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## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

*Climate Justice and Right to Water in Latin American Cities.  
Recommendations for the Water Action Agenda based on social  
experience in Lima, La Paz - El Alto, San Salvador and Ciudad de  
México.*

Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 at 11.00 EDT, virtual side-event

Organized by: Coalición Internacional para el Hábitat Oficina para América Latina (HIC-AL); MISEREOR; Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima (FUNDASAL); Taller de Proyectos e Investigación del Hábitat Urbano y Rural (Red Hábitat); Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo (DESCO); y Ciudad Viva.

### **Background on the event**

The organizers were working during 2022 in a civil society report titled “*Climate Justice and the Right to Water. Inspiring experiences of adaptation in urban areas of Latin America*”, therefore they decided to hold a side-event aligned to the Interactive Dialogue 3: Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and DRR (SDGs 6.5, 6.6, 7, 11.5, 13, 14, 15) A summary in English and Spanish of this report was launched during the side-event (<https://www.misereor.org/climate-justice-and-the-right-to-water>; <https://www.misereor.org/justicia-climatica-y-derecho-al-agua>) along with its main findings and demands to public actors arising from social experiences of adaptation, advocacy and construction of alternatives by local communities and organizations working in Latin American cities. The side event was broadcast on FB live: <https://fb.watch/jtMrklpSAa/>

### **Water Action Agenda**

Closing remarks by the speakers were dedicated to confirming their commitments to continue working in favour of climate justice and the promotion and defence of the right to water, and to begin to outline more coordinated actions in the future.

### **Key Issues discussed**

- Climate change is accelerating water insecurity across Latin America; its impacts over the cities and urban settlements of La Paz-El Alto, Lima, San Salvador, and Mexico City include aridity, drought, atypical rainfall, landslides, and floods.

- In his video-message sent for this side-event, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water and Sanitation emphasized the importance of making peace with rivers, promote democratic governance and assume a human rights approach in water management to face the water global crisis with special attention to rural and urban settlements.
- Civil society organizations and local communities in urban areas have been looking for years for alternatives and changes in public policies and legislation, developing experience to face water and climate change related challenges. Examples of these efforts were addressed by the representatives of COMDA and HIC-AL (Mexico), FUNDASAL (El Salvador), Red Hábitat (Bolivia), and DESCO (Perú).
- Organizations demanded to local and national public actors: a) **strengthen urban development policies and urban planning**, ensuring better policy alignment and coordination; b) **implement water management policies from a rights-based approach and a gender and intergenerational perspective on access to services**, integrating the community approach to water management; c) **strengthen food policies with a focus on food security and sovereignty**, as climate change indirectly affects food production and distribution; d) **implement adaptive technologies that are based on the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous Peoples**, such as harvesting water and conservation of ecosystems; e) **strengthen organized civil society's capacities for disaster prevention and climate change adaptation**, facilitating access to safe land, prioritizing infrastructure and programs for safe and sustainable social housing, putting in place early warning systems based on community input and safeguarding most susceptible areas to landslides and floods.

#### **Key recommendations for action**

- **Strengthen public policies on climate change from a comprehensive perspective in cities and urban settlements**, based in human rights ensuring effective citizen participation.
- **Improve urban water governance**, strengthening effective mechanisms for citizen participation in policy design and decision-making on water resources.
- **Clean up our rivers, lakes, and lagoons, reduce pollution of water sources and encourage habit changes for the safe and effective use of water** through tighter regulation and oversight of private sector operations.
- **Defend the common goods, including the ecosystems, natural resources and water recharge areas on which cities depend.**
- **Organizations also called on the international community** to increase countries' ambition to tackle climate change; to recognize that international climate policies must respect human rights and the rights of Mother Earth/Nature/Pachamama; to give priority attention to the most vulnerable populations and, in particular, empower women who are key actors; to increase and prioritize financial resources for climate change adaptation and international development cooperation for investments in water and sanitation infrastructure; to promote a stronger dialogue between nations of the global South and North, an exchange of knowledge, the sharing of solutions, including those derived from ancestral knowledge, and the advancement of research on the relationship between housing, habitat, cities, climate change, and water.