclaim that the management and protection of the world's water resources must absolutely be based on the principles of justice, solidarity, reciprocity, equity, diversity, and sustainability, because water is a human right. As stated in the Porto Alegre Declaration of 2002, we call upon all legislators and parliamentarians to take the necessary steps to encode this vision. Furthermore, in opposition to the 3rd World Water Forum meeting in Kyoto, water activists are gathering together in water social forums\* in Florence, Italy; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Accra, Ghana; New York City, USA; and New Delhi, India, which will coalesce in an alternative worldwide assembly on the future of water.

\*The forums are as follows:

- 1st People World Water Forum; Florence, Italy (March 21-22)
- Social Water Forum (March 16-23)
- African Conference on Water; Accra, Ghana (date to be determined)
- Water Water Conference and Festival; New York City (March 16 -23)
- Peoples' National Water Forum; New Delhi, India (March 15-16)

*(Source: From Public Citizen , USA)*