



United Nations
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Cultural Organization

OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS' MEETING ON THE **RIGHT TO WATER**

PARIS, 7 AND 8 JULY 2009



Organized by
UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Sector
UNESCO's Natural Sciences Sector
UNESCO Etxea-UNESCO Centre Basque Country

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OUTCOME OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS' MEETING ON THE RIGHT TO WATER

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I. THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity and for the realization of other human rights: in particular the right to life, to an adequate standard of living, housing, food, and health. Access to water and sanitation is a *sine qua non* for the fulfillment of these rights. Almost 900 million people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion – 40% of the world's population – have no access to improved sanitation.¹ Failing to ensure access to water and sanitation has immense human costs, both in social and economic terms.

Preventable diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation kill approximately 10,000 people every day, including almost 5000 children under the age of five. Unclean water and poor sanitation are the world's second biggest killer of children: for every child killed by HIV/AIDS, easily preventable diseases caused by unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene kill five. Each year 443 million school days are lost due to sickness caused by poor water and sanitation. Millions of women and young girls collect water for their families every day – a practice that reinforces gender inequalities by preventing girls from attending school.²

1 UNICEF, WHO. *Progress in Drinking-water and Sanitation: special focus on sanitation*. WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP), 2008.

2 UNDP. *Human Development Report 2006 Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*, 2006.

Recent research from the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that every US dollar spent on sanitation generates, on average, benefits of 9 US dollars in gained productivity and averted costs, making it one of the most cost-effective development interventions. Simple interventions can have huge positive impacts: handwashing with soap for example, reduces diarrhea by up to 47%. Ensuring access to water and sanitation for all people is not simply a question of water resources, technology and infrastructure, but also of setting priorities, tackling poverty and inequality, addressing societal power imbalances, and, above all, political will.

Legal basis of the right to water

The human right to water is included – implicitly or explicitly – in a number of international treaties and declarations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that everyone has the right to “a standard of living adequate for [his or her] health and well-being,” including food and housing.³ This right cannot be realized without access to a minimum amount of water. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulates a number of rights whose fulfillment requires access to water. It maintains that no people can be deprived of their own means of subsistence and that “every human being has the inherent right to life.”⁴ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also recognizes the right to water implicitly. The rights to an adequate standard of living⁵ and the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,⁶ both enshrined in the ICESCR, have been officially interpreted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) to include the right to water.⁷ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) mentions water explicitly by stating that rural women have a right to adequate living conditions, including access to water,⁸ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child maintains that all children have a right to the highest attainable standard of health guaranteed *inter alia* through the provision of adequate clean drinking water.⁹ The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes “the right of persons with disabilities to social protection [...] including measures to ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to clean water.”¹⁰ The 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses – although not in force – maintains that special attention be given to “the requirements of vital human needs.”¹¹

International humanitarian law also stipulates obligations that relate to access to water and sanitation. The Geneva Conventions, which have been ratified by virtually every country in the world, establish *inter alia* the right of prisoners of war to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including water for both drinking and sanitation.¹² The Geneva Conventions also contain similar provisions with regards to the protection of civilian persons.¹³ Additional Protocol I, which has been less widely ratified, prohibits warring parties from attacking,

3 Article 25, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

4 Article 6, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976.

5 Article 11, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

6 Article 12, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

7 The CESCR states in its General Comment No. 15: “Article 11, paragraph 1, of the Covenant specifies a number of rights emanating from, and indispensable for, the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living “including adequate food, clothing and housing”. The use of the word “including” indicates that this catalogue of rights was not intended to be exhaustive. The right to water clearly falls within the category of guarantees essential for securing an adequate standard of living, particularly since it is one of the most fundamental conditions for survival.” General Comment No. 15 can be found at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G03/402/29/PDF/G0340229.pdf?OpenElement>

8 Article 14, paragraph 2 (h), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979.

9 Article 24, paragraph 2 (c), Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

10 Article 28, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

11 Article 10.2, Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, 1997.

12 Articles 26 and 29, Third Geneva Convention of 1949.

13 Articles 85, 89 and 127, Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

destroying, or rendering useless “objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population,” including “drinking water supplies and irrigation works.”¹⁴

Regional agreements are also increasingly recognizing the importance of sanitation and the human right to water. The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, for example, includes a right to “a satisfactory environment” favorable to people’s “development,” which is unattainable without access to water and sanitation.¹⁵ The Protocol of San Salvador to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights protects “the right to live in a healthy environment and to have access to basic public services.”¹⁶ The Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes adopted under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe, aims to protect human health and well-being by ensuring an adequate supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for everyone.¹⁷ The Arab Charter on Human Rights calls upon States to provide safe drinking water and proper sanitation systems for all.¹⁸

A number of international political declarations and resolutions, of which we only mention a few, also include the right to water. The standards set out in them represent the aspirations, views and the growing consensus of the international community on the right to water. For example, the Mar del Plata Action Plan of 1977 states that all peoples have a right to sufficient quantities of clean drinking water.¹⁹ The Statement resulting from the 1992 Dublin International Conference on Water and the Environment acknowledged that there is a “basic right of all human beings to have access to clean water and sanitation at an affordable price.”²⁰ Also in 1992, Agenda 21 endorses the statement from the Mar del Plata Action Plan, includes an objective to ensure that adequate supplies of water are maintained for the entire population of the planet, and specifies that the right to water includes access to a sufficient quantity and quality of water.²¹ The 1994 Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development explicitly recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, including water and sanitation.²² A UN General Assembly Resolution on the Right to Development in 2000 recognized the right to clean water.²³ The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has declared itself in favor of the human right to water.²⁴

More recently, the Abuja Declaration adopted at the first Africa-South America Summit in 2006 affirms “the right of our citizens to have access to clean and safe water and sanitation”.²⁵ In 2007, the first Asia-Pacific Water Summit adopted the “Message from Beppu,” which recognizes “people’s right to safe drinking water and basic sanitation as a basic human right.”²⁶ The third South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) in 2008 reaffirmed through the Delhi Declaration that access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation constitutes a basic human right.²⁷

Finally in 2008, the Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution establishing the

14 Article 54, Additional Protocol I of 1977.

15 Article 24, African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, 1981.

16 Article 11, Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 1969.

17 Economic Commission for Europe, Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, 1999.

18 Article 39, Arab Charter on Human Rights, 2004.

19 See http://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/bibliography/UN/Mar_del_Plata_Report.pdf

20 The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, <http://www.un-documents.net/h2o-dub.htm>

21 Agenda 21, Chapter 18.47, <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21chapter18.htm>

22 Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994.

23 General Assembly Resolution 54/175 (2000) paragraph 12(a) which states the “rights to food and clean water are fundamental human rights, and their promotion constitutes a moral imperative both for national Governments and for the international community.”

24 Council of Europe Press Release, “PACE President Calls for Access to Water to be Recognized as a Basic Human Right,” March 20, 2009, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1422333&Site=DC>

25 See http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/docs/abuja_declaration.pdf

26 See http://www.apwf.org/archive/documents/summit/Message_from_Beppu_080130.pdf

27 See <http://ddws.nic.in/infosacosan/ppt/Delhi%20Declaration%207.pdf>

mandate of an Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.²⁸ The Independent Expert will *inter alia* identify and develop a compendium of best practices in relation to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, further clarify the normative content of the human rights obligations related to water and sanitation, and make recommendations that could help realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While the human right to water is increasingly recognized by the international community, sanitation is not yet widely perceived as a human right. Given the critical importance of sanitation to human health, dignity, and well-being, as well as its interconnectedness with the right to water and other rights, the Independent Expert has already focused on sanitation during the first year of her mandate. “Although the discussion about recognition of a distinct right to sanitation is ongoing, the Independent Expert indeed supports the current trend of recognizing sanitation as a distinct right.”²⁹

Content of the right to water

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defined the right to water in General Comment No. 15 as the right of everyone to “sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.”³⁰ In addition, universal access to sanitation is “not only fundamental for human dignity and privacy, but is one of the principal mechanisms for protecting the quality”³¹ of water resources. According to the Committee, access to water must be continuous, and the amount of water available must be “adequate for human dignity, life and health,”³² and suffice for drinking, cooking, and personal and domestic hygiene. “The adequacy of water should not be interpreted narrowly,” but rather go beyond simple quantities and recognize water as a “social and cultural good, and not primarily as an economic good.”³³ According to UNESCO, considering water as a cultural good should indeed be understood as the recognition of the diverse socio-cultural dimensions of people’s engagement with water, such as identity, heritage, and sense of belonging. Water must also be of a safe quality and “acceptable colour, odour and taste”³⁴ as mentioned in General Comment No. 15. Accessibility includes physical and economic accessibility to all, without discrimination, with special attention given to those who have traditionally been deprived of the right to water, as well as access to information concerning water issues.

