

Declaration of San Salvador for the Defense and Right to Water

We, social organizations and movements, meeting in the city of San Salvador during August 21-22, 2003, from Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Canada, and United States, wish to make known our total rejection of the privatization of water resources and public water services in our countries and in the region, and denounce that these processes are being encouraged, financed and promoted by multinational corporations, international financial institutions, multilateral trade organizations and governments.

Considering that the problem has deep implications and negative effects on the environment, health, sovereignty, the economy, and the dignity of our people, WE DECLARE THAT:

1. Management of water resources should be based on fundamental principles such as social, sustainable and universal justice.
2. Water is a public good and a fundamental and unalienable human right that should be protected and promoted by all of us who inhabit the planet, by communities and by nations.
3. Water is not a commodity and no one or no entity has the right to profit from it; thus water must not be privatized, sold nor exported.
4. Water conservation is a universal responsibility. Water must be protected from all contaminating human activities, especially mining and industrial and agro-industrial processes. Protection of ecological systems and integral management of water is a must, in order to guarantee the right to a health environment.
5. Water must be totally excluded from the WTO, FTAA and FTA negotiations, and must not be considered a "commodity", "service" or "investment" in any international, regional or bilateral agreement. We therefore denounce, reject and will mobilize against attempts to include it in negotiations in the upcoming WTO summit in Cancún.
6. Large-scale water development projects are being implemented, such as mega-dams, that are both ecologically and socially unsustainable. Therefore alternatives must be sought that respect the rights of persons and communities, promote and protect the environment, and are undertaken with full social participation.
7. Recognizing the existing inequality between men and women in the access, management and rights with respect to water resources and drinking water, policies and practices should be developed that eliminate these inequities.

8. A future with a secure access to water depends on the recognition, respect and protection of the rights of indigenous, campesino and fishing peoples, and also of their traditional knowledge.

9. We reject the strategy being promoted by international financial institutions, multilateral trade organizations and national governments, among others, that encourages governments to forego their obligation to offer various water-related services in an efficient manner. We demand that public water systems be protected, revitalized and strengthened so as to improve levels of quality and efficiency. The participation of workers from the community should be promoted, in order to democratize the decision-making process, guaranteeing transparency and accountability through social control.

10. In the case of communal, urban and rural water systems, public policies should be drawn up and enacted that support development and economic, social, and environmental sustainability, respecting the autonomy and rights of communities.

11. We reject the conditions being imposed by international financial institutions in order to lend funds for water management, violating the sovereignty of our peoples.

Convinced as we are that only by social organizing and mobilizing we will be able to guarantee the effective defense of our right to water, in the face of the water-resource privatization threat, we commit ourselves to strengthening and widening social resistance against these privatization processes, and for which reason WE HEREBY AGREE:

1.- The constitution of the VIDA (Inter-American Vigilance for the Defense and Right to Water) Network, and the naming of a Liaison Commission temporarily headed by organizations from Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Dominican Republic, United States, Costa Rica and El Salvador.

2.- Among initial activities of VIDA Network will be the launching of a continental campaign called "No to the Privatization of Water. We Want a Public Management Scheme with Social Participation".

San Salvador, August 22, 2003

International organizations:

Alianza Cívica Chiapas, México

Asociación de Servicios Municipales de Saneamiento, Brasil

Asociación de Consumidores de Masaya, Nicaragua

Bloque Popular, Honduras Comisión AGUA Y VIDA, Uruguay

Consejo de Canadienses, Canadá

Centro del Agua del Trópico Húmedo para América Latina y El Caribe, Panamá

Coordinadora por la Defensa del Agua y la Vida, Bolivia

Comité de Servicio de los Amigos, Nicaragua

Consumers International, Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe

Encuentro Popular, Costa Rica
Federación Nacional de Asociaciones de Consumidores y Usuarios, Costa Rica
Fundación por los Derechos del Consumidor, República Dominicana
Fundación SOLON, Bolivia
Frente Petenero Contra las Represas, Guatemala
Federación Nacional de Trabajadores del Agua Potable y Alcantarillado, Perú
Fundación del Consumidor y Usuario de Panamá
Internacional de Servicios Públicos, Oficina Regional para Centroamérica y el Caribe
Instituto Polaris, Canadá
Instituto de Ecología Política, Chile
Liga para la Defensa del Consumidor, Nicaragua
Movimiento Contra las Represas en Jinotega, Nicaragua
Public Citizen, Estados Unidos
Red Ciudadana del Agua, México
Red Nacional de Consumidores de Nicaragua
Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa Estatal de Agua, Honduras
Unión de Usuarios y Consumidores, Argentina

Salvadoreans Organizations:

Asociación de Organismos de Cuenca del Lago de Ilopango
Agencia de Desarrollo Microregional de los Municipios de Ilopango, Soyapango y San Martín
Asociación de Mujeres por la Dignidad y la Vida, Las Dignas
Asociación Comunal de Salud, Agua y Medio Ambiente
Asociación de Ayuda Humanitaria, Pro vida
Asociación de Trabajadores del Arte y la Cultura
Centro para la Defensa del Consumidor
Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador
Consejo Coordinador de Comunidades
Fundación Maquilishuatl
Fundación Salvadoreña para la Promoción Social y el Desarrollo Económico
Fundación para el Desarrollo de El Salvador
Fundación Salvadoreña para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo
Fundación Río LempaFundación para el Estudio y la Aplicación del Derecho
Iglesia Bautista Enmanuel
Movimiento de Mujeres "Melida Anaya Montes"
Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
Red de Consumidores en Acción
Red Sinti Techan
Sindicato de Empresa de Trabajadores de ANDA
Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña.