

3rd World Water Forum NGO Panel Debate Outcome

Kyoto, Japan 22 March 2003

We as a diverse group of experienced NGOs and community organisations working in the water sector convey our recommendations and concerns to the Kyoto Ministerial Conference, which are the result of deliberations in the NGO Panel Debate.

We assert that water is a public good and access to safe, affordable water is a human right. We welcome that this has now been recognised by the UN Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights.

We oppose the promotion of the development paradigm exemplified by the commodification of water and the renewed push for large-scale infrastructure projects that undermine local, participatory, decentralised actions.

Despite ample and credible evidence of the value of local actions within river basins, they continue to be marginalized and trivialised. It's time to mainstream these locally rooted strategies, by incorporating them into policies and budgets at all levels.

Recommendations

Governments must reaffirm that access to water and sanitation is a basic human right in the Kyoto Declaration and must always respect and protect human rights in all water policy and water resource management decisions.

Governments must recognise the legitimacy of NGOs and community organisations as contributors to sustainable development.

Community based approaches require more formal political and financial support so they can be replicated and scaled up.

Build the capacity of public service providers, community cooperatives and small-scale entrepreneurs to provide water.

Base Integrated Water Resource Management strategies on people's participation and provide adequate mechanisms for dialogue and conflict resolution within river basins and across national boundaries. NGOs are ready to work with governments to set up these mechanisms

Governments, International Financial Institutions and the private sector should cease to promote water mega-projects without reference to international agreements and must always incorporate the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams into water and energy planning processes, including reparations.

Governments have to close the financing gap, increase financial efficiency and eliminate corruption and Donors must meet their commitments to debt relief.

Financing should be targeted towards low cost technologies and community developed systems.

Governments must keep water resources and services out of the WTO and all other regional and international trade negotiations and agreements and in particular the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

NGOs will continue to work with governments to develop water policies that prioritise ecosystem security and environment health of river basins to provide sufficient flow, quantity and quality of water for human livelihoods, development and biodiversity.

As enablers of participation in planning, implementing and monitoring we require full and free transparent access to information held by governments, international agencies and corporations

We call for a rejection of the Camedessus Report as the product of an unaccountable, unrepresentative, inaccessible process no longer suitable for this day and age.