

Peoples Water Forum Declaration, Istanbul, Turkey

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Contents

- [Activists slam Water Forum](#)
- [Turkish police charges protest](#)
- [Turkey Deports International](#)
- [Controlling the agenda at \(...\)](#)
- [More than 30 Countries Join](#)
- [Unesco pulling out of WWF5](#)
- [Global Week of Actions for \(...\)](#)
- [Statement from The PRESIDENT](#)

Istanbul, March 19, 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!

Activists slam Water Forum

ISTANBUL (AFP) ? A global ministerial meeting was putting the final touches here Saturday to resolutions for tackling the world's water crisis but activists attacked the process as a corporate-driven fraud.

The communique to be issued by more than 100 countries on World Water Day on Sunday climaxes a seven-day gathering on how to provide clean water and sanitation for billions and resolve worsening water stress and pollution.

"The world is facing rapid and unprecedented global changes, including population growth, migration, urbanisation, climate change, desertification, drought, degradation and land use, economic and diet changes," according to a draft seen by AFP.

The document, which is non-binding, spells out a consensus for boosting cooperation to ease trans-boundary disputes over water, preventing pollution and tackling drought and floods.

It also describes access to safe drinking water and sanitation as "a basic human need." France, Spain and several Latin American countries were striving to beef up this reference, from "need" to "right," a change that could have legal ramifications.

But campaigners representing the rural poor, the environment and organised labour blasted the communique as a sideshow, stage-managed for corporations who are major contributors to the World Water Council, which organises the Forum.

Maude Barlow, senior advisor to the president of the UN General Assembly, said the Forum promoted privatisation of resources by "the lords of water" and excluded dissident voices.

She called for the meeting to be placed under the UN flag.

"We demand that the allocation of water be decided in an open,

transparent and democratic forum rather than in a trade show for the world's large corporations," Barlow told a press conference.

David Boys, with an NGO called Public Services International, said "transparency, accountability and participation" were absent from the Forum, and dismissed the ministerial statement as "vapid."

Around 880 million people do not have access to decent sources of drinking water, while 2.5 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in a report on Tuesday.

By 2030, the number of people living under severe water stress is expected to rise to 3.9 billion, a tally that does not include the impacts of global warming, according to the OECD.

The World Water Council, based in the southern French city of Marseille, holds the World Water Forum every three years. The Istanbul conference, the fifth in the series, drew a record more than 25,000 participants, and registrations from at least 27,000.

The Council's website says it is funded by more than 300 member organisations from 60 countries, including water utilities, governments, hydrological institutions and associations involved in research, environment and education.

Its president, Loic Fauchon, rejected charges of elitism and exclusion.

"Everyone is invited, and in any case, everyone comes these days," he told AFP.

He added: "If it (the Forum) were organised by the United Nations, it would lose its characteristic of being open to all. In a UN conference, not everyone who wants to come can participate. In the World Water Forum, anyone can take part."

The Istanbul Forum has focussed overwhelmingly on issues of policymaking and includes a big trade fair by water utilities and engineering firms.

It has also staged side events on issues of civil society, but to a far smaller degree than in other big environmental meetings.

Grassroots campaigners have complained of high registration fees, of geographical separation from the main conference events and of overbearing security.

Turkish police charges protesters blocking WWF's entrance

Monday, March 16, 2009

At 9.30 this morning, a group of about 300 Turkish and international activists began a peaceful march towards the entrance of the 5th World Water Forum in Beyoglu to express their concerns about the political agenda of the event and prevent people getting inside. Turkish police forces, outnumbering by far protesters, quickly intervened and charged, using rubber bullets, separating Turkish activists from international protesters and violently dispersing the action.

17 Turkish activists from the "No to commercialisation of water platform" were arrested, mostly women who couldn't escape fast enough and one high-profile leader of anti-dam movements. Arrested activists are now in hospital, waiting for their transfer to Vatan police station where they might be prosecuted for illegal protest. The renowned Turkish hospitality seems to not apply to those critical of the World Water Forum.

