

**PrepCom UNESCO offices, Paris – January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024 – Political Segment of  
the 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum – CSO's statement**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Permanent Delegates to UNESCO, Your Excellencies,

I stand in front of you today as a representative of all civil society representatives attending the meeting here today as observers. I speak on behalf of the Butterfly Effect coalition - a network of 150 NGOs from all over the world in the water sector, that works from the local to the global level, whose secretariat is coordinated by the International Secretariat for Water - whose legitimacy on the international scene no longer needs to be established. I would like to say a few words that we hope will have some resonance.

Civil society, if it were necessary to reiterate it, has a vital role to play in all debates and important contributions to make, because it is committed, involved on all fronts for the achievement of all water SDG targets, carries the banner of vulnerable and under-represented communities, and is in essence the breeding ground for social cohesion and participatory democracy. Therefore, we will never cease to remind you that its presence at major international events, where the future of our planet is at stake, must be unconditional.

We would therefore like to thank the delegation from the Republic of Indonesia for allowing us to attend today. Nevertheless, we would like to ensure that the participation of civil society in these preparatory meetings is always guaranteed, on time, but also that our presence is assured for the second preparatory meeting of the political segment which will take place March.

In addition, as it has ALWAYS been done for previous editions of the forum, we are requesting to be fully integrated into the drafting of the ministerial declaration and its preparatory process, since once again our long-lasting expertise allows us to propose appropriate recommendations.

This request reflects an underlying need for a cross-cutting approach to water-related issues, as well as genuine follow-up and accountability of the commitments made at the forum from one edition to another. We recommend that this ministerial declaration focus on several areas, such as:

- human rights : guaranteeing the right to water and sanitation for all by recognizing, respecting and implementing the rights to drinking water and sanitation at the national level, as well as the application of international humanitarian law - Geneva Convention ;
- mobilizing financial resources, in particular by investing in infrastructure but also governance and capacity building and by fighting corruption;
- the establishment of inclusive water governance by promoting transparent management of water and sanitation services, the inclusion of all stakeholders - including young people, women, indigenous populations - in the development of public policies with the need to systematically take the gender dimension into account;
- the promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation (including at regional, basin and international levels) and water as a peace-building tool;

- Regarding the multilateral cooperation specifically, and in the follow up of the UN Conference on water 2023, we ask delegates to integrate concrete provisions that support the conclusions of the UN Conference which have not been implemented to date: appointment of a Special Envoy of the Nations United for Water and Sanitation (advised by an advisory committee including non-state actors with solid representation from all major groups and regions); and the creation of a global scientific mechanism on water
- The weaponization of water: Water should not be used as a weapon of war. The year 2023 have seen many violations of the humanitarian law that is prohibiting the targeting of civilian infrastructures (such as water networks) or infrastructure “containing dangerous forces” (such as dams or dikes);
- Fragile and crisis contexts: Water sanitation and hygiene are basic needs as unconditional human rights in times of humanitarian crisis. We also call the delegates to take into consideration those who are suffering in refugee camps, displacement areas or slums all over the world without access to services.

... so that we can work together to achieve the SDGs and build on a solid foundation.

Regarding the Declaration itself, we would like to propose some amendments, such as a reference to the "human rights to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene" throughout the document and adding that “they must be guaranteed in all places, and are unalienable” (§2); a mention of civil society - including youth, women and minorities - when referring to stakeholders and actors (§8 & §12.11); the use of the word "cooperation" rather than "collaboration" (§7); the use of the word "protect" rather than "conserve" (§12. 1); the addition of the words "and all other related sectors such as agriculture, health and biodiversity for the promotion of cross-sectoral approach to global challenges" when talking about better integration of water into climate action plans (§12.2); the mention of minorities and most disadvantaged people following “community” (§12.6); adding “in particular in humanitarian context” at the end of the §12.7; the addition of the transboundary dimension when talking about water management at basin level (§12.9); and adding a paragraph on the weaponization of water mentioning that water should not be used as a weapon of war; among others.

Thanking you for your attention and consideration, we remain available for any help you may require for the elaboration of this Ministerial Declaration.

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