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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 Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee, 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.

[22 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation in India

Access to water and sanitation are recognized by the United Nations as human rights; fundamental to everyone's health, dignity and prosperity. However, billions of people are still living without safely managed water and sanitation. My organization wants to bring council attention towards India where marginalized groups are often overlooked, and sometimes face discrimination, as they try to access the water and sanitation services they need. Recent incidents across rural India where Dalits getting beaten up to death, specifically around access to water, are now a new normal. Even After a Century, Water is still the marker of India's Caste Society. For Dalits, water is not a natural beauty, the nectar of life or a life-nurturing agent, but a 'caste burden'. Several stories have been reported of Dalits being beaten up, assaulted and killed because they attempted to collect or drink water. The death of a nine-year-old Dalit kid on the night of India's 75th Independence Day after he was reportedly physically assaulted by his school teacher for sipping water from a pot intended for the teacher who was from an upper caste. A similar incident yet again been reported in Karnataka in May 2023 when two Dalit youths in Rajankunte a suburb in Bangalore, Karnataka were killed for drinking water from the same jar as upper castes.

Indian cities and towns regularly run out of water in the summers because they lack the infrastructure to deliver piped water to every home. Around 200,000 Indians die every year because they have no access to clean water. Rural areas of India are also badly affected by lack of access to clean water. Winding queues of people waiting to collect water from tankers or public taps is a common sight in slums and these slums have no sanitation system.

Access to safe water ensures good health, dignity, and a quality life, and fosters happy communities but in India where more than 8% of this population lack access to safe water and about 17% of India's population is suffering the indignity of defecating in fields, forests, bodies of water, or other public spaces due to a lack of access to toilets. India alone accounted for 90 per cent of the people in South Asia and half of the 1.2 billion people in the world that defecated in the open. Due to this, there is a risk of developing many diseases. In India lack of household water connections and toilets contributes largely to water-borne illnesses, stunting, and death. We urge this council to ask Indian government to control open defecation and provide better facilities to its citizens for safe drinking water and sanitation.