General Comment No. 15 specifies core obligations of States that are of immediate effect, including ensuring access to a “minimum essential amount of water” at a reasonable distance from homes on a non-discriminatory basis and with special protection for vulnerable and marginalized groups, “ensuring access to adequate sanitation,” creating and implementing a national water strategy, and monitoring progress on realizing the right to water. UNESCO recognizes the challenges that a number of these core obligations pose for many developing countries and emphasizes the importance of “international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical” towards their fulfillment.³⁵

²⁸ See http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_7_22.pdf

²⁹ Paragraph 81, Report of the Independent Expert focusing on human rights obligations related to sanitation, to be presented to the Human Rights Council in September 2009. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/water/iexpert/docs/A.HRC.12.24.AEV.doc>

³⁰ CESCR, General Comment No. 15, paragraph 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, paragraph 29.

³² *Ibid.*, paragraph 11.

³³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, paragraph 12 b.

³⁵ Article 2(1), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

II. IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO WATER

Establishing a human right to water is only the first step in ensuring that this right is realized and universally enjoyed. Implementation of the right to water requires not only economic and technical resources, but also political will. General Comment No. 15 clarifies that States must take “deliberate” and “concrete” steps “targeted towards the full realization of the right to water.”³⁶ The CESCR emphasizes that it is “particularly incumbent” on States or others who can assist to “provide international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical which enables developing countries to fulfill their core obligations.”³⁷ It is thus primarily each national government’s responsibility to ensure that the human rights of all persons under the State’s jurisdiction are realized.

Domestic legal frameworks must guarantee access to water and sanitation, including a “basic minimum” for human consumption provided at affordable costs for all.

The primary responsibility to guarantee the right to water thus falls upon governments. Yet, this does not exclude the option of privatized services. In that case, States have to ensure that private actors do not adopt approaches which result in human rights violations. This requires *inter alia* an adequate regulatory framework, accountability mechanisms, and pricing schemes that ensure affordability as well as safeguards such as public participation and the involvement of local communities to ensure non-discriminatory access.

³⁶ CESCR, General Comment No. 15, paragraph 17.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, paragraph 38.

III. UNESCO AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

UNESCO stands in full support of the human right to water. As UNESCO stated in its contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) study on the scope and content of human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation: “Water has always been an important component of UNESCO’s science programmes and became the principal priority of the Natural Sciences Sector at the 31st General Conference of UNESCO in 2001. Through its Water Programmes, the Organization provides the necessary scientific and educational backbone upon which water professionals and politicians build the decisions they make in order to respect, protect and fulfil the right to water.”³⁸

UNESCO furthermore stated that “non-discriminatory access to water and sanitation is regarded [...] as a pre-requisite for the realisation of several other human rights, such as the rights to life, dignity, health, food, and an adequate standard of living and education.”

UNESCO’s Strategy on Human Rights developed in 2003 sets the integration of a human rights-based approach in all its programs, including all water-related activities, as a priority, thereby contributing to the realization of human rights.

Through its Water Programmes, UNESCO develops and spreads the knowledge and information needed to provide access to water and sanitation. UNESCO thus constantly underlines the importance of the right to water and explicitly recognizes it. For example, UNESCO’s Director-General Mr Koïchiro Matsuura stressed that freshwater shortages and inequitable access to water pose “the greatest ecological and human rights threats of our time.”³⁹ Not only are water resources crucial to life itself, but they are closely linked to other global issues including energy, climate change, and the international economy. UNESCO believes that we urgently need to stop the current unsustainable exploitation of water resources and develop integrated management strategies at local, regional, and national levels. Such strategies will pave the way for the actual implementation of the right to water and should be grounded in the recognition that we are trustees of water resources that must be conserved for future generations. Moreover, it is critical that local communities have real, meaningful involvement in management decisions. Without such participation, solutions cannot be sustainable.⁴⁰

These calls for action are not empty rhetoric. As Mr Matsuura has said:

“We have moved beyond the need for declarations and statements. The priority now is for action. We must mobilize the necessary political commitment, human capacities and goodwill to ensure that forecasts of looming water crises do not become true.”⁴¹

38 UNESCO’s contribution to OHCHR’s study on the scope and content of the human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. April, 10 2007. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/water/contributions/IntOrg/UNESCO.pdf>

39 Address by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates, “Right to Water as a Human Right,” December 11, 2008.

40 *Ibid.*

41 Message from Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of World Water Day, 2009: Transboundary Waters, March 22, 2009.

