

Statement of Commitment

We, the delegates of the Pan-Asia Water Colloquium, “Water: Common Good, Public Management and Alternatives” gathered between September 25-27, 2008 at the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras in Chennai, Tamil Nadu State, India,

Declare that

- ‘Water is life’ and part of the global commons whose nurturance remains the responsibility of humankind for the survival of the planet and its ecosystems in the present and for the future;
- This responsibility calls for democratic governance and sustainable, inclusive, community stewardship of water, which is a gift of nature;
- States as duty bearers must work for the protection and fulfillment of the right to water, including the promotion and support of community stewardship;
- The ethical basis of water as the right of all life must be affirmed and the mainstream dogma of the market as the arbiter of value, rejected;
- All state and market initiatives to enclose the commons to the exclusion of the disadvantaged, marginalized and underprivileged must be firmly resisted.

As we build alternatives, we remain

- firm in seeking remedial justice for the destruction of water resources by the state, international financial institutions (IFIs), big business and other private entities;
- steadfast in resisting the global and concerted drive of corporations, international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, regional development banks such as the ADB, etc., multilateral organizations such as the World Trade Organization, governments and elites to commodify and privatize water;
- determined in repudiating the illegitimate debts claimed from us by the IFIs, the servicing of which has taken public resources away from the strengthening of public water utilities and services, and in exposing the use of debt as leverage to promote privatization;
- strongly in solidarity with water justice movements whose resolute mobilizing and consciousness raising have strengthened opposition to water privatization and commodification and promoted the search for alternatives.

We stand by principles which maintain that

- The nurturance of water is rooted in the respect for living cultures, values and ethical traditions that sustain the global water commons;
- Any process that involves the access, use and disposal of water should be evolved from systems of governance that are democratic, ecologically sustainable, socially acceptable, inclusive and gender just;
- Community control in water governance must be ensured at all levels and across the spectra of water use;

- The guarantee of access to water must be ensured by state investments, as a fundamental rejection of exploitative principles exercised in the name of revenue generation, financial viability and willingness to pay;
- We uphold the right of communities to technologies that are accessible, affordable, sustainable, self-manageable, gender just, and respect traditional knowledge and cultural practices, where these involve good water conservation practices;
- The responsibility of states shall be to promote, support and sustain improvement initiatives through partnerships between their agencies and communities.

We therefore commit to further develop, promote, and practice alternatives to ensure the

- democratization of water through participatory, gender fair processes of consultation and decision-making; transparency and accountability of governments and government agencies, especially those directly involved with water resources and services; and access to justice mechanisms and processes for redress, where and when the right to water is compromised or denied in any way;
- reclaiming and strengthening of public water utilities through adequate public investments to fulfill a public trust of providing clean, adequate, and affordable water to the people;
- reinforcement of regulatory authorities, seeing to it that they are truly autonomous and independent, established by virtue of Act of legislation to operate transparently and provide mechanisms for accountability;
- support for public-public partnerships (PUPs) that actively and decisively involve government and civil society in policy-making, resource generation, and management;
- promotion of community-based water management initiatives; and
- supporting public audit of debts to guarantee that public expenditures for water are prioritized over debt service.

We affirm the above in the spirit of the *koodam*- a traditional, cultural, social space which respects diversity and seeks harmony through a process rooted in notions of equity and justice, and strives for consensus and collective ownership that resonates with other life-affirming world views in Asia such as *bayaniban* (Philippines), *idobata-kaigi* (Japan), *choupal* (North India) and *Imece* (Turkey).

The statement was endorsed by participated organisations:

<International>

Focus on the Global South

Transnational Institute

Globalisation Monitor, Hong Kong

Amrta Institute for Water Literacy, Indonesia

Monitoring Sustainability of Globalisation (MSN -Malaysia)

Institute for Strategic Research and Development Studies, Visayas State University, Philippines

National President of the Alliance of Government Workers in the Water Sector (AGWWAS-Philippines)

AM NET (Advocacy and Monitoring Network on Sustainable Development), Japan

ALL-JAPAN WATER SUPPLY WORKER'S UNION (ZENSUIDO) Kinki-Tokai reg. HQ, Japan

Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), Philippines

Korean Government Employees'Union (KGEU), Korea

Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka
Bisowela water project, Sri Lanka
Government water Utility in Kandy, Sri Lanka
Water & Energy Users' Federation-Nepal (WAFED-Nepal)
Dhaka WASA Employees Cooperative, Bangladesh
BanglaPraxis, Bangladesh
Jubilee South
PENGON, Friends of the Earth Palestine
Red VIDA (Vigilancia Interamericana para la Defensa y Derecho al Agua –
Inter-American Network for the Defense of the Right to Water)
Blue Planet Project, Canada
Platform against the commodification of water, Turkey

<India>

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Centre for Law, Policy and Human Rights Studies, Chennai
Change Management Group (CMG) of Engineers of

- TN IAMWARM PROJECT (Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water-Bodies Restoration and Management Project)
- Agricultural Engineering Department (AED)
- Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board (TWAD) Public Services International, Asia and Pacific Region

Water Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore
Chennai Water Forum
Right to Food Campaign, New Delhi
Campaign Against Water Privatisation, Karnataka
Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, Madhya Pradesh
Focus on the Global South-India
Thamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam (Tamilnadu Farmers' Association)
Prayas, Resources and Livelihood Group, Pune
Arghyam, NGO, Water Sector, Bangalore
Akash Ganga Trust- Rain Centre, Chennai
Tamil Nadu Women's Collective
ActionAid India
Association for Promoting Social Action
ADISIL (Agrarian Development Institute for Sustenance and Improved Livelihood)
B.K. Sinha, IAS, Director General, National Institute of Rural Development
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Prof. Pradip Prabhu, National Institute of Rural Development
Prof. Arvind Sivaramkrishnan, Asian College of Journalism, Chennai; Senior Journalist, The Hindu
B. Kailasam, Film Maker