

*PEOPLE, PLANET AND WATER  
MEETINGS*

**EAU  
PLANETE  
ET PEUPLES**

*LET'S CHANGE THE PARADIGM  
FOR WATER!*





## CONTENTS

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*Water, the commons of humanity  
and the living world ... 3*

*WATER & RIGHTS ... 4*

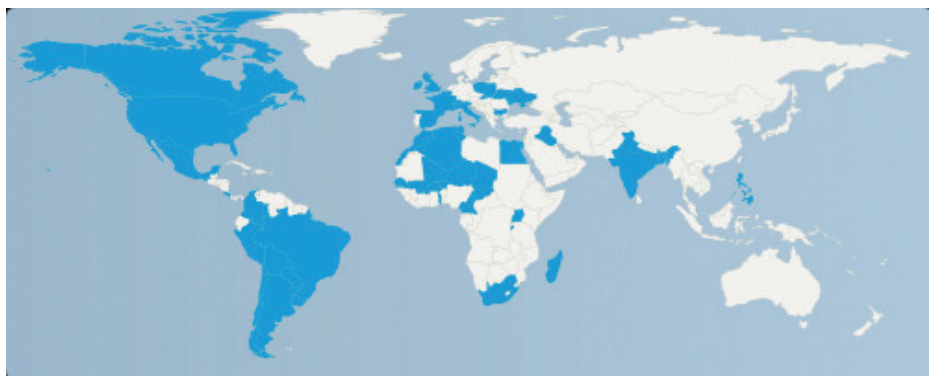
*WATER & ENERGY ... 6*

*WATER & AGRICULTURE ... 8*

*WATER & THE CLIMATE ... 10*

*Let us return water to its rightful place! ... 12*

People, Planet and Water: international meetings



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## *Water, the commons of humanity and the living world*

Since their launch in March 2012, the People, Planet and Water meetings have been attended by dozens of civil society organisations from around the world, who have come together to share their experiences and their vision for the essential resource that is water. **We are united by a common belief: that water is a universal common good and life-sustaining resource that needs to be protected.**

At the second People, Planet and Water meeting held in March 2015 at the World Social Forum in Tunis, we were proud to present **our proposals for a new paradigm for water**, particularly on issues relating to the human right to water and sanitation, the climate, agriculture and energy.

As part of negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change agreements, we call on the international community and governments to take all steps necessary to implement the human right to water and sanitation, promote sustainable energy solutions that respect the water resource, focus on family farming and agro-ecological practices and restore the water cycle to tackle climate change. And this with an essential cross-cutting requirement: **that of involving the public in all aspects of water-related decision-making.**





# WATER & RIGHTS

The right to water and sanitation was recognised as a human right by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 28th July 2010. However, this right will only become a reality for all when it is properly understood and implemented. **Each State bears the responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of this right within their territory**, not only by making this an inalienable right, but also by ensuring the various criteria (accessibility, availability, quality, affordability, sustainability) and principles (non-discrimination, participation, accountability, transparency, access to information, etc.) are met. This requires real political will and sufficient funding.

To make it truly enforceable, the right to water and sanitation must be **enshrined in domestic legislation** so that people can invoke this right and have recourse to the relevant courts if their rights are denied or violated.

It is vital that the criteria specifying the content of the human right to water and sanitation are met to ensure all people have sustainable access to **sufficient quantities of safe and affordable water and accessible, affordable, hygienic and socially and culturally acceptable sanitation services**.

It is also essential that people, particularly those to whom these rights are being denied, are involved in all aspects of **water-related decision-making** to improve management of the resource and ensure universal access. This involvement must be based on free, full and meaningful participation.

Governments are accountable to their citizens, who must be informed of their rights and able to enforce them. **Access to information, transparency, and knowledge and capacity building** are vital for enabling people to carry out citizen-led monitoring and ensuring the human right to water and sanitation is effectively implemented.

Lastly, for the effective implementation of the human right to water and sanitation to be achieved, this right must be taken into account at both the international and national levels and there must be greater **experience-sharing between countries**.

We call on the international community and governments  
**TO MAKE THE RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION  
A TRULY EFFECTIVE RIGHT**

**1** By making it enforceable, which means enshrining it in domestic legislation.

**2** By setting up regulatory and oversight mechanisms so that people can claim this right.

**3** By respecting and enforcing the criteria and principles of the right to water and sanitation.

**4** By involving all people in decision-making in line with the principles of effective participation, access to information, transparency and the accountability of governments towards their citizens.

**5** By allocating sufficient funding to implement this right.



# WATER & ENERGY

Our current energy model is no longer sustainable if we wish to successfully adapt to and tackle climate change. Energy transition is urgently needed and should focus on **renewable energy sources that do not compromise the sustainability of water resources**. For this transition to be successful, **energy planning needs to be made democratic** at both the local and national levels.

One of our energy model's most imminent threats is that being posed to our water resources by **shale gas and oil exploration activities**. The extraction process used leads to the planned destruction of our ecosystems and runs counter to both protecting the human right to water and tackling climate change.

It is thus vital that we are provided with **transparent information** on water use within the extractive industries to prevent these practices having an adverse effect on water, the environment and public health and safety. Formal social controls need to be put in place, which include **sanctions** that can be imposed against any party deemed responsible for causing social and environmental damage, along with a rehabilitation fund.