Other activists then entered the WWF venue to protest against this unacceptable way of treating democratic protests and further challenge the World Water Council and Turkish government's water privatisation plans.

By:

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Turkey Deports International Rivers' Staff After Peaceful Water Forum Protest

March 16, 2009

Istanbul, Turkey- Two International Rivers' staff members were arrested and detained today for unfurling a banner at the opening ceremony of the World Water Forum (WWF) in Istanbul. They will be deported tomorrow morning or face a year in Turkish prison.

As the opening ceremony of the WWF began, International Rivers' South Asia Director Ann-Kathrin Schneider and Climate Campaigner Payal Parekh unfurled a banner reading "No Risky Dams" in protest at the World Water Forum's promotion of destructive dams. They shouted slogans as the chair of the World Water Forum and government dignitaries were about to take the stage.

While many WWF participants applauded the protest, the police detained the two protestors. Meanwhile, outside the conference center riot police used water cannons and tear gas against 150 peaceful protestors who shouted "water for life, not for profit" in opposition to the WWF's agenda of water

privatization and river destruction. Seventeen protestors were arrested.

As she was being detained, Payal Parekh said: "Large dams have left a legacy of lies and loss. Continuing to build destructive dams will bring unacceptable risks to people and the planet." Ann-Kathrin Schneider said as she unfurled the banner: "The Ilisu Dam in Southeast Turkey is a symbol of outmoded water and energy policies which destroy communities and the environment. We call on the participants of the World Water Forum to embrace smarter and cleaner solutions which are readily available."

Peter Bosshard, International Rivers Policy Director, whose Opinion Piece on the World Water Forum and large dams was published in today's Turkish Daily News (<http://www.internationalrivers.org/en/node/4006>), said "The response by the Turkish authorities highlights the undemocratic nature of the World Water Forum. Two protestors being deported for unfurling a banner is unacceptable. We call on the World Water Council to respect and support the rights of all people to speak freely and protest peacefully."

The World Water Forum takes place every three years. It is organized by the World Water Council, a private organization whose most influential members are private water companies and some of the world's biggest dam construction companies, funders and government agencies.

Based on five continents, International Rivers (<http://www.internationalrivers.org>) is an international environmental and human rights organization. For over two decades, International Rivers has been at the heart of the global struggle to protect rivers and the communities that depend on them.

For more information, visit <http://www.internationalrivers.org/e>

Controlling the agenda at World Water Forum - the multinationals' network

This new paper by Corporate Europe Observatory, Public Services International (PSI) and the PSI Research Unit (PSIRU) reveals the continuing influence of water multinationals on the World Water Forum and its agenda.

Read the report at <http://www.waterjustice.org/>

EU trade talks: a covert push for water privatisation?

This new Corporate Europe Observatory report shows that the EU is putting pressure on developing countries to privatise their water services and to make privatisation practically irreversible by including water in new trade agreements.

Read the new report: <http://www.corporateeurope.org/docs...>

Blogging from Istanbul

CEO's Martin Pigeon - together with other water justice activists - will be blogging from Istanbul throughout next week:

<http://worldwaterforum.blogspot.com/>

More than 30 Countries Join the Global Week of Action for Water Justice!

Today marks the start of the Global Week of Action for Water Justice. Today, we are also celebrating the International Day of Action for Rivers.

We are happy to report that the water justice movements around the world have responded positively and are organizing events in their own countries and localities. A diversity of events—from film showing and exhibits, public forum and lectures, to water caravans, marches and mobilizations—have been organized in Asia, Latin America, Oceania, Europe, Africa, and North America, by a diversity of actors—indigenous peoples, anti-dam activists, peoples' organizations, NGOs, coalitions, networks, farmers, fisherfolks, progressive public water managers, and women's groups. Amid this diversity, the water justice movements around the world share common principles of upholding and realizing water as a human right, as part of the global commons, and public trust.

In the next few days, hundreds of events will be held around the world in solidarity with the Turkish movements and international groups that will be in Istanbul. These are testimonies to the growing strength and dynamism of the water justice movements; that the movements are in no doubt up to the challenges of addressing the world's water crisis.

