



# SPRING OF THE ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS (SASAL)

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## UN Water Conference 2023

22- 24, March 2023

Written statement on: Water for Health: Access to WASH, including the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

### **Statement submitted by Mana Omar, Executive Director & representative of SASAL; a non-governmental organization Specially accredited to the UN Water Conference 2023.**

As an NGO working with vulnerable grassroots communities facing water inaccessibility, it is a hurdle for these communities to build climate resilience. Water has proven to be an overarching and vital factor to building livelihoods, fostering peace, economic development and protecting rural communities who wish to sustain their way of life. However, this is not possible for communities like the pastoralists SASAL works with who rely on water to survive and thrive.

Everyone is entitled to have access to safe, clean water and sanitation that is easily accessible to meet the 2030 Agenda and ensure no one is left behind. Unfortunately, the critical voices of pastoralists communities on the ground are missing from this international space. Currently, millions of people are facing an imminent famine as the Horn of Africa faces one of the worst droughts in recent decades. Pastoralists communities rely on their livestock, their ancestral lands and safeguarding of their cultural practices for survival. As we have seen, water scarcity can create a hostile environment for communities to compete for limited resources.

We would like to bring attention to the infringement of these rights in the areas we work in: Magadi Ward, Kajiado County in Kenya. Communities here are facing water scarcity and lack of health and sanitation facilities hence posing grave danger to the lives of children, their education and their futures which exacerbates instances of gender-based violence and widens the gender equality gap. In particular, we are concerned of the situation with pregnant, lactating mothers and girls undergoing female-genital mutilation under these unhygienic conditions.

Little to nothing is being done by our government, the private sector and NGO's regarding this and would like to encourage them to act urgently and respond to this grave need by these rural communities. The engagement and support to these communities will contribute to many international agendas including the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 for the Africa We Want and the Sendai Framework.

Thank you

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