



From: Blue Planet Project
To: UN 2023 Water Conference
Re: Preparatory Meeting for the UN 2023 Water Conference

October 27th, 2022

Towards the 2023 UN Water Conference: An Appeal in Defense of Water

In light of the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Conference on the Comprehensive Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Goals of the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development' 2018-2028 (the 2023 UN Water Conference) in New York, March 22-24 and the UN Human Rights Council Social Forum on Water and Sustainable Development, Geneva, November 3-4, 2022, the Blue Planet Project, as a member of the Global Water Justice Movement, challenges: the corporate capture of decision-making on water; the promotion of private financing, management and ownership of water and sanitation systems and; market-based solutions to drought and water scarcity.

As the world faces the compounded impacts of economic crisis, a global pandemic and climate chaos, we demand that world leaders seize this opportunity to promote solutions that protect water for people and the planet, not profit. We demand that the UN promote global discussions to defend water as a common good that is the essence of life and that should never be subject to commodification, commercialization and financialization. It is imperative that intergovernmental discussions be driven by human rights and the public interest rather than corporate and financial interests.

UN-Water declared in 2020 that the world was “alarmingly off-track” on SDG 6. Yet the agency is championing “innovative mechanisms” to increase private financing of water and sanitation services, particularly for the most marginalized and vulnerable populations. We have already learned the lessons of failed privatization schemes through structural adjustment programmes in the Global South. Water privatization leads to water deprivation. We demand that water, its uses and management be governed by democratic mechanisms and a human rights agenda, not the market.

We call for the presence and voices in these UN processes of Indigenous peoples, peasants, people living in informal settlements, migrants, people living at the intersections of class, gender, caste and race-based oppression, and other frontline communities with lived experience of water deprivation and dispossession. We also call for the presence of community and public water operators, unions, social movements, NGOs and faith-based communities who are championing just and equitable alternatives to privatization and market-based solutions.

The 2023 UN Water Conference is of vital importance. Within the framework of the United Nations' Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation Pedro Arrojo-Agudo's report to the 2023 Conference, we urge countries, delegations, organizations and social movements to defend the human right to water and promote democratic processes to ensure the just and equitable transitions necessary to preserve life on the planet for generations to come.

Blue Planet Project