



SOCIAL FORUM
3 – 4 November 2022
Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

“WATER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

Interactive Dialogue: Governance and participation

Oral statement delivered by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

Madame Chair,

APG23 thanks the panellists for the insightful remarks, which have underlined the outstanding relevance of governance and participation issues in enforcing and implementing the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Echoing the words of the Progress Report issued in 2020 by Mr. Heller, the former Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation: "globalization and the neoliberal wave have weakened the role of the State in the provision and regulation of water and sanitation services, and the imbalance of power has at times affected the exercise of the human rights to water and sanitation".¹

Facing and overcoming these structural factors and imbalances is crucial for the life itself of the too many peoples and communities hit by the denial or the strong limitation of the fundamental human right to water.

In order to reduce and close key gaps in water governance and ensure universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, we would like to underline three critical messages.

- 1) Prioritizing human rights over profits. Given its deep value for human life and dignity and being a fundamental right, water should never be reduced to a commodity to be traded or an object of speculation without regard to the adverse human rights impact of the financialization of public goods.
- 2) Democratizing governance of natural resources. As also reminded during this Social Forum, water governance schemes based on privatization and extractive business models have shown their failure. Democratic, transparent and accountable decision-making processes led by meaningful community participation and citizens engagement are needed to ensure a fair, equitable and sustainable governance of natural resources and public goods, according to the right to development-based approach.
- 3) Linking environmental health and human well-being. Every stage of water governance processes should be aligned to the pursuit of human and community well-being and the recently recognized human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Thank you!

¹ "Progress towards the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation (2010–2020)", Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation for 45th session of the Human Rights Council (2020).