

MANIFESTO

ISTANBUL DECLARATION AGAINST THE 5TH WORLD WATER FORUM*

We, the “No to the Commercialization of Water Platform,” in opposition to the 5th World Water Forum and its collaborators in Turkey and throughout the world, have organized demonstrations, press releases, various workshops on the issue of water, and meetings of broad participation. We announce that:

From April 2008, during our “Counter Forum” activities that emphasize water as a social good, we have acted with the belief that defending water against commercialization—which poses a threat to all peoples and living creatures—is only possible through an organized struggle.

Therefore, we acknowledge as our priority the necessity to incorporate the broadest segments of the world’s people into this struggle.

This struggle goes well beyond the struggle against the 5th World Forum and activities organized as part of the counter forum. We anticipate that our struggle will carry on until our forests, land, labor, and water have become free.

- ◆ Our opposition is not only directed towards the World Water Council or the World Water Forum. We declare to the whole world that we consider the United Nations as part of the problem, not as part of the solution, because it is the first international institution that defines water as a commercial good (commodity), and it has sponsored the World Water Council since its inception. Furthermore, we—trade unions and trade organizations, revolutionary configurations, labor parties, and environment and culture associations from Turkey—believe that it is not possible for the states that are identified as anti-democratic when considered individually to act “democratically” when clustered together under the umbrella of the UN.
- ◆ The reason that institutions of the capitalist system, such as the World Water Council, OECD, and World Bank, are now promoting “public-private partnership” as a strategy is, in our view, simply an attempt to create confusion in the minds of people regarding the issue of commodification of water. Therefore, the truth that the word “public” is trying to conceal should be closely examined. As we can see, in Turkey as well as many places throughout the world, water resources and services are being commercialized with the hand of the “public.” Moreover, the legal regulations ensuring that water becomes a good that is bought and sold on the market are carried out by the states themselves. In the present context where multinational corporations and the World Water Council claim that the ownership of water resources should be kept in the hands of the state—but insist that the value of water be determined by the market—to limit the argument to keeping water resources public is to approve the commodification of water. Furthermore, because the transfer of control of water resources and water distribution is taking place under capitalism—where clean water is rapidly polluted and consumed—even if the

- ownership and distribution stays in the hands of the states, demands confined exclusively to advocating public ownership of water and water distribution systems cannot halt the accelerating destruction to water resources and the ecosystem. Under public-private partnerships, it is anticipated that public water businesses that are experienced in marketing water resources in the global marketplace will share their experiences with other public water businesses, and all the state-owned water companies will become active commercial actors in the global marketplace.
- ◆ Bargaining within the capitalist system, for example, selling water for its cost price, raised concerns in the workshops that took place March 17-18, 2009. Everyone knows that there are countries and regions that are rich in water resources and others that are poor in water resources. As the distance between human settlements and water resources increases, capital investments will rise and costs will soar. Therefore, we predict that bargaining within the capitalist system will intensify struggles over water.
 - ◆ We, the No to the Commercialization of Water Platform, believe that instead of considering the attempt to “determine the value of water through market mechanisms” a mere technical detail, which the World Water Council repeatedly emphasizes, using the market to value water must be analyzed in terms of the repercussions it has for people and the environment. As with all other commodities, it is necessary to have a quantifiable and storable water supply and extraction and distribution process that includes both capital and labor. This also means that as groundwater is rapidly drawn down and collected above ground, the ecological balance is destroyed by building countless dams on rivers. The resulting dislocation of people leads to more unbearable levels of unemployment and poverty, while physical labor exploitation in water and related production processes increase, and the world is confronted with rapid desertification. This will further impoverish the working classes and make it even more difficult for them to access water.
 - ◆ As a compulsory requirement of the commodification of water and a way to increase exploitation and profits in the capitalist-imperialist system, the building of dams do not solve the problems of water provision and sustainability. Dams do not take into consideration the natural cycle of water, the entirety of the ecosystem, the vital importance of freely flowing rivers for natural life and agriculture, nor the availability of water to all creatures.
 - ◆ It is clear that despite the discourse of institutions such as the World Water Council and the UN—which try to legitimate the commodification of water by pleading for “obtainment of water by the ones who do not have access to it”—transforming water into a commercial good offers no solution for the 1 billion people throughout the world who currently do not have access to water. Those without access to water are, in fact, the world’s poorest, who do not even have the means to buy food. There is no reason to believe that these groups, who make up the lowest strata of the laboring peoples, will be able to obtain water once it is commodified. Therefore, we believe that it is our solemn duty to expose the propaganda of those who advocate the commodification of water under the false pretext of providing water to all the

peoples of the world.

- ◆ The most notorious sector represented by the World Water Forum and its sponsors is conventional agriculture due to its increasing consumption of clean water resources. The solution they propose, however, is increasing industrialization of agriculture. The spread of industrial agriculture via the “Green Revolution” has not eliminated hunger but has caused intractable environmental problems. In order to increase efficiency in agriculture, the quality of food, and create a healthier environment, agricultural models that are friendly to nature must be embraced.
- ◆ There is evidence that throughout the world, as in Palestine, water is gradually being used as a strategic weapon. However, water-crossing borders can only be managed correctly with the cooperation and solidarity of the people on both sides of the border. The participation of international institutions in the management of water in such localities can only bear the signs of commercial and imperialistic hegemony.
- ◆ We, the No to the Commercialization of Water Platform, know that water is a necessity not only for humans but also for other creatures; that water, being a component of nature, is the protector of organic and inorganic systems; and that water itself is a living thing. Thus, since water is an inseparable part of life, we reject its commercialization.

