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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 May 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The Right to water, Right to Development

Endemic conflict in parts of Africa and the rest of the world has worsened the minimum supply of water among the poorest communities that are hit the hardest by unstable geopolitical conditions. Added to the chronic shortages of water, conflict-driven displacement has taken a huge toll on communities that face deprivation on a wide scale. Children, women and the elderly have been particularly hit as a result.

Water problems of varying intensity now affect more than half of humanity. No less than 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water and 2.6 billion people suffer complications from absence or lack of basic sanitation. When one considers that up to two in three people, who lack access to clean water, survive on less than \$2 a day, with one in three living on less than \$1 a day, it becomes clear that the water crisis lies at the core of all that is wrong with stunted development. Income disparities and uneven development play their part in making shortages a compound issue.

Access to piped water into the household averages about 85% for the wealthiest 20% of the population, compared with 25% for the poorest 20%.

Poor infrastructures have also led to the water crisis. It may come as a shock to many of us that while about 1.8 billion people have access to a water source within one kilometre this access is usually not in their house or immediate domestic surroundings. Their basic consumption of around 20 litres per day thus becomes an uphill challenge.

Compare this with the United Kingdom, where the average person uses more than 50 litres of water a day flushing toilets, a usage that comprises a third of daily use. Compare that also with the United States where the highest average daily water usage is 600 litres a day. This state of affairs gives ground to the prospect that water supply in the poorest of the world's countries is not likely to improve any time soon.

What are the consequences of this chronic shortage? Aside from direct impact on daily existence scant water supplies lead to poor sanitation, which in turn cause disease to proliferate. In one striking example child mortality from diarrhoea is seen to be responsible for 1.8 million deaths per year. Other water-related illness impacts heavily on development, in particular child development, and limits prospects for children. Loss of school time as a result of illness is commonplace and is known to result in the loss of 443 million school days.

When all causes and effects of the current water crisis are taken into account it is clear that nearly half of all people in developing countries suffer at any given time from a health problem caused by water and sanitation deficits.

Children's wellbeing is directly linked to the welfare of their families, especially their mothers, sisters or other guardians. But millions of women spend several hours a day collecting water and still have to look after families in other ways, such as working on farms, doing jobs away from home and finding fuel or food to feed their families. All this results in massive economic waste, lack of productivity and poor and inadequate adherence to development targets.

Recommendations

1. Our organisation recommends a greater coordinated effort with the participation of governments, aid agencies and non-government organisations to improve conditions for water supply.
2. Our organisation also calls for a more concerted effort to spread education about the conservation, consumption and storage of water.
3. Our organisation calls for a more coordinated integration of overall development goals and water distribution and supply planning.

4. Our organisation calls for more emphasis on mass media campaigns and the use of social media to address issues of water sources, conservation and maintenance of clean water storage. Greater attention to educational aspects of water consumption can lead to significant savings and contribute to meeting development goals.
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