IV. SOME INNOVATIVE POLICIES

Although there is no single policy framework that satisfies everyone, nor will there ever be a one-size-fits-all solution, there is an increasing number of States which have included the right to water in their constitutions, enacted legislation aiming to expand and improve water and sanitation services, and pursued innovative policies that seek to realize the right to water while making water management more effective and sustainable.

The following are a few examples taken from such policies to achieve access to sanitation and realize people's right to water.

Brazil⁴²

The Autonomous Service of Water and Sewerage (SAAE) in Guarulhos, State of São Paulo, created a Division of Sanitation in slums, which identified the needs of the poor, discussed plans of action and implemented them with the targeted populations. This participatory approach led to a high increase in connectivity of piped water supply (87% of the households in comparison to 63% connectivity for communities that have yet to apply this approach). Brazil has also developed a participatory budgeting mechanism which promotes popular decision-making at all levels of government. This mechanism, called the “conference mechanism”, consists of a process which takes place first in municipalities, then in States and finally at the national level. As far as water and sanitation are concerned, all relevant decisions such as national plans on water resources, must be taken with respect for the decisions adopted through the conference mechanism.

These mechanisms are a few examples of Brazil's innovative participatory decision-making systems that, in many instances, have helped to improve access to water and sanitation.

South Africa

South Africa has declared access to sufficient food and water a basic human right. The right to water is included in the Constitution, and the Water Services Act provides that “everyone has a right of access to basic water supply and basic sanitation.”⁴³ The National Water Act, passed in 1998, is the legal framework for South Africa's water policy, which abolishes private ownership of water and places all water resources in a public trust. The Free Basic Water policy, adopted in 2001 in order to improve upon the 1998 Act, guarantees each household 6000 liters of water per month, based on the amount deemed necessary for basic needs. Above this basic amount, rates paid for water are adjusted according to the use of water and the user's socio-economic status. Prices rise as more water is withdrawn, with especially steep tariffs applied to luxury water use, large landowners and industry.⁴⁴

⁴² The case study of Brazil presented here is based entirely on the article by Kiefer, Thorsten and Roaf, Virginia, “The human right to water and sanitation: benefits and limitations”, in: Mancisidor, Mikel (ed.), *The Human Right to Water – Current Situation and Future Challenges*, Icaria editorial, Barcelona, Spain, pp.141-147.

⁴³ Section 3(1) of the Water Services Act, which reflects section 27(1)(b) and (2) of the South African Constitution.

⁴⁴ Haffajee, Ferial, “South Africa: Water for Everyone,” *UNESCO Courier*, February 1999.

Belgium

Belgium guarantees a basic right of access to water and sanitation. Responsibility for providing such access rests with different administrative bodies, but is primarily the concern of regional and municipal authorities.

In the Flemish region, residents pay a basic connection fee for a minimum amount of water supplied for free to each person, with the price of excess water used depending on the amount consumed. The Walloon region recognizes a right of access to enough water to cover “nutrition, food, domestic, and health needs.”⁴⁵ Therefore, a certain amount of water is available to each household per year at a low price. This water is essentially subsidized by the higher prices paid by large consumers. The Water Code also established a Social Fund for Water which is funded by taxes and assists low income people with their water bills. The Walloon region is also establishing a tax that will be used to provide financial and technical support to developing countries working on water projects. The Brussels-Capital region recognizes “the right of drinking water for household consumption,” and uses a progressive pricing plan. The poorest people receive a refund of the sanitation tax and can access a Social Fund for Water that is financed by a tax on water consumption.⁴⁶

Philippines⁴⁷

The Philippines’ 1976 Water Code defines the extent of the rights and obligation of water users. Water users who use water beyond domestic purposes need to acquire a water permit which is granted by the Philippines’ National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

The Water Code thus recognizes the fundamental right to water — it exempts drinking, cooking, bathing, and other domestic or household uses from the permit requirement. People also do not need water permits to collect water from rivers or lakes using hand-carried receptacles, to use these waters for bathing or washing, watering or dipping of domestic or farm animals, or for boating or water transportation.

Another important step to implement the right to water is the 1997 Indigenous Peoples Rights Act which recognizes, protects and promotes the water rights of indigenous peoples. Traditional water use practices, though not mentioned in the Water Code, are protected by the Act, which bestows customary water rights to indigenous communities.

⁴⁵ Art. 1.2 of the Decree of 15 April 1999 (Walloon Region).