Truly, with all of you, we are able to make this Global Week of Action a reality!

A calendar of global events (though not exhaustive and still a work in progress) can be found at www.peopleswaterforum.org. We encourage you to add your events by clicking "Add an event".

Also, a comprehensive list of activities celebrating the International Day of Rivers can be found at <http://internationalrivers.org>.

Again, thank you very much and please do share photos and updates on your activities.

Onward with the struggle!

In solidarity and on behalf of the international organizers,

Mary Ann, Darcey and Claudia

Unesco pulling out of WWF5

A leak in UNESCO support for water forum

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/...>

ISTANBUL - The World Water Forum in Istanbul is not all clean fun like a day at the water park as UNESCO, whose involvement is seen as pivotal to the forum's legitimacy, temporarily pulls out in protest of a ban on discussing cultural diversity

Under ordinary circumstances, water never runs backwards. But support for water forums can run in two directions, as the United Nations international scientific cooperative program demonstrated yesterday.

After four years of planning, the 5th World Water Forum will open its doors to thousands of participators Monday. It was to begin with UNESCO's support until Wednesday when it was revealed that UNESCO was pulling away. Frustrated that the Istanbul Water and Sewerage Administration, or İSKİ, and the Turkish Women Culture Association, or TÜRKKAD, did not agree on the same issues they wanted to put forward during the forum, UNESCO threw its support behind an "alternative" water forum.

The Alternative Water Forum was organized by opponents of the 5th World Water Forum including nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, Parliament members and environmentalist volunteers, reported daily Haber-Türk. But UNESCO's withdrawal from the 5th World Water Forum did not last long. A few hours later, UNESCO International Hydrological Program, or UNESCO-IHP, returned to the fold.

IHP, UNESCO's international scientific cooperative program for water issues, was planning to take part in the session organized in cooperation with İSKİ and TÜRKKAD to discuss the relation between water and cultural diversity. Yet when the two disagreed with UNESCO's program, IHP decided to withdraw from the 5th World Water Forum.

According to daily Haber-Türk, UNESCO-IHP's leader said water and culture have a scientific relation and it is important to discuss these issues to have sustainable water management.

Not to tolerate the eventual outcome of the session they decided to pullout their support at the last minute. But according to the spokeswoman of TÜRKKAD, Ümit Ceylan, an official IHP withdrawal from the official forum was never a topic.

TÜRKKAD will be working together with UNESCO-IHP during the 5th World Water Forum, said Ceylan. The UNESCO office in Ankara declined to explain the incident.

It has been mentioned that the 5th World Water Forum does not want to make room for controversial topics on Turkey's water agenda such as Allianoı and Hasankeyf, the historic places where Generale Directorate of State Hydraulic Works, or DSİ, plans to build dams.

UNESCO's support is really important for the 5th World Water Forum, said Nuri Özbağdatlı, coordinator for the Doğa Foundation, which will take part in both forums. According to Özbağdatlı, who has been following both of the forums since planning began, the water council took steps with the support of the UN until today and that is why the official forum having problems with UNESCO is a big scandal. "The biggest issue is that UNESCO is opening its arms for an alternative forum right after the disagreement proves that they also don't support the 5th World Water Forum's policy,"

he said.

'Such a fiasco'

According to Ömer Madra, the chairman of independent radio station Açık Radio, and a supporter and participant of the alternative forum, IHP was still taking part in the Alternative Water Forum. "I think the program supporting the alternative forum is great because the 5th World Water Forum is such a fiasco," he said.

The IHP sent a proposal to the Alternative Water Forum with a document covering the context, session outline and list of speakers.

The IHP report said the context was sustainable managing water resources. "In order to manage water in a sustainable manner, it is necessary to address the complexity of issues surrounding water and water use, which includes not only the natural scientific and engineering approaches that have dominated water resources management, but also social, cultural, economic and political dimensions," read the report. According to IHP officers, cultural diversity is fully incorporated into water management practices and policies.

The 5th World Water Forum will be held at Sütluçe Culture and Conference Center from March 16 to 22. The Alternative Water Forum will be held at Santralistanbul on March 20 to 22.

