

Universal Declaration on Water as a Fundamental Human Right (UDWFHR)

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February 27, 2025

Adopted on February 27, 2025

Abstract

This Universal Declaration affirms that access to clean and safe water is a fundamental human right. It establishes global legal and ethical responsibilities to protect water sources from contamination, privatization, and unsustainable exploitation. The Declaration calls for equitable water distribution, ecological conservation, and governance mechanisms to ensure water security for present and future generations.

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Preamble

Recognizing that water is essential to all life and that billions of people worldwide face water scarcity, contamination, and inequitable access, and acknowledging the duty of governments, corporations, and communities to ensure the protection and sustainable management of water resources, this Declaration affirms the following principles:

1. Every individual has the inalienable right to safe, clean, and accessible water for drinking, sanitation, and sustenance.
2. Water resources must be protected as a global commons, not subject to privatization or commercial exploitation.
3. Governments and corporations must ensure water sustainability, equitable distribution, and pollution prevention.
4. Climate resilience and conservation policies must prioritize the protection of freshwater ecosystems.
5. Communities must have a say in water governance, ensuring fair and democratic decision-making in water management.

Article 1: Definitions

For the purposes of this Declaration:

- **Water as a Human Right:** The principle that access to safe and clean water is a fundamental necessity for life and must be guaranteed to all individuals.
- **Water Privatization:** The transfer of water resources and services from public to private control, often leading to restricted access and higher costs.
- **Water Sovereignty:** The right of communities and nations to manage their own water resources without external interference.
- **Sustainable Water Management:** Practices that ensure the long-term availability, quality, and equitable distribution of freshwater.
- **Pollution Prevention:**** Measures taken to protect water sources from industrial, agricultural, and human contamination.

Article 2: General Principles

2.1 Right to Clean and Safe Water

All individuals have the right to sufficient, safe, and accessible water for personal, domestic, and agricultural use, free from contamination.

2.2 Prohibition of Water Privatization

Water must remain a public good and cannot be commodified or controlled by private entities at the expense of human access.

2.3 Sustainable and Equitable Water Distribution

Governments must ensure that water resources are fairly distributed, prioritizing access for marginalized and water-scarce communities.

2.4 Climate and Environmental Protection

Water governance must integrate climate resilience, ecosystem conservation, and pollution prevention to maintain long-term water security.

2.5 Community-Based Water Governance

Decisions regarding water management must be made through democratic and community-led processes, respecting local knowledge and Indigenous water rights.

Article 3: Ethical and Legal Obligations

3.1 Governments

States shall recognize water as a human right in national law, establish public water utilities, and protect natural water sources from contamination and overuse.

3.2 Corporations and Industrial Sectors

Companies must adopt sustainable water usage practices, avoid pollution, and refrain from engaging in exploitative water privatization.

3.3 Communities and Civil Society

Local communities must be empowered to participate in water governance, ensuring fair allocation and environmental stewardship.

Article 4: Implementation and Compliance

4.1 Global Water Governance Framework

An international body shall be established to monitor water rights compliance, mediate disputes, and support sustainable water management practices.

4.2 National Legislation and Public Water Policies

Governments shall enact laws prohibiting water privatization, enforcing clean water standards, and ensuring universal water access.

4.3 Education and Public Awareness

Educational programs must inform the public about water conservation, pollution prevention, and the human right to water.

Article 5: Enforcement Mechanisms

5.1 Legal Accountability

Entities violating water rights, engaging in pollution, or restricting public access to water shall be subject to legal penalties, including fines and restitution.

5.2 Environmental Justice Tribunals

Courts specializing in water justice shall be established to address water-related disputes and hold violators accountable.

5.3 Whistleblower Protections

Individuals exposing water-related corruption, pollution, or human rights violations shall be legally protected from retaliation.

Final Provisions

This Declaration serves as a foundational ethical and legal framework for the recognition and protection of water as a fundamental human right. It shall be open to ratification by states, corporations, and institutions, who commit to upholding its principles.

Signed on February 27, 2025

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