

COMMUNIQUE AT THE END OF NATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER WITH THE THEME: ***NIGERIA'S WATER EMERGENCY: FROM RESISTANCE TO REAL SOLUTIONS AGAINST CORPORATE CONTROL*** HELD AT REIZ CONTINENTAL HOTEL, 29-30 JANUARY 2019

**PREAMBLE**

The Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/ FoEN) organised a National Summit on the Human Right to Water with the theme: *Nigeria's Water Emergency: From Resistance to Real Solutions Against Corporate Control* on 29-30 January 2019.

Co-organisers of the summit are Corporate Accountability, Public Services International (PSI), Transnational Institute, and the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE), among others.

Over 150 participants drawn from local, national and international civil society and grassroots groups representing a global movement committed to resisting corporate control of water and securing the human right to water attended the summit. They were drawn from Nigeria and across Africa, Europe, India and the United States, including representatives from Flint and Pittsburgh who have cases of lead-poisoned water.

Representatives of the Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, Institute for the Black World 21<sup>st</sup> Century, NAACP were in attendance. Also, representatives of Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Water Resources and the wife of the President of the Nigerian Senate, Mrs. Toyin Saraki, were in attendance.

Solidarity messages were received from notable civil society actors and representatives of critical allies in Nigeria and the global community. They include the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, Leo Heller, and the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, Representative Gwen Moore, and Representative Raul Grijalva, who sent their solidarity messages via virtual video delivery.

The summit was organised to build on the lessons learnt from the Lagos Water Summit in 2015 and to scale them up nationally; Identify new allies and build power with the Nigerian government to initiate a process for enshrining water as a human right in the Nigerian constitution. Similar laws will be advocated for countries across the African continent; Strengthen the solidarity between civil society groups, labour unions, activists, policy makers and the media to resist privatisation in the water sector and reinvigoration of the Africa Coalition Against Water Privatisation

Advance real solutions to lack of access to water within the realm of public-public partnerships.

Key issues on the agenda were the interrogation of water privatization in all its ramifications and implication on communities and peoples; the need to intensify pressure on the Lagos government to back off its pro-privatisation stance in relation to water and infrastructural development, the importance of solidarity between civil society, labour, activists, and other critical segments of society as a wall of force against privatisation; and exploring the multitudes of options to strengthen democratic control of water. .

The welcome address was delivered by Chair of the Board of ERA/FoEN, Nnimmo Bassey, while the keynote address titled **The Nigerian Water Crisis and the Imperative of Rights-based Solutions** was delivered by the Executive Director of the African Center for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Center LSD), Dr. Otiye Igbuzor.

Igbuzor's intervention dwelt on the importance of water, the false arguments driving privatization, the failure of the state, and the need for governments to protect and fulfill the rights

of their citizens to water and sanitation as recommended by the United Nations in its General Assembly of 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2010. As a member of the United Nations human rights charter, the Nigerian government has an obligation to fulfill these rights.

The convergence also denounced the aggressive marketing of the Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) “success myth” by the World Bank and its private arm – International Finance Corporation (IFC) especially in poor nations. The well-documented failures of this model were shared by participants from across the world, including the U.S. and in Nigeria

Following robust deliberations and contributions in panel sessions, participants observed thus:

1. The acceptance of the privatisation myth by the Nigerian government and governments across Africa has spiked land grabs by multinational corporations and pose serious challenges on all sectors of life, including access to water, thus depriving locals of their basic human right.
2. The Lagos state government continues to demonstrate an unacceptable abdication of responsibility by its failure to embrace public sector solutions to address the yawning gap in access to water and rejuvenating the ailing water sector.
3. The corporate takeover of water in Lagos and other cities across Africa is a new form of colonialism now strangulating the African continent.
4. The plans laid out by the **Our Water Our Right** coalition in the way forward document - **Lagos Water Crisis: Alternative Roadmap for the Water Sector** have not been engaged with seriously or responded to.
5. Comprehensive data on both water infrastructure investment and access is lacking, thereby stifling planning for now and the future.
6. Reports of massive corruption in water sector across the states and at the national level are alarming.
7. The World Bank and corporate powers are intensifying the promotion of privatization, which is a false solution to the gap in access to water in Nigeria and Africa. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the water sector is a new form of colonialism aggressively marketed by the World Bank and its corporate partners, and defines success only in terms of profit to corporations rather than universal affordable water access.
8. The funding gap in the water sector is due to the vested interests and lack of political will, not a lack of resources. For example, Lagos State, which generates nearly 60 billion naira monthly, claims to not have sufficient funds to improve the state water system.
9. Bills and policies on water at the national level include dangerous pro-privatisation elements which threaten the human right to water. Participants were galvanized to advocate for the elimination of these policies as a means to protect their fundamental rights.
10. In decision-making in relation to water, local communities are not consulted and their inputs not sought. Women’s voices and the voices of other vulnerable groups are subjugated and not accorded priority. They are equally at the receiving end of water shortages and inaccessibility.
11. Oil extraction, and its attendant pollution of rivers and other traditional water sources especially in the Niger Delta, continue to deny local communities access to clean, safe water and an environment in which they can thrive
12. Those most impacted by government decision in respect of water governance are least informed about what the government is doing.

It was therefore agreed that:

1. The Nigerian government and governments in Africa reject privatization projects designed by the World Bank and its corporate partners, including the PPP success myth that it is aggressively marketing in developing and poor countries.
2. The Lagos government accedes to the demands of the **Our Water Our Right** movement that it jettison privatization, including its PPP addiction, and build the political will to fulfill the human right to water through the public sector.
3. A probe of all PPP projects, loans and funding for the existing water system and infrastructure nationwide, including at the state level, particularly in Lagos State since the assumption of office by the Governor Akinwunmi Ambode administration and the new management of the Lagos Water Corporation (LWC).
4. A national agenda for the human right to water, starting with a robust national campaign to demand for a Bill that protects against privatization and advances the human right to water
5. Remunicipalisation which is increasing globally as privatization promises fade, offers opportunities to build local democratic governance of water sources and infrastructure.
6. Government to replace the failed Public Private Partnership model with proven public solutions including the Public Public Partnership model and a national Water Trust Fund, as outlined in the way forward document – **Lagos Water Crisis: Alternative Roadmap for Water Sector**.
7. Governments in Africa embrace democratic decision-making in addressing water shortages. Women and vulnerable groups should be accorded priority in plans to guarantee access.
8. Need for comprehensive data on both water infrastructure investment and access to aid planning for the now and the future.
9. The National Water Policy be reviewed to make it mandatory that all states in collaboration with local governments ensure adequate fund is made available to resuscitate all water facilities.
10. The importance of women's leadership was shown as vital to the success of this movement. Participants agreed wholeheartedly that women's leadership shall continue to be sustained and bolstered to achieve future victories.
11. African governments invest in public infrastructure and embrace democratic, participatory and transparent management of water investments. The state governments across the federation make public the sums they have obtained in form of loans or grants from donor agencies for water and how much have been expended in the last decade.
12. Communities at the grassroots level, including Community Development Associations (CDAs) be fully integrated into campaigns on the human right to water.
13. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) be utilised in the public demand of information on funds sourced and approved for public water projects in the last three decades.
14. Reinvigoration of the movement for water justice across Africa. This initiative will address the challenges of governance, human rights and corruption in the water sector across the African continent.
15. In the design and implementation of policies relating to the water sector, governments in the African region must recognize the role of workers and guarantee they have job security

**KEY SIGNATORIES:**

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