Global Week of Actions for Water Justice

Second call!

March 14-22, 2009

We know you are planning something, tell us about it!

As part of the call to the global water justice movements to mobilize against the false World Water Forum, we commit to mobilize for the Global Week of Actions for Water Justice. The global week of action serves as a common platform for movements, peoples' organizations, activists and citizens, elected representatives and governments committed to water justice for all communities to access safe, affordable water for drinking, fishing, recreational, and cultural uses in an equitable, effective, democratic way. These actions will support all the activities being planned by groups in Turkey to challenge the 5th World Water Forum.

We invite and urge movements, organizations and citizens around the world to undertake actions in their own countries that reflect their own struggles, character, and possibilities. Many countries are joining already, these are only some examples:

Mexico City - Jornadas en Defensa del Agua - as in 2006, many organizations are planning very diverse activities such as conferences, video screenings and exhibitions.

Mumbai, India - a talk about Indigenous Knowledge System of Water Management

Colombia, Indonesia, Philippines, USA, India, Bangladesh and Nepal are all planning mobilizations.

Canada - a toast to public water, with a light show on parliament hill with blue lighting so all the buildings look blue!

USA - many organizations are planning very diverse activities such as March for Water, video screenings, concerts, and letters to government officials.

What are you organizing in your country?

Please share the information about your plans by going to www.peopleswaterforum.org, then press "add an event", and write the details of your action. You can also send us a short paragraph outlining your planned activities and engagements (including date and place), contact details, including Country and Organization.

Information can be sent to [mbmanahan focusweb.org](http://mbmanahan.focusweb.org)

Statement from The PRESIDENT of the 63rd Session United Nations General Assembly

To the Fifth World Water Forum Delivered by Maude Barlow, Senior Advisor on Water to the President

Istanbul, 19 March 2009

Dear Friends,
Sisters and Brothers All,

I am very pleased to be able address the Fifth World Water Forum and through my Senior Adviser on Water, Ms. Maude Barlow, I send warm greetings to what has become the largest gathering of concerned water advocates in the world. I wish to address some concerns regarding the processes and structures of this institution today with candor and the genuine hope that we can find new ways to broaden our partnerships around the crucial issues arising from the water crisis that is relentlessly unfolding around the world.

As you may know, I have made access to water for all people a priority during my presidency of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. My concern has moved me to be the first General Assembly President to address the Forum since its inception in 1997. At a time when the global water crisis continues unchecked, the General Assembly has committed Member States to ensure that as much progress as possible is made towards the goals of the 2005-2015 International Decade for Action "Water for Life", which it proclaimed in 2003.

The primary goal of the UN Decade is to promote efforts to fulfill

international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015. These commitments include the Millennium Development Goals to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015 and to stop unsustainable exploitation of water resources. The UN requires dynamic partnerships to ensure the realization of these goals.

The General Assembly is joined by other members of the UN family to advance these goals. I am heartened by the decision last year of the Human Rights Council to appoint an independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Her appointment was clear demonstration of the rising concern of the international community of the impending water crisis, and the need to ensure that our joint efforts are guided towards meeting the needs of the world's most vulnerable and the disempowered.

Just last week in Geneva, Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque presented her first preliminary report to the Human Rights Council, which focused on the problem of lack of access to sanitation, and its connection to other human rights obligations. She is now focusing on the normative content of human rights obligations related to access to sanitation and the development of criteria for good practices relating to the human rights obligations for water and sanitation. These are initiatives that all of us gathered here should heed and support.

I do not need to tell you the scale of this crisis. I trust we share an awareness of the importance of supporting the billions of people who are suffering from lack of access to clean water and sanitation. What is less clear is our awareness of the need to build dynamic partnerships to ensure support for the vulnerable communities in their search for sustainable solutions to the complex problems surrounding access to water.

My views on water have been deeply influenced by Maude Barlow's exceptional work over the past years to bring the global water crisis to the attention of the international community. I share her view that water is a public trust, a common heritage of people and nature, and a fundamental human right. I am convinced that we must challenge the notion that water is a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market. We must work quickly to guarantee that access to drinking water constitutes a fundamental right of all peoples and is included among the goals of the United Nations Decade.

