

ISTANBUL DECLARATION AGAINST THE 5TH WORLD WATER FORUM

15-22 March 2009/ Istanbul

We, No to the Commercialization of Water Platform, in opposition to the 5th World Water Forum (16-22 March, Istanbul) 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, announce that:

Starting from April 2008, during our Counter Forum activities based on social utility, we have acted with the belief that defending water against commercialization, which poses a threat towards all peoples and living creatures, is only possible through an organized struggle.

Therefore, we acknowledge as our priority the necessity to incorporate society's broadest sections into this struggle.

From the beginning onwards, this struggle does not only consist of preparations against the 5th World Forum or of 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.

We declare our solution offers to all the organizations who struggle against the commercialization of water in Turkey and throughout the world, and with whom, at the end of our counter forum activities, we have reached a consensus regarding the problems we face.

1. Our opposition is not solely 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, due to the fact that it is the first international institution that defines water as a commercial good (commodity) and that it undertakes the sponsorship of the World Water Council since its foundation. We, trade unions and trade organizations, revolutionary configurations, labor parties, environment and culture associations from Turkey, believe that it is not possible for the states that are identified to be anti-democratic when considered individually, to act "democratically" when clustered together under the umbrella of the UN.
2. The reason that institutions of the capitalist system like World Water Council, OECD and World Bank are lately putting forward "public-private partnership" as a strategy, is in our view nothing else than the aim to create blurriness in the mind of people regarding the process of commodification of water. Therefore, the truth that the word "public" is trying to conceal should be examined correctly. As we can see, not only in Turkey, but also in many examples throughout the world, water resources and services may well be commercialized with the hand of the "public". Moreover, the legal regulations that ensure water to become a good bought and sold on the market are carried out by the states themselves. In the present conditions, where multi-national corporations and the World Water Council repeat that the ownership of water resources should be kept in the hands of the state, but insistently emphasize that it is an inevitable necessity that the value of water is determined by the market, to argue for what is public is to approve the commodification of water. Furthermore, due to the fact that the capitalist system in which clean water is rapidly polluted and consumed, would still be going on, even if the ownership of water distribution and resources stays in the hands of the states, demands confined exclusively to the advocacy of public ownership of water conveyance and distribution, cannot block the accelerating destruction of water's natural cycle and the ecosystem. With this strategy it is anticipated that public water businesses who 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.
3. Another concern that ensued from the workshops held during 17-18 March, are propositions oriented towards bargaining with the capitalist system, such as the selling of water for its cost price. When the problem is handled from a universal perspective, it is known to everyone that there are countries and regions that are rich in water resources and there are those that are

poor in water resources. Since it is evident that as the distance between human settlements and water resources increases, capital investments will increase and costs will amount to astronomic levels, and that it is highly contestable even for the peoples of water rich and developed countries to approve of such arguments, it is possible to predict that such propositions will make the water struggles regress.

4. We, No to the Commercialization of Water Platform, believe that instead of considering the attempt to “determine the value of water through market mechanisms” which the World Water Council insistently emphasizes, as a mere technical detail, it must be analyzed in terms of the repercussions it has for the people and the eco-system. In exactly the same way as it is with all other commodities, it is necessary to have a quantifiable and storable water supply and a water extraction and conveyance process in which capital and labor is both included. This also means that groundwater is removed in excessive amounts and collected above ground, the eco-system balance is destroyed by building countless dams on rivers, unemployment and poverty reach even more unbearable dimensions while physical labor exploitation in water and related production processes increases, and the world is confronted with rapid desertification. This process, which will make clean water even scarcer gradually, will make water prices reach astronomic levels due to the unavoidable rise of capital investments, and the working classes’ impoverishment and their difficulty to access water will become even more inevitable.

5. As a compulsory requirement of the commodification of water and a means to increase exploitation and profits in the capitalist-imperialist system, the building of dams that do not take into consideration the natural cycle of water, the entirety of the eco-system, the vital importance of freely flowing rivers for natural life and agriculture and the availability of water to all creatures, is not a solution to the problems of water provision and sustainability. It is also apparent that such attempts increase the water shortage and the destruction of the quality of water even more.

6. It is clear that despite the discourse of institutions such as the World Water Council and the UN, which try to acquire legitimacy for the commodification of water by pleading for “obtainment of water by the ones who do not have access to it”, the transformation of water into a commercial good will not be a solution for the 1 billion people throughout the world that do not have access to water. Because the ones who do not have access to water, are in fact the most poor sections who do not have the means to buy even food. It would not be wrong to predict that these groups, who make up the lower layers of the laboring peoples, will this time not be able to have access to water due to the lack of money, once the commodification of water has been achieved. Therefore, we believe that it is our indispensable and ertelenemez duty to expose at all times, the unreal stories of the ones who advocate the commodification of water under the false pretext of providing water to the peoples of the world.

