

We as Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries (Hivos) as part of the Voices for Just Climate Action alliance- an alliance of 175+ NGOs and CSOs that amplifies and advocates for locally-led climate-resilient solutions, many of which focus on water- make this submission to the UN Water Conference.

Our work prioritises the often-marginalised voices of the most vulnerable: women, youth, Indigenous people, the urban poor, and people with disabilities. Our partners are based in Kenya, Zambia, Tunisia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Indonesia, and work with an alliance led by Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA), Fundación Avina, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), SouthSouthNorth (SSN), Hivos and WWF-Netherlands.

Our written submission for the Conference connects to multiple themes of the conference, but particularly for **Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR.**

Based on collective input from our partners, our key messages for the Conference are:

1. **WATER IS LIFE** Water is essential for all life. We must take care of this precious resource, both for human wellbeing and for healthy ecosystem function. The climate crisis is a water crisis. Countries must include water security and climate resilience strategies into development plans.
2. **WATER IS A HUMAN RIGHT, NOT A COMMODITY.** Water is a right for all living beings. If water is traded as a commodity for profit, it benefits the wealthy and excludes the poor. Funding models for water and sanitation service delivery should ensure infrastructure provision to the poorest, and not just those who have the means to pay.
3. **JUSTICE FOR ALL: WATER, FOOD, CLIMATE.** Water is central to every aspect of human survival and wellbeing. Without water justice, there can be no food justice, social justice, or climate justice.
4. **WATER JUSTICE IS GENDER JUSTICE** Access to clean water is crucial for women, who often bear the primary responsibility of household care as well as managing the home's water supplies. Addressing water inequality and including women in decisionmaking related to water management is critical to promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights.
5. **SAFELY MANAGED WATER FOR ALL AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE.** We must ensure improved infrastructure provision and democratic water governance for all.
6. **WATER CONNECTS RURAL AND URBAN.** Water and sanitation service delivery are particularly urgent in cities, which are growing fast and where over half the world's population is already settled. These communities and the cities they inhabit must feature more prominently in water and climate discussions. We need to urgently build solidarity between rural and urban dwellers, to fight together for water access for all.
7. **VOICES FROM THE SOUTH.** We must give voice to the needs, perspectives, and solutions of the most vulnerable communities, who are often the most marginalised: women, children, people with disabilities, and Indigenous communities. Decision-makers, donors, private sector and other organisations and stakeholders can learn from hearing communities' stories. Communities must be enabled to share their knowledge, skills and practices on global platforms.
8. **SOUTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION.** Communities are producing locally tailored ways to adapt to the impacts of climate change and thrive in spite of worsening weather shocks such as droughts, floods, diseases, heat, cold, storms and other changes. Organisations from the Global South

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should be supported to work more collaboratively, particularly where water and climate resilience overlap.

9. **POLICY FOR WATER JUSTICE.** Governments have the responsibility to support the concept of the right to water, including through creating and implementing the appropriate laws and policies. The UN specifies that climate policy needs to prioritise the protection of the water cycle, which requires policy response from all spheres of government.

We further call on the UN Water Conference 2023:

- To be more participatory and inclusive: the special passes greatly restricted participation in the major sessions, even though many of the venues were not full and could have admitted more participants.
- To embrace engagement: the interactive dialogues could have been a space for interaction and engagement which led towards greater resolution and commitments. However, they did not realise this potential, consisting of a series of presentations.
- To ensure greater accountability: the conference should be a space to foster legally binding commitments, not only voluntary commitments. And there should be monitoring of measurable, tangible results. This review of our water actions and commitments itself has come too late, and should occur more frequently.