In the meantime, governments and multinationals continue to promote false solutions, such as large dams and nuclear energy: 'solutions' that are supposed to be environmentally-friendly but which, in reality, pose a threat to our water resources and put people's safety at risk.

Effective solutions are energy saving and efficient and should draw on **local and traditional energy production techniques**. **These techniques need to be explored and promoted** as they are well-adapted to their immediate environment and can help combat climate change.

We call on the international community and governments  
**TO IMPLEMENT AN ENERGY TRANSITION THAT  
RESPECTS WATER RESOURCES AND THE CLIMATE**

- 1** By banning hydraulic fracturing.
- 2** By promoting the development of renewable energies.
- 3** By refusing to accept false energy solutions, such as nuclear power.
- 4** By exploring and building on local and traditional techniques.
- 5** By making energy planning democratic.
- 6** By developing multiple energy solutions on the same site.

# WATER & AGRICULTURE

Although policy-makers and international agencies pay limited attention to the hardships they face, family farms have the capabilities to address **food security, social equity and environmental sustainability challenges**. However, not only do they need land to achieve this, they also crucially need access to water. Family farms are able to adapt their practices to the water resources available to them, whether using rainfed or irrigated systems.

Small-scale irrigation systems very often involve creating cooperatives to manage access to water, maintain the equipment and resolve conflict. They can thus help build social cohesion and self-regulate the volumes consumed. They draw on local knowledge and adapted techniques that protect the ecosystems, which work to ensure that the farming practices used are environmentally sustainable.

However, **policy-makers and donors prefer instead to promote the large-scale irrigation schemes of agribusiness and contract farming** (a type of partnership between farmers and the agro-industry, which is often disadvantageous to the farmers). In addition to the widespread land grabbing taking place around the world, we are also seeing smallholders and family farms deprived of their water resources.

Thus, we need to find a way of securing water for the world's farmers and of regulating the dominant agricultural models, which are incompatible with the interests of society as a whole.

We call on the international community and governments  
**TO INITIATE A PARADIGM SHIFT  
IN THE AGRICULTURAL MODELS USED**

# 1

By supporting **family farming**, which helps create **wealth and jobs** and is able to adapt to water scarcity and address current **food security and social equity challenges**.

# 2

By strictly and stringently **regulating** major capitalist developments that take over extremely large swathes of land and fail to consider the impact they have on groundwater reserves, surface water or on the people who rely on this water to live.

# 3

By **investing** in techniques that increase the availability of and sustainably use water, particularly those based on **agroecology** principles;

# 4

By establishing ongoing **democratic dialogue** on preserving water as a commons and discussing alternatives to using water for agriculture, as well as defining governance models that best serve the **general interest**.

# WATER & THE CLIMATE

At COP21, governments will need to review international water management policy in order to assess the long-term impacts of its economic management and highlight the need for **democratic and integrated management**.

Water plays a key role in climate change. For people throughout the world, climate change most notably manifests itself through water and, conversely, **human-induced disruption to the water cycle also affects the climate**.

By sealing the soil in our towns and countryside and by overexploiting our aquifers and rivers for energy and industrial use, we are preventing water from soaking into the soil and replenishing the aquifers and are instead increasing surface runoff. The amount of available groundwater is falling whilst sea levels are rising. Through the resulting changes to the evaporation process and increases in temperature over dried out land, this disruption to the water cycle is contributing to climate change.

**By restoring the water cycle, we actually have the power to have a positive impact on the climate**, notably by curbing extreme weather events.

Whether at the regional or local levels, **we all need to play a part** if we are to effectively address this disruption to the water cycle and tackle climate change.

We call on the international community and governments  
TO TAKE ACTION TO RETURN WATER TO ITS RIGHTFUL  
PLACE WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENT AND IN OUR LIVES

**1** By supporting **research** into the impacts of our water resource management on the climate;

**2** By encouraging the use of **techniques** that minimise runoff and water extraction from rivers and aquifers, notably rainwater harvesting or increasing the variety of water uses prior to treatment.

**3** By **'unsealing' towns and cities**: nature needs to be returned to urban areas in order to restore local water cycles.

**4** By fully involving **communities** in water resources management and decision-making within their local area to improve the action taken.

*In 2015, let us return water to its rightful place!*

**Water is the commons of all humankind.** We rely on it for our food, our energy, our climate and, quite simply, we rely on it to live.

As such, it is vital that integrated water resources management is implemented worldwide in order to minimise the impact of human activities on the climate whilst ensuring everyone is able to effectively exercise their right to water.

It is now necessary to establish ongoing **democratic dialogue** on preserving water as a commons, on finding alternatives to using water, on effective governance and, more generally, on underlying development models.

There is currently no specific body with direct responsibility for water governance within the United Nations system. We therefore call for a representative, **international water agency** to be created that is empowered with real decision-making authority.

Now more than ever, we need to start changing **the way we live on our planet.** Our development model and accompanying water resources management are no longer sustainable and are jeopardising the right to water of current and future generations.

We all – the international community, governments, citizens – **share the responsibility** of ensuring our societies make the right energy, social, economic and **political changes.**



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