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## Explicitly Name and Include the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in Priority Themes

Although environmentalists, decision-makers and the business sector agree that the deepening global water crisis is the single largest challenge plaguing the planet in the 21st century,<sup>1</sup> the Zero Draft does not adequately reflect the widespread nature of this concern, nor its urgency. Goal 6,<sup>2</sup> which combines freshwater management targets and universal access to water and sanitation services, is a fairly complex and far-reaching goal dealing with a range of urgent social and environmental issues. In addition, water is a crosscutting theme that is a pre-condition for the fulfillment of other SDGs. For example, water shortages and contamination affect gender equality, the fight against poverty, environmental health, and the production of food and energy.

Despite this, water is not included in Zero Draft paragraphs 20-28 that cover the major thematic issues of the 17 SDGs. Brief mentions of water within the document overlook the importance of the human right to water and sanitation and fail to cover the range and complexity of freshwater challenges faced by communities that are meant to benefit from this development agenda. To this end, moving the Chapeau, which explicitly names the human right to water to the third annex of the Zero Draft relegates water from a top priority and shifts focus away from viewing water as a matter of human rights.

First and foremost, the human right to water and sanitation must frame all goals, targets and indicators dealing with water resource management and universal access to water and sanitation services. As noted in a call by 621 organizations from the global water justice movement,<sup>3</sup> explicit recognition of the human right to water and sanitation is the only way to safeguard scarce water supplies for the basic needs of people and the planet against other competing interests.

1 <http://www.weforum.org/news/climate-change-and-water-shortage-main-concerns-world-economic-forum-east-asia>

2 6:Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, Zero Draft,p.13

3 [https://drive.google.com/open?id=oB\\_ogobv2USnNajhoVTFnRnlwam-FVc3dvNE1BcjY3RlprMU53&authuser=1](https://drive.google.com/open?id=oB_ogobv2USnNajhoVTFnRnlwam-FVc3dvNE1BcjY3RlprMU53&authuser=1)

Paragraph 15 of the Zero Draft calls for affordable drinking water rather than the enjoyment of the human right to water and sanitation that encompasses other important principles (including availability, accessibility, acceptability, safety, and sufficiency). As seen with the MDGs, emphasis on one aspect of the normative content of this right leads to inappropriate solutions that neglect the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population.

In addition, the solutions to freshwater scarcity in the Zero Draft are limited to a call for “more efficient use” and waste management (para 26). Because of this shortcoming, the document fails to appreciate the full extent of the current water crisis, its humanitarian implications, and the obstacles it will pose to the development agenda. An emphasis on efficiency fails to acknowledge the urgent need to examine how water resources are distributed and how water pollution is regulated. An emphasis on efficiency and waste management alone signals an approach that favors the status quo rather than a willingness to challenge the unsustainable and unjust manners in which watersheds are being depleted and destroyed by a powerful few while resources are denied to marginalized and vulnerable segments of the population.

As the world water crisis deepens and proliferates, a hierarchy of water use that prioritizes human rights is essential to ensuring equitable and environmentally sustainable use of limited supplies. If the Post-2015 Development Agenda is to succeed, the text must reflect these essential concerns.

In addition to amendments to existing paragraphs, we call for an independent paragraph highlighting the importance of the freshwater crisis and calling for all SDG activities pertaining to freshwater use and distribution to be framed within a human rights-based approach. We propose the language be drawn from UNGA Resolution 66/288 The Future we Want.<sup>4</sup>

4 UNGA Resolution 66/280 para 121

## MWG Proposed Changes to Text

15. In the goals and targets which we have agreed, we are setting out a supremely ambitious vision. We envisage a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want. A world, for example, of safe and nutritious food; ~~of affordable drinking water~~ [universal enjoyment of the human right to water and sanitation]; of universal access to basic education; of physical, mental and social well-being. A world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity; of justice and equality; of respect for race and ethnicity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential while promoting shared prosperity. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all barriers to their empowerment in our societies have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant and inclusive world. And one in which humanity lives in complete harmony with nature.

26. We recognize that sustainable urban development and management are crucial to the quality of life of our people. We will work with local authorities and communities to renew and plan our cities so as to foster community cohesion and personal security and to stimulate innovation and employment. We will reduce the negative impacts of urban activities, including through the safe management and use of chemicals, the reduction and recycling of waste and more efficient [equitable and sustainable] use of water and energy. And we will work to minimize the impact of cities on the global climate system.

[add: 23bis. Given the urgent nature of the freshwater crisis facing the world today, we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, to be respected, protected, and progressively realized for all, for today's generations and future generations. The human right to water and sanitation is of cross-cutting importance and frames all relevant goals, targets, and indicators dealing with water resource management and universal access to water and sanitation services.]