

People's Water Forum Declaration – Istanbul, 2009

After Mexico City 2006, which was an important milestone of the continuous work of the global movement for water justice, we have now gathered in Istanbul to mobilize against the 5th World Water Forum. We are here to delegitimize this false, corporate driven World Water Forum and to give voice to the positive agenda of the global water justice movements!

Given that we are in Turkey, we cannot ignore that this country provides a powerful example of the devastating impacts of destructive water management policies. The Turkish government has pushed for the privatization of both water services, watersheds and has plans to dam every river in the country. Four specific cases of destructive and risky dams in Turkey, include the Ilisu, Yusufeli, Munzur and Yortanlı dams. For ten years, affected people have intensively opposed these projects, in particular, the Ilisu dam which is part of a larger irrigation and energy production project known as the South East Anatolia Projects, or GAP. The Ilisu dam – one of the most criticized dam projects worldwide – is particularly complex and troubling because of its implications on international policy in the Middle East. The dam is situated in the Kurdish-settled region where there are ongoing human rights violations related to the unsolved Kurdish question. The Turkish government is using GAP to negatively impact the livelihood of the Kurdish people and to suppress their cultural and political rights.

We, as a movement, are here to offer solutions to the water crisis, and to demand that the UN General Assembly organize the next global forum on water. The participation of important United Nations officials and representatives in our meeting is evidence that something has changed. There is a tangible and symbolic shift of legitimacy: from the official Forum organized by private interests and by the World Water Council to the Peoples Water Forum, organized by global civil society including, farmers, indigenous peoples, activists, social movements, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and networks that struggle throughout the world in the defense of water and territory and for the commons.

We call on the United Nations and its member states to accept its obligation, as the legitimate global convener of multilateral forums, and to formally commit to hosting a forum on water that is linked to state obligations and is accountable to the global community.

We call upon all organizations and governments at this 5th World Water Forum, to commit to making it the last corporate-controlled water forum. The world needs the launch of a legitimate, accountable, transparent, democratic forum on water emerging from within the UN processes supported by its member states.

Confirming once again the illegitimacy of the World Water Forum, we denounce the Ministerial Statement because it does not recognize water as a universal human right nor exclude it from global trade agreements. In addition the draft resolution ignores the failure of privatization to guarantee the access to water for all, and does not take into account those positive recommendations proposed by the insufficient European Parliamentary Resolution. Finally, the statement promotes the use of water to produce energy from hydroelectric dams and the increased production of fuel from crops, both of which lead to further inequity and injustice.

We reaffirm and strengthen all the principles and commitments expressed in the 2006 Mexico City declaration: we uphold water as the basic element of all life on the planet, as a fundamental and inalienable human right; we insist that solidarity between present and future generations should be guaranteed; we reject all forms of privatization and declare that the management and control of water must be public, social, cooperative, participatory, equitable, and not for profit; we call for the

democratic and sustainable management of ecosystems and to preserve the integrity of the water cycle through the protection and proper management of watersheds and environment.

We oppose the dominant economic and financial model that prescribes the privatization, commercialization and corporatization of public water and sanitation services. We will counter this type of destructive and non-participatory public sector reform, having seen the outcomes for poor people as a result of rigid cost-recovery practices and the use of pre-paid meters. Since 2006, in Mexico, the global water justice movement has continued to challenge corporate control of water for profit. Some of our achievements include: reclaiming public utilities that had been privatized; fostering and implementing public – public partnerships; forcing the bottled water industry into a loss of revenue; and coming together in collective simultaneous activities during Blue October and the Global Action Week. We celebrate our achievements highlighted by the recognition of the human right to water in several constitutions and laws.

At the same time, we need to address the economic and ecological crises. We will not pay for your crisis! We will not rescue this flawed and unsustainable model, which has transformed: unaccountable private spending into enormous public debt, which has transformed water and the commons into merchandise, which has transformed the whole of Nature into a preserve of raw materials and into an open-air dump.

The basic interdependence between water and climate change is recognized by the scientific community and is underlined also by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Therefore, we must not accept responses to climate chaos in the energy sector that follow the same logic that caused the crisis in the first place. This is a logic that jeopardizes the quantity and quality of water and of life that is based on dams, nuclear power plants, and agro-fuel plantations. In December 2009, we will bring our concerns and proposals to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Further, the dominant model of intensive industrial agriculture, contaminates and destroys water resources, impoverishes agricultural soils, and devastates food sovereignty. This has enormous impact on lives and public health. From the fruitful experience of the Belem World Social Forum, we are committed to strengthening the strategic alliance between water movements and those for land, food and climate. We also commit to continue building networks and new social alliances, and to involve both local authorities and Parliamentarians who are determined to defend water as a common good and to reaffirm the right to fresh water for all human beings and nature. We are also encouraging all public water utilities to get together, establishing national associations and regional networks.

We celebrate our achievements and we look forward for our continued collaboration across countries and continents!