In the light of the above evaluations, the No to the Commercialization of Water Platform’s struggle to overcome the increasing shortage and prevent the commodification of water, we announce the following short-term goals:

- ◆ To openly discuss the necessity and benefits of the construction of all kinds of water structures, utilizing majority opinion to evaluate the viewpoints of the people who will be affected as well as the environmental, cultural, and social impacts; to evaluate water structures according to the sustainability of all life and nature rather than to the benefit of the capitalist construction and finance sectors; and to determine locations according to these criteria.
- ◆ To demand that at least half of the water that firms producing commodities use comes from their own waste water treatment facilities and that they pay market price for the rest; this will help insure that domestic water supplies are conserved and provided for free to those who don’t have access to water.
- ◆ To provide free irrigation water for subsistence farmers.
- ◆ To re-evaluate the efficiency of agricultural production according to its contribution to human health.
- ◆ To do away with capitalist industrial farming and large land ownership in agriculture and implement improved farming techniques that protect water and soil.

- ◆ To completely abolish the capitalist pressures (construction and rent) on water basins.
- ◆ To set up committees of local people to unconditionally protect entire water basins rather than relying on short-, middle-, and long-distance protection zones.
- ◆ To repeal laws and revoke permits already issued for mining in water basins.
- ◆ To prevent industry from illicitly removing underground and surface water, ensure that waste water is purified before it is reused, and prohibit the use of water from fossil aquifers.
- ◆ To protect wetland systems and basins according to sustainability of the *natural equilibrium* and not according to so-called “sustainable development” strategies.
- ◆ To protect and improve pasture and forest areas.
- ◆ To prevent water basins from being polluted by agricultural activities and industrial and domestic wastes.
- ◆ To prohibit the use of genetically altered seeds, which pose a threat to bio-diversity in Turkey and the whole world.
- ◆ To give preference to local crop varieties, which are better adapted to their surroundings and consume less water and nutrients, over corporate-produced hybrid seeds, which ignore variations in geographical conditions.
- ◆ To prevent any initiative that destroys the historical, cultural, and natural fabric and compels people to leave their homes because of disruptions or interference in rivers through dam construction and hydroelectric plants,
- ◆ To prohibit the use of fossil fuels in energy production and shift to renewable energy, particularly wind and solar energy.
- ◆ To advocate energy produced in localities where it is needed, instead of producing and transporting it from long distances. We also call for energy production to be planned according to the renewability of resources available and not energy requirements for capitalist production.
- ◆ To closely monitor likely policies and scenarios related to water sharing on the local level.
- ◆ To ensure that people participate in writing laws related to water.
- ◆ To revoke existing laws that permit water companies in Italy, India, and Turkey to establish their own private security organs.

- ◆ To implement policies that enable producers to have a say in the management of water and land.
- ◆ To create work environments in which employees of water services and related jobs can work under full social security, freely, and receive a living wage.
- ◆ To developing strategies that will help labor movements internalize the struggle and create strong social opposition to the commodification of water.
- ◆ To ensure that everyone has equal and free access to clean, potable water.
- ◆ To collectively organize laborers of neighboring countries instead of allowing individual countries to increase productivity at the expense of their neighbors, which could restrict access to water and reduce the purchasing power of their wages.
- ◆ To create national and international networks to broadcast to the whole world the policies and practices of corporations and states regarding water and to exchange information about the experiences of people and communities in the countries, regions, and localities that are engaged in struggles over water.
- ◆ To monitor international struggles and share experiences of local resistance and struggle against the commercialization of water, transforming these experiences into unified resistance—in short, to ensure that through international knowledge sharing, the peoples of the world can act collectively.
- ◆ To act according to the benefit of local communities around the world who are living in the most difficult circumstances and to ensure their demands become a world demand.
- ◆ To take into account all local, historical, and cultural differences while building organization and solidarity networks across the globe.
- ◆ To take a collective stand with the peoples of the world in order to immediately revoke the clauses regarding the commercialization and commodification of water from the loan agreements between governments and international loan institutions, especially the World Bank, and to ensure that such loans will never be available again.
- ◆ To contribute as artists to the organized struggle by creating, publishing, and displaying works in favor of water rights, democracy and labor rights.

In the long run:

Our determination to actualize our shared opinions will give strength to the systematic and organized struggle of the No to the Commercialization of Water Platform.

We believe that no economic value is more important than the history and cultural heritage of people and natural life and its equilibrium.

Water is life itself. The commercialization of water is not only unacceptable for humans but also for all of nature and other living creatures.

We stand for only the use value of water and its utilization in the production of products that only have a use value.

We concretize our demand for a free world without exploitation, in which developments in science and technology are employed for the benefit of humankind.

Shortly, we claim the use value of our land, bread, labor, and WATER, meaning that all production must solely focus on public welfare.

Once again we pray that the people will struggle together against the games of commercialization of water that the World Water Council and their collaborators play in Turkey, and against the intentions of the 5th World Water Forum.

* NO TO THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF WATER PLATFORM *