

# AWWF 2018: Message of the Religions and Spiritualities to the Peoples

Alternative World Water Forum  
Brasília, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

## The waters summon

We, members of different religious traditions and spiritualities, we gathered at the Alternative World Water Forum held in Brasília/Brazil on March 17-22, 2018 to assert the Waters as a Gift of God, Right of all creatures and Common Good. We feel summoned by the waters to listen to their clamors that emerge from the grave socio-environmental situations caused by the greed of the human beings which makes them use the natural resources in an irresponsible way. We pitched our Interreligious Tent at AWWF 2018 and, in dialogue with indigenous peoples, grassroots movements, NGOs and other civil society organizations, based on our creeds and in tune with all creation, we affirm that water is a right and not a merchandise.

Our religious and spiritual traditions have a deep relationship with the waters. They connect us with the reality of the Transcendent through our liturgies, our rites of initiation, purification, praise and thanksgiving. They express characteristics of the creator, such as **Life** – without water there is no life; **Gratuitousness** – water is not merchandise; **Freedom** – water cannot be privatized; **Communion** – water is a common good. Therefore the waters have for us a sacred dimension in its origin and in its purpose: the life that proceeds of the divine and is realized in the existence of all creatures. As a vital element the waters intertwine the natural and the spiritual, the sacred and the profane, mystique and politics, the individuality and the community. They connect the different local and global contexts where the course of life travels towards the fraternity between the peoples who share this element essential to all: water.

## The waters cry out

The waters have their own movement as a living being that must freely follow its course to generate and sustain other lives. But today they suffer from the effects of a profit-driven system and the consequences of climate change which alter their cycles and threaten life on the planet. That is why the waters cry out for a socio-environmental justice that needs to surpass the projects of privatization, mercantilization and depredation of nature.

The AWWF 2018 is held in Brazil where the restrictions of access to water express the scandalous social inequalities: the country that holds 12% of the world's water reserves has more than 80% of its people without access to quality water. About 1/3 of the world's population is in the same situation, and more than half of humanity does not enjoy safe basic sanitation. Some offer attempts of merely technical answers to these problems; others present solutions with interests to profit from the grave situations of our seas, aquifers, rivers, streams and springs. These proposals directly affect our peoples, especially indigenous people, *quilombolas* [rural people of African descent), riverine people and inhabitants of the city outskirts, increasing further social inequalities and the suffering mainly of women and children.

In this context, we hear the waters cry out for justice and for rights. Water is a gift of God and not a private property to be bought and sold. Hence, access to water for free and without restriction

is a right for everyone. For our religious traditions and spiritualities, this is a privileged way of living our faith in the creator of the waters of the entire planet. As the indigenous people teach us: if the waters were given to us for free, why pay for them?

### **The waters send us out**

We join the voices that denounce any action that attacks the sacred value of water, transforming it into a commodity devoid of life and rights. As religious persons we raise our prophetic voice, denouncing the projects of death and defending ethical and political proposals that overcome the disorder caused by social and environmental injustices. To this end, we propose as concrete actions:

- **Spiritual and theological training**, as well as technical and political training, to promote communities as subjects of fair relations to nature, specifically water and their territories;
- **Actions of articulation, alliance and advocacy** that link local agendas with the regional and global processes of sustainable development, climate justice and fight against sociocultural inequalities;
- **Common communication strategies** that promote exchanges of experience and knowledge, actions of public denunciation and dissemination of the alternatives that involve the peoples in the processes to attain justice for water and all creation.

We call on all creeds and faith-based organizations to integrate with the voices and transforming actions in societies in Brazil, Latin American and all continents, linking mystique and politics in the strengthening of local and global projects that defend our waters as rights and not commodities, because they are a gift of God and a common good.

### **INTERRELIGIOUS TENT OF THE ALTERNATIVE WORLD WATER FORUM**