7. The most condemned domain by the World Water Forum and its sponsors is conventional agriculture due to its increasing consumption of clean water resources. The proposed solution however, is the transition to industrial agriculture. The spread of industrial agriculture through the process of “green revolution” has not been able to eliminate hunger completely and has caused a set of environmental problems. In order to increase the efficiency in agriculture, the quality of food and to create a healthier environment, agricultural models that are friendly to nature have to be preferred.

8. It is evident that in the whole world, as is the case 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 at 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.

9. We, 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 the organic and inorganic systems, and that water itself is a living thing. Thus, water being an inseparable part of life; we do not accept its commercialization.

In the light of the above evaluations, No to the Commercialization of Water Platform's struggle to overcome the increasing shortage of clean water in the world and to prevent the commodification of water, has the following short term goals:

- * Openly discussing the necessity and the benefits of the construction of all kinds of water structures, evaluating the viewpoints of the people who will be effected as a majority opinion, evaluating the environmental, cultural and social effects, the planning of water structures not according to the benefit of the capitalist construction and finance sectors, but according to the sustainability of all life and nature, and determining locations according to these criteria,
- * In order to provide water to the ones who don't have access and to provide domestic water free of charge, water must be sold for the market price to firms that produce commodities and at least half of the water needed by industry, must be provided from their own waste water treatment facilities,
- * Providing cost-free water for irrigation, to those who engage in subsistence farming,
- * Re-evaluating the efficiency of agricultural production, according to its contribution to human health,
- * Overcoming capitalist farming and large landownership in agriculture, and improving overhauled conventional techniques that will protect water and soil,
- * Abolishing the capitalist pressures (construction and rent) on water basins completely, hence preventing the pressures to increase efficiency and that of water shortage,
- * Protecting water basins in their entirety and unconditionally by committee's set up by the local people, and not according to short, middle, long distance protection zones,
- * Cancelling laws and allowances already given, that permit mining in water basins,
- * Preventing industry from illicitly removing underground and surface water, overseeing that waste water is purified before being reused, and not allowing the usage of water from fossil aquifers,
- * Protecting wetland systems and basins according to "sustainability of the natural equilibrium" and not according to "sustainable development" strategies,
- * Protecting and improving pasture and forest areas,
- * Preventing water basins being polluted by agricultural activities, industrial and domestic wastes,
- * Prohibiting production with seeds genetically altered, which pose a threat to bio-diversity in our country and the whole world,
- * Giving weight to local varieties that are better adapted to their surroundings and consume less water and nutrients, instead of hybrid seeds produced by corporations that do not pay any attention to geographical circumstances,
- * Intervening in every kind of initiative that destroys the historical, cultural and natural fabric and compels people to migration, due to the interference in rivers through dam construction and hydroelectric plants,
- * Cutting off the usage of fossil fuels in energy production and transferring to renewable energy production, particularly wind and sun energy,
- * Producing energy in localities that are in need, instead of producing it from long distances, and do planning according to renewability of recourses, not according to the increase in energy

requirement of capitalist production,

- * Closely monitoring probable policies and scenario's related to water sharing on the local level,
- * Ensuring the participation of people in the process of legislation related to water,
- * Embarking upon the effort to cancel the legal regulations that give permission to water companies in Italy, India and Turkey to establish their own private security organs,
- * Implementing policies, which enable producers to have a say in the management of water and land,
- * Creating work environments in which employees of water services and related jobs can work under full social security, freely and with humanely wages,
- * Developing strategies that will help labor movements to internalize the struggle, creating a strong social opposition,
- * Ensuring that everyone has equal and free access to potable, clean water,
- * Since the increase in productivity of water resources in any country will restrict the access to water of neighboring countries and their laborers, thereby decreasing the purchasing power of wages, instead of engaging in efforts to "increase productivity", the collective organization of laborers of neighboring countries should be aimed for,
- * Reaching a consensus on the necessity to urgently create national and international networks in order to broadcast to the whole world the policies and practices of corporations and states regarding water and to interchange information about the experiences of struggle in the countries, regions and localities that are exposed to similar enforcements,
- * Monitoring international struggles, sharing experiences of local resistance and struggle in the process of the commercialization of water, transforming these experiences into a unity of resistance at common grounds, in short ensuring that through international knowledge sharing the peoples of the world can act collectively,
- * In collectivizing demands related to the water struggle across the world, it is important to act according to the benefit of local communities of the world who are living in the most difficult circumstances and to ensure their demands become a world demand,
- * Taking into account all local, historical, and cultural differences while building organization and solidarity networks across the globe,
- * Taking a collective stand with the peoples of the world in order to delete immediately the clauses regarding the commercialization and commodification of water from the loan agreements between governments and international loan associations, especially the World Bank, and to ensure that it will not be recommended again,
- * Contributing 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 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 plead that the people will struggle together against the games of commercialization of water 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