

- HAS NOT BEEN DELIVERED-
Focus area on Water and Sanitation

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair,

For the Mining Working Group – since water is life, sustains life, and has independent rights to integrity, water must not be considered a commodity to be bartered for profit.

While we agree with the need for a water-secure world, such a world cannot be realized unless water is sustainable and equitably available to all and acknowledged as a public good.

As we probe water related challenges, to be just and transformative we must look beyond symptoms to systemic and root causes of global water injustices – including unjust use, scarcity, privatization, commodification, overconsumption, contamination, and freshwater loss. What are the forces driving this? We have to ask: Who is benefiting? Who is bearing the burden?

At the PGA session a couple weeks ago, the Special Rapporteur on water and sanitation urged us to prioritize the progressive elimination of inequalities in water and sanitation with a focus on the most marginalized groups, on women and girls, and on the rural poor. She warned us that, quote: "an appearance of progress is masking profound injustices."

Therefore, we agree with the assertions in the focus area document that:

1. the pollution of and dumping of toxic materials in water bodies must cease, aquifers must be protected
2. and that we must protect and restore water-linked ecosystems

Deliberations must also include:

1. Guarantee and realization of the right to water and sanitation;
2. Recognition of water as a public good, protected as a public trust and not commodified or privatized;
3. Public financing and investment in adequate facilities and infrastructure;
4. Prioritizing water for human consumption, food production, watershed protection, care of vital ecosystems – rather than for industrial consumption or unsustainable energy production;
5. Effective public and local water governance;
6. Wastewater management that is transparent, effective and just;
7. A moratorium on extractives where vital water supply to local communities, farmers, indigenous peoples, and fishing communities is limited;
8. Recognition of human and environmental rights violations of water by State and non-State actors.

Finally, we have to recognize additional key interlinkages and connect gender, climate change, human rights, environmental protection, health, and chemicals to the issue of water.

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Aine O'Connor, Sisters of Mercy, on behalf of the Mining Working Group