



Franciscans International welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Water Conference, on the theme of “Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR.” We would like to take the opportunity to draw the attention of States to the impacts of extractive industries on human rights, and on the right to water and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in particular.

Our partners continually relay the issues they face regarding the severe, protracted and varied effects of extractivism on water, and the vacuum of accountability that they and others are often faced with.

In Laovavasa, in Guadalcanal Island (Solomon Islands) logging activities have left behind great devastation. Current logging practices have led to soil erosion that has increased sediment in coastal areas and waterways, and more broadly has led to poor water quality. Fish resources have declined as a result of this sedimentation of rivers and reefs, impacting food security.

It has been eight and four years respectively since the Mariana and Brumadinho mining dam break disasters in Brazil; the exposure to the released toxics continues to affect the population. In the concerned Rio Doce and Paraopeba basins, the situation worsened early this year when heavy rains caused the rivers to overflow its banks. The floods provoked further contamination of homes and plantations and the consequences of this new exposure on the health of the population are still unknown. In Brumadinho, the main agreement signed in 2021 between the mining company and the State of Minas Gerais does not provide for independent scientific assessment of the damage to determine reparations.

Since February 2021 in the Lualaba province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Tenke Fungurume Lime Mine has been discharging toxic industrial waste that causes significant water pollution. The toxic releases have serious consequences on the local communities experiencing skin rashes and infections, among others.

These cases, like many others, illustrate the difficulties that victims of water pollution face in obtaining an impartial, independent and reliable assessment of the damage and thus adequate reparation, even when there is a comprehensive legal framework. More generally, these cases also prove that prevention is key as effective reparation is very difficult or even impossible, when whole rivers and ecosystems are affected.

The aforementioned cases are but three of countless communities around the world who have seen their water and other resources degraded and depleted by business enterprises. Within this context, States have failed to fulfil their obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to water and the right to a healthy environment, amongst others. As a result, they, and the international community at-large, will continue to be far off target from achieving the



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Sustainable Development Goals, and Goal 6 in particular. We note also that the United Nations approach of “multi-stakeholderism” has given space and undue influence for business enterprises, including to major water polluters at the Water Conference.

We urge States to comply with their obligations under international law, including by ensuring that businesses under their jurisdiction respect human rights and are held accountable in cases of adverse impacts on people and the environment.

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