



Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

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The Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace (CSJP) is dedicated to peace through justice, which can only occur once we right our relationship with water. The CSJP is a member of the NGO Mining Working Group (MWG) and shares these written inputs on behalf of that coalition of over a dozen UN-NGOs.

In 2017, the MWG issued *A People's Guide to SDG 6: A rights-based approach to implementation*,¹ which analyzes the connection between achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6: Water and Sanitation and the human rights to water and to sanitation. It also proposes a four-step litmus test for policy-makers, advocates, and others to use when assessing water-related proposals. The recommendations offered in the *People's Guide* not only remain relevant, but have become more urgent.

As we approach the 2023 Water Conference, followed by the High Level Political Forum and SDG Summit, we again underscore the importance of water, as a sacred element essential to all life. Conference proceedings, including the Water Action Agenda, need to reflect worldviews which are grounded in interconnectedness, interdependence and relationship and speak to the sacred wisdom and experiences of Indigenous Peoples, spiritual communities, and faith groups, amongst others. We reiterate and build on the *People's Guide* with the following recommendations:

Rights-Based Approach

The human rights to water and to sanitation were formally recognized almost 13 years ago. While progress has been made in fulfilling these rights, including by spurring changes in national frameworks, much more needs to be done.

Alongside the rights to water and to sanitation, we highlight recognition of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly in 2021 and 2022 respectively. We note that safe, sufficient water and healthy freshwater ecosystems are substantive elements of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Accordingly, we call on States to:

- Respect, protect and fulfill the rights to water and sanitation as well as the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment;
- Develop a human rights-based approach towards achieving SDG 6; and
- Ensure the active participation of Indigenous peoples and other historically marginalized groups in the Water Action Agenda. Women and girls, especially rural and Indigenous women, have knowledge and experience that is critical for

¹ The Guide is available on the NGO Mining Working Group's website, at: <https://bit.ly/mwg-sdg6>

the achievement of SDG 6, and as such need to play a central role in the provision, management, and safeguarding of water.

Accountability of Businesses

We continue to witness the destructive impact that business enterprises, especially extractive industries, often have on water, people, and the environment at-large. It is clear that soft law principles, like the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, have not adequately ensured the protection of human rights, nor provided sufficient avenues for accountability and justice. We call on States to:

- Ensure that businesses operating in or otherwise under their jurisdiction undertake human rights and environmental due diligence, so that adverse impacts are avoided;
- Ensure access to remedy for individuals and communities that have had their right to water violated; and
- Constructively engage in negotiations towards a legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

Climate Change, Environmental Degradation & Mining

The failure of States to fulfill their obligations under international law and their commitments under the Paris Agreement has led us to the triple planetary crisis of pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change that we now face. The impact of climate change is inextricably linked to water.

While a renewable energy revolution is needed, it must not come with more extensive or new forms of extraction, including deep sea mining. We call on States to:

- Take broad measures to conserve and preserve our oceans for present and future generations;
- Join the call for an international moratorium on deep sea mining, and make strong commitments against sourcing minerals from deep sea mining should they come onto the market; and
- Take urgent action to minimize the current and prospective impacts of climate change and limiting global warming to 1.5°C, including cutting greenhouse gas emissions and also take measures towards adaptation, loss and damage, and financing.