



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
MARCH
2023

Special Event

Reducing Inequalities, implementing human rights

Thu 23 March 2023, 10.00 am

Co-organized by Women for Water Partnership, AquaFed, FILAC, African Youth Parliament for Water, UN OHCHR, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation, International Indian Treaty Council, representing the Indigenous Peoples Coalition

Background

Clean water and sanitation access touches the lives of every human being on the planet, so water and sanitation as human rights must be acknowledged by all and put into national and international law, policies and programmes. Specifically taking measures to reduce inequalities and implement human rights rapidly accelerates progress to SDG6 and other SDG targets.

The overall aim of this Special Event is to influence Member States and other decision-makers to prioritize the reduction of inequalities through inter alia inclusivity, implementing human rights-based approaches and integrated water resources and community-based governance and management, to advance SDG6 and other SDGs.

The event will demonstrate the value of ensuring rights-holders' meaningful, democratic and equal participation in water governance. Special attention will be paid to women as water carriers but also custodians and professionals in their own right; Indigenous Peoples as practitioners and caretakers of millennial knowledge systems; and to the youth who must take the future that is theirs into their own hands.

The event will be carried out in a way that ensures stakeholders and rights holders engage decision-makers (duty bearers) to take concrete action.

It will offer clear action-oriented solutions, based on methodologies, promising practices, and lessons learned over time. The event will build on these experiences to share scalable and replicable promising practices and experiences in other countries and regions to encourage that actors enter commitments into the Water Action Agenda.



Objectives

- To promote 'game-changer actions' that accelerate human rights and the reduction of inequalities and marginalization in water and sanitation, in the second half of the Water Action Decade for Sustainable Development.
- To show States that implementing and guaranteeing human rights and meaningfully involving youth, women and indigenous peoples and their representatives, reduces inequalities faster and more effectively and sustainably.
- To convince all involved, through evidence, to use a watershed approach and increase understanding of the importance of aquatic ecosystems treatments and balanced sustainable uses while respecting rights holders and customers uses and users.
- To underscore the right to water as a cross cutting, transversal human right closely tied to, *inter alia*, the rights to health, life, food and subsistence, rights of human rights and water defenders, lands and territories, culture and spirituality, development, rights of the child, and, for, Indigenous Peoples, the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent.
- To be inclusive, interactive, and complementary to the discussions in the Interactive Dialogues, particularly Dialogues 1 and 5.

Key messages to States and Non-State Actors

- Specifically taking measures to reduce inequalities and implement human rights rapidly accelerates progress to SDG6 and other SDG targets.
- Clean water and sanitation access touches the lives of every human being on the planet, so water and sanitation as human rights must be acknowledged by all and put into national and international law, policies and programmes.
- Building from local and regional to national to reduce inequalities is crucial.
- Respect, protect and care for water with the knowledge and experience of Indigenous Peoples, women and youth, combining it with other knowledge and data.
- Measuring and evaluating progress is crucial to effectively accelerate the achievement of SDGs targets, incorporating human rights and cultural diversity in the development of benchmarks and evaluation frameworks.
- Cooperation between stakeholder groups (incl. government) and rights-holders (including water defenders) is essential and needs to be facilitated.





How will this Special Event contribute to the Water Action Agenda?

The key outcome for this session is a set of concrete action-oriented recommendations to become part of and enhance the Water Action Agenda.

To do this, States and Non-State Actors:

- Will be presented with a range of action-oriented recommendations and ideas for Commitments that reduce inequalities and implement human rights, that they can take to accelerate the implementation of the SDG 6 and the Water Action Agenda.
- Contribute or expand their own Commitments to the Water Action Agenda in line with their human rights obligations.

The recommendations will focus on:

- Ways to increase participation of women, youth and Indigenous Peoples in water governance at all levels and respecting and protecting indigenous knowledge on an equal footing with other types of knowledge
- Improving evidence-based governance and management of water resources including aquatic ecosystems. This includes disaggregated data collection and analysis including that collected by all individuals and communities
- Social justice and human rights as a foundation to build adequate and sustainable livelihoods that ensures access to water and sanitation for everyone's dignity, health, and well-being.

Content and format

The format of this Special Event is based on the assumptions that:

- the impacts of inequalities and a lack of implementation of human rights are similar and intertwined between Indigenous Peoples, women and youth.
- the impacts of inequalities and a lack of implementation of human rights affect indigenous peoples, women and youth to a greater extent.

The format is then structured into three sessions:

1. Introduction
2. Review of situations where inequalities exist and what is being done to tackle them, implement and protect human rights
3. How partnerships and collaboration can accelerate progress and what resources are needed.





In each session, concrete cases, experiences and information will be shared that are aligned with human rights standards and the framework of availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and acceptability).

Sessions will focus on:

- participation and inclusion
- accountability
- transparency
- the rule of law
- access to information
- equality and non-discrimination
- Sustainability and non-retrogressive measures
- Do no harm
- principles of responsible water management

Sessions will be organized using different formats and tools, including: panels, videos, presentations, music, poetry, audience participation and polls. Structured speeches will be limited and short presentations will be preferred.

This Special Event will be presenting the issues of Indigenous Peoples, Youth and Women together as much as possible in all the sessions.

Session 1: Introduction

Representatives (incl. at least 1 Indigenous Peoples, 1 Youth, 1 Women's Groups) will start with messages highlighting:

- an emergency statement about inequalities
- the case for why human rights must be implemented better by governments and monitored by independent stakeholders
- how the Special Event will propose good practice and realistic recommendations that will work.

Session 2: The current state and current solutions

Indigenous Peoples', women and youth groups set out their actions to overcome current challenges using a range of presentation methods. Other stakeholders may be invited to present some of their experiences / lessons learned.

The case studies and examples should follow a human rights-based approach and be in line with human rights standards and principles, specifically the human rights to





water and sanitation. They should be a global theme, e.g. lack of participation and inclusion, but grounded in specific national, local or regional examples.

The intention of this session is to present solutions that are available; the challenges that have been overcome to achieve progress; and the challenges that remain.

Session 3: How partnerships and collaboration can accelerate progress

In this session, representatives from Indigenous Peoples', women and youth as well as other stakeholders will discuss the type of partnerships they need and will pitch ideas to advance on SDG 6 implementation.

Along the way, representatives from Member States attending the Special Event will be invited to reflect on the discussions and share their views on how those could be translated into action on the ground..

Closing remarks will be provided by representatives of Indigenous Peoples, youth, and women and possibly other contributors (t.b.d.).

This event must be different and unconventional to make our messages stand out. We should aim to utilize a full range of techniques based on interactive dialogue at all levels:

- Short interactive presentations and strictly no speeches longer than 5 minutes.
- Live 1-2-1 interviews on stage
- Audience participation
- Panel debates (without any pre-prepared speeches) but ensure diverse and gender and age balanced.
- Video messages
- Short expression in dance, music, acting
- Live surveys
- Avoid "jargon" speak and make it very understandable
- Create a platform hub where everybody can give their background documents / links – quick access to knowledge and ideas

Organizing partners

- African Youth Parliament for Water
- AquaFed
- FILAC (Fondo para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas de América Latina y el Caribe)





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- International Indian Treaty Council, representing the Indigenous Peoples Coalition
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation
- Women for Water Partnership – advocacy-sc@womenforwater.org

Please note, as of 24 Feb 2023 all speaker slots for this session have been filled.



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