The World Bank reports that by 2025, two thirds of the world's population will not have enough clean water. This is why water is increasingly seen as the "oil" of the twenty-first century, with all the serious consequences that implies. Those who are committed to the privatization of water, making it a commodity like oil, are denying people a human right as basic as the air we breathe.

Because of these beliefs, I feel I must express my concerns regarding the constitution and performance of the World Water Forum. As President

of the General Assembly, I see more clearly than ever the importance of inclusive and democratic partnerships in addressing the global challenges before us. Yet to be successful, these partnerships need to be in keeping with the UN development agenda and the goals of our Organization, and must take into account and reflect the emerging trends in international law, including international human rights law. I believe the UN's own ambiguity and lack of leadership have hindered our ability to steer a course and forge more constructive partnerships for addressing the critical issue of water.

I am concerned that the World Water Forum is currently structured in a way that precludes partnerships with the advocates of the principles mentioned above. The Forum's orientation is profoundly influenced by private water companies. This is evident by the fact that both the president of the World Water Council and the alternate president are deeply involved with provision of private, for-profit, water services.

It is important that the United Nations insist on more clarity on the issue of "commodification" of water and articulate a rights-based approach on access to water. I strongly believe that UN agencies and offices should spearhead the effort to articulate, through a legally constituted process, a clear, comprehensive framework for dealing with issues of access to water and sanitation. Guidelines should be established as to the accountability and responsibilities of the members of the World Water Council and the World Water Forum.

I was troubled to learn that the current World Water Forum Ministerial Statement was only agreed upon when some states ensured that there was no binding obligation on governments to actually implement any of the articles within the statement. The issue of water is too important to be left without a binding and accountable process. We can and must do better.

It is clear that the present World Water Forum does not share the widely held views against water privatization and on preventing water from becoming a commodity. I must agree that future Forums should adopt international norms and conduct their deliberations under the auspices of the United Nations. I urge UN Member States to work together to promote policies for a Forum that meets our well-developed methodologies for such events. These policies should be implemented before the meeting of the Sixth World Water Forum.

This new orientation will give new impetus to a range of positive initiatives. Now is the time when we need to join forces and resources to take immediate steps to protect the sources of this precious resource and improve measures to prevent water pollution. It will bolster our efforts to involve more people in creative and dynamic partnerships to address the crisis, which is placing at risk the lives and well-being billions of human beings.

A broader-based Forum will also provide new opportunities to work together to develop the processes that allow us to work through any

water conflicts in a peaceful manner based upon the rule of law. We need to utilize the clear mechanisms of human rights and international law for this to be successful.

For all these reasons, it is essential that those of you representing governments at the World Water Forum take steps to reverse the decision to remove reference to the right to water from the Ministerial Declaration. As it stands, this important statement undermines the efforts of those who are struggling for access to clean water and sanitation. I urge all of you to support the efforts of the delegation from Uruguay in the process to open up the statement and do the right thing. We all know the real work comes after the words, and on this we must all stand together.

All of us - the United Nations, Governments, the private sector and organized civil society - must join forces to find solutions and positive ways forward. Together we must reassert our role as stewards of planet Earth, a role that has been abandoned for so long. We must recognize that the narrow, profit-driven approach to the precious elements of life is leading us to a dead end, not only for humanity but for all life on our beleaguered planet. We must find new respect for what has been entrusted to our care and manage our resources for the good of all.

All of us, without exception, share responsibility for the state of our world. But we must move forward. Today, we are witnessing a confluence of large-scale, interrelated crises — access to clean water among them. But crises need not necessarily turn into tragedies. This is a time of tremendous opportunities to introduce corrective measures to improve our way of doing things. The World Water Forum should be one of the key vehicles in this work.

I thank you for your support for this appeal, which goes to the heart of the work of the Forum. I entrust my advisor, Maude Barlow, to help us rethink and join efforts to develop a truly representative legal framework for dealing with water.

Thank you

<http://www.un.org/ga/president/63/s...>