⁴⁶ Armeni, Chiara, “The Right to Water in Belgium,” International Environmental Law Research Center, available at: <http://www.ielrc.org/content/10802.pdf>

⁴⁷ The case study of the Philippines presented here is excerpted from Tigno, Cezar, “Securing Water Rights for All – Philippines”, Asian Development Bank, June 2007, available at: <http://www.adb.org/Water/Actions/phi/Securing-Water-Rights.asp>.

V. SUGGESTIONS

The right to water and access to adequate sanitation is vital to human dignity, health and survival, as well as to the realization of other human rights and human development, including the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, it has other important benefits ranging from extensive economic returns, improvement of ecosystem health, and the preservation of privacy and safety. The economic and social costs of inaction are enormous. The expert participants of this meeting put forward a number of suggestions to assist decision-makers in their efforts to implement the right to water and access to adequate sanitation:

- States must comply with their human rights obligations related to water and sanitation. Compliance with obligations requires States to take human rights principles of non-discrimination, gender equality, accountability and participation of all stakeholders, the rights holders in particular, fully into account. Special attention should be paid to the poor and other disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups.
- Concrete and targeted measures should be taken to empower all individuals and groups to exercise their rights. States shall establish legal frameworks encompassing mechanisms and procedures of access to information, participation, and access to remedies related to sanitation and the right to water.
- Water and sanitation services must be affordable to all. States and all other relevant actors shall explore and utilize creative ways to make water and sanitation services affordable for all people, including the poorest and most marginalized segments of society.⁴⁸
- Governments, bilateral and multilateral development cooperation agencies, international financial institutions, and private donors shall prioritize investments in basic drinking water and sanitation services for all, applying a human rights-based approach.
- Disaggregated indicators backed by reliable data sources are required to set benchmarks and effectively monitor progress towards the realization of the right to water and access to sanitation, and to enable States to identify and assess disparities in the access and use of water and sanitation services by groups that have traditionally experienced discrimination.

⁴⁸ Such as:

- The “3Ts” approach which involves strategic blending of tariffs, taxes, and transfer;
 - Financing of sanitation as a form of financing the water sector (enhancing the quality of water put back into watersheds enhances the quality of water to be extracted from them);
 - Reinforcement of public or private water providers creditworthiness, (managing risks and improving governance) to make investment in these utilities safer;
 - Increasing water-energy efficiency by reducing the cost of energy needed to provide the water;
 - Incentives for philanthropists to make donations towards the MDGs;
- More information on these creative ways can be found in 'Managing Water for All: An OECD Perspective on Pricing and Financing' available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,3343,en_2649_34311_42289488_1_1_1_1,00.html
- Linking governance reforms with financial strategies and public budgets for water, so as to improve efficiency and accountability in the water sector;
 - Micro-credit schemes, sometimes in conjunction with subsidies, to finance small water projects, with a focus on small-scale strategies to be replicated elsewhere;
 - New technology as a way of leveraging new funds for the sector, through investments in innovative technology, and in order to improve water and sanitation access;
 - Delinking water from land tenure for providing services to the most vulnerable people who have no recognized land rights.
- More information on these creative ways can be found on the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) website available at: http://www.wsp.org/index.cfm?page=page_disp&pid=10855

Such groups include ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, people with disabilities, asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, prisoners, immigrants, and people living in informal settlements.

- In implementing their respective mandates, treaty bodies and special procedures shall take due account of the right to water and access to sanitation as well as all related State obligations.
- Through its scientific and educational efforts, UNESCO shall further promote the right to water and continue to collaborate with the mandate of the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to water and sanitation.
- UNESCO shall encourage all Member States through its dedicated programs to generate an annual report identifying all vulnerable and marginalized groups in their territories with regard to access to water and sanitation. Further, UNESCO shall encourage all Members States to monitor the improvement of access to and availability of water and sanitation to those identified vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- All stakeholders are encouraged to work with a human rights based approach and collect and share good practices on human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation.

UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences and Natural Sciences Sectors, jointly with UNESCO Etxea-UNESCO Centre Basque Country, organized an experts' meeting on the right to water on 7-8 July 2009 in Paris, France.

The main purpose of the meeting was to bring together international experts to discuss and develop recommendations on the right to water and access to sanitation, which are presented in this booklet.

The participants were experts and representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as well as academics from various backgrounds and regions. A member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation also participated.

The intention of the booklet is to contribute to the efforts made in view of the fulfillment of this right and to explore possibilities of future collaboration between UNESCO and other actors in this field.

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