

July 22, 2010

The Honorable Susan Rice  
Ambassador, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations  
United States Mission to the United Nations  
140 East 45th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10017  
FAX: 212-415-4053

Dear Ambassador Rice:

We write as faith-based and humanitarian organizations in the United States that work to ensure universal, sustainable access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use. We understand that a resolution on the human right to water and sanitation will be submitted this week to the United Nations General Assembly. We urge you to support the consensus resolution before the UN General Assembly on the human right to water and sanitation.

The right to water and sanitation, and other rights, including the rights to health, housing, education, work, freedom from violence, and to an adequate standard of living, are codified in international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The UN Human Rights Council, and the member states that make up the Council, are engaged in an important process to define the scope and content of the human right to water and sanitation. The Council has appointed an independent expert to study and report on these rights and good practices that implement them, with a view to assisting states to meet their international obligations.

The World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation, the official United Nations working group tasked with monitoring progress towards Millennium Development Goal 7 (halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation), reported on progress this year:

- 884 million people lack access to improved water sources
- 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation
- Approximately 1.8 million children under 5 years of age die and 443 million school days are lost each year from water and sanitation related disease

UN member states represented in these and other UN agencies, such as the UN Development Program, agree that the implementation of the human right to water and sanitation is a key means to addressing this global water and sanitation crisis.

It is vital that the resolution under consideration be passed by consensus at this time. Current consultations between member states are an important opportunity to adopt a resolution that will encourage states to redouble their efforts to progressively realize the human right to water and sanitation, and support the UN Human Rights Council process. We encourage the U.S. Mission to the UN to work with the delegations from Germany, Spain, Norway, and Bolivia, to agree on a text that:

- Recognizes the human rights to water and sanitation as components of the rights to an adequate standard of living and other human rights. These rights entitle everyone to available, safe, acceptable, accessible, and affordable water and sanitation.
- Calls on States to progressively realize these rights to the maximum of available resources, including through international cooperation and assistance, and on the United Nations to promote and support the realization of these human rights.
- Calls on States to guide their actions aimed at the realization of the MDG goals regarding access to water and sanitation by human rights principles.
- Requests the UN Independent Expert, in consultation with relevant UN agencies, funds, and programs, to submit a report to the General Assembly, at its 66<sup>th</sup> session, on the principal challenges related to the realization of the rights to water and sanitation.

We are very encouraged by President Obama's interest in the broader goal of providing safe drinking water for vulnerable communities at home and abroad, and the work of the U.S. State Department with regard to the implementation of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which prioritizes foreign assistance to vulnerable populations and their access to safe drinking water and sanitation. We hope you will join this effort to make safe drinking water and adequate sanitation a reality. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Patricia Jones, Program Manager for Environmental Justice at the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee at [pjones@uusc.org](mailto:pjones@uusc.org).

Sincerely,

Africa Faith and Justice Network  
Agricultural Missions Inc  
Bon Secours Health System, Inc.  
Catholic Health East  
Center of Concern  
CHRISTUS Health  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)  
Congregation of St. Basil  
Church World Service  
Franciscan Action Network  
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility  
Corporate Accountability International

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Leadership of Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers  
Mercy Investment Services, Inc.  
Ministry Health Care  
National Council of Churches USA  
National Jesuit Committee on Investment Responsibility  
Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment  
Peace and Justice Team, Congregation of St. Joseph  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Public Witness  
St. Joseph Health System, Orange, CA.  
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team  
SSM International Finance, Inc.  
The National Jesuit Committee on Investment Responsibility (NJCIR)  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Water Advocates

Cc:

Ms. Esther Brimmer,  
Assistant Secretary  
International Organization Affairs

Ms. Maria Otero  
Under Secretary  
Democracy and Global Action

Mr. Michael H. Posner  
Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor