

March 9, 2023

Dear Minister Sajjan, Minister Hajdu and Minister Guilbeault,

The UN 2023 Water Conference will take place at UN Headquarters in New York, March 22nd to 24th. While March 22nd marks World Water Day each year, this conference is long overdue as the first global UN conference on water in 46 years. Co-hosted by the Government of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of The Netherlands, the Conference proceedings center on "*Our watershed moment: uniting the world for water.*" It aims to build new commitments, pledges and actions by Governments and all stakeholders towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, and water-related targets across all SDGs, in order to move us collectively towards the Water Action Agenda. The Conference will be framed by five interactive dialogues:

1. **Water for Health:** Access to WASH, Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water
2. **Water for Sustainable Development:** Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus, Sustainable Economic and Urban Development
3. **Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment:** Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction
4. **Water for Cooperation:** Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation, Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda
5. **Water Action Decade:** Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade 2018-2028, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan

Multilateral frameworks for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and water resources management lack global governance and sufficient incentives for States, including Canada, to act within and across borders, even in the face of a global pandemic, conflict, and climate change. A strong, unprecedented, international political commitment and effective investment in reaching SDG 6 is essential now more than ever for human and children's rights in times of peace and conflict, to address inequalities and disease burden, to build resilience of people to the increasing impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss and enhance global governance mechanisms for water. Yet the UN 2023 Water Conference should not be a one-off opportunity to put water at the heart of the international agenda – it must spark continued momentum for securing water resources and human and children's rights while strengthening global water governance for future generations.

Canada is uniquely positioned to engage and act by demonstrating feminist leadership for international assistance, confronting difficult lessons learned at home, and protecting valued natural resources within and beyond our borders. The universality of the SDGs means that goals and targets apply equally to *everyone, everywhere*. Canada has an important role to play in demonstrating this fundamental link of national action for human rights to water and sanitation and sustainable water resources management with priorities of the feminist international assistance policy. We call on Canada to bring its voice and leadership to the UN 2023 Water Conference, and throughout the Water Action Decade, to engage Canadians and global decision makers on the universal need, value, and rights to water and sanitation.

As a collective of concerned organizations, we urge the Government of Canada to:

- I. **Demonstrate leadership** in achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, guided by SDG 6 target 6.1 at home and abroad: encompassing human rights to water and sanitation; respecting Indigenous and traditional knowledge and right to self-determination in keeping with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and strengthening prioritization of water resources management and water security, sanitation, and hygiene for all, in Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy.
- II. **Contribute Canada's strengths** in feminist leadership and reputation for peace and security to the Water Action Agenda, ensuring that the role of water resources management and WASH for all are optimized to address inequalities, prevent conflict, including gender-based violence, and build resilience of people worldwide to global health crises and climate-related disasters.
- III. **Take action** to ensure water security, access to basic sanitation and hygiene for all as 'no regrets' investments for children, youth and future generations, enabling them to realize their rights to a healthy environment in Canada and around the world through the integration of WASH and water resources management as essential catalysts for achieving gender equality, food security, strong health systems, climate resilience, and reconciliation.
- IV. **Build and strengthen multisectoral partnerships** to steward global commitments to improve WASH for all and sustainable water resources management, as a prerequisite to overcome preventable diseases affecting underserved and under-resourced communities, notably NTDs and cholera, which continue to threaten the most vulnerable people. By achieving more resilient health systems and embedding WASH in One Health approaches, we can build a more equitable and healthier world in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss.
- V. **Strengthen Canada's leadership in global water governance** through championing more regular meetings between States on water at the heart of the UN and through binding decisions in support of UN resolutions to reinforce compliance with SDG 6; establish an intergovernmental mechanism focused on accountability, investment tracking, and monitoring of WASH and water resource management commitments at national and global levels; and reinforce civil society participation in decision-making processes related to water resources management and WASH, ensuring meaningful participation of rights holders including women indigenous populations and youth as future generation representatives.

Signatories:



Jane Goodall Institute
Canada



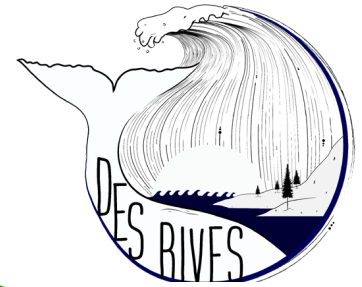
OXFAM
Canada



CIER
Centre for Indigenous
Environmental Resources



grandmothers
Advocacy Network
Mouvement de soutien des
grands-mères



OXFAM
Québec



**Save the
Children**



arbre-évolution

