



His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

21 May 2015

Dear Pope Francis,

The NGO Mining Working Group is a coalition of more than 25 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) most of whom are faith-based. We advocate at and through the United Nations (UN) for the human rights of all people, especially in the context of the extractive development model, with a particular focus on the human right to water and sanitation. We have been actively participating in the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, and our advocacy efforts have consistently emphasized the importance of a human rights based approach to all sustainable development.

Last week, the NGO Mining Working Group mobilized more than 600 faith-based groups and NGOs from around the world, who focus on water justice and who collectively represent billions of people, in calling on UN Member States to ensure that the human right to water and sanitation be made explicit in the Declaration of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The letter built on the consistent and urgent advocacy efforts of the NGO Mining Working Group throughout the Post-2015 process (see enclosed).

The United Nations General Assembly has officially recognized the right to water. However, we are deeply concerned that unless the human right to water and sanitation is explicitly mentioned in the Post-2015 Agenda, this critical and basic right for the protection of God's creation and the human family will be ignored.

In this regard, we deplore the fact that the human right to water and sanitation continues to remain unrealized for hundreds of millions of people. According to a recent joint study by UNICEF and WHO, at least 1.8 billion people drink fecally contaminated water. In addition, 2.5 billion remain without access to basic sanitation. Water is being increasingly exploited on a global scale as a disposable commodity to be sold to those who have the power and resources necessary to control it.

For all these reasons, the NGO Mining Working Group calls for the unequivocal recognition of the human right to water and sanitation in order to ensure that the Post-2015 Agenda gives priority to people over profits, and protects water as a vital common good shared by all in the human family as well as our Earth. We believe that if the Post-2015 Development Agenda is to be truly sustainable, people-centered, transformative, and representative of a road to human dignity, it must explicitly name the human right to water and sanitation.

Pope Francis, we have been encouraged by your statement for the recent World Water Day in which you declared that water is a common good that must be accessible to all, and we look forward to your encyclical on the environment. Your resounding moral voice is heeded by people of all faiths as well as those of no faith.

We believe strongly that if you call on Member States of the UN to acknowledge the human right to water and sanitation in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the world's marginalized and disenfranchised will receive renewed hope that their fundamental right to lead a life of dignity will be realized.

We ask you to join your voice to that of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew who in his statement for World Water Day encouraged the international community to explicitly name the human right to water and sanitation (see enclosed). Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Mariadiaga also added his voice to this discourse during an event at the United Nations on March 5, 2015. He said, "The United Nations is launching a Sustainable Development Agenda this year, which presents an opportunity to make changes that put the needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities first. Water and sanitation must be recognized at the domestic and international levels as a human right. It must also be managed as a common resource that is protected from private profiteering and abuse."

Pope Francis, a "zero-draft" of the political Declaration of the Post-2105 Development Agenda is currently being developed for negotiations in the June session of the Post-2015 Intergovernmental Negotiations. **An immediate call from you to Member States urging them to explicitly name the human right to water and sanitation in the political Declaration will be heard and have bold impact.** Given the United Nations commitment to realize an ambitious Post-2015 Development Agenda that is just, transformative, and people-centered, we remain confident that with your guidance, Member States will heed this shared call.

We are grateful for your moral leadership on so many pressing issues. Be assured of our constant prayers and support as you lead us in accord with Gospel values.

Sincerely,

Members of the NGO Mining Working Group:

Blue Planet Project of the Council of Canadians, Meera Karunanathan
Claretian Missionaries, Rev. Brian Culley, CMF
Congregations of St. Joseph, Sr. Justine Gitanjali Senapati CSJ
Congregation of the Mission, Rev. Joseph Foley CM
Dominican Leadership Conference, Sr. Margaret Mayce OP
Edmund Rice International, Brother Kevin Cawley CFC
Feminist Task Force, Rosa Lizarde

Franciscans International, Fr. Markus Heinze OFM, Amanda Lyons, and Sr. Odile Coirier FMM
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA), V. Rev. Dr. Nathanael Symeonides
International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sr. Elsa Muttathu PBVM
Loretto Community, Sally Dunne COL, CoMember of Loretto
Marianists International, Brian Reavy
Medical Mission Sisters, Sr. Celine Paramundayil MMS
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), Rev. Daniel Le Blanc OMI
Mennonite Central Committee, Doug Hostetter
Passionists International, Mirek Lesiecki, c.p.
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Sr. Veronica Brand RSHM
Salesian Missions, Rev. Thomas Brennan SDB
Sisters of Charity Federation, Sr. Teresa Kotturan SCN
Sisters of Mercy (NGO), Mercy International Association: Global Action, Sr. Áine O'Connor RSM
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Sr. Jean Stoner SNDdeN and Sr. Grace Ezeonu SNDdeN
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, Sr. Suzanne Golas, CSJP
Temple of Understanding, Grove Harris
UNANIMA International, Sr. Michele Morek OSU and Sr. Cecelia Martin NDS
VIVAT International, Rev. Robert Mirsel SVD and Sr. Zelia Cordeiro SSpS
Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church, Rev. Kathleen Stone
Yamasi People, Southeast Indigenous Peoples Center, Lori Johnson

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Enclosed:

- ❖ A Human Rights Approach to Water and Sanitation
- ❖ Church Statements on Water and Sanitation
- ❖ Civil Society Calls for the Human Right to Water and Sanitation
- ❖ Ecumenical Patriarch World Water Day 2015
- ❖ Letter to Special Rapporteur 2015
- ❖ MWG Advocacy Brief