



CITY CHARTER FOR THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

CONSIDERING THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER are as follows:

- **Water is a universal human right**
 - **The human right to water**, recognized by the UN as a specific, autonomous and universal right, requires every State to guarantee all citizens access to a minimum quantity of water (50 litres per person per day, according to 'WHO') of a sufficient quality to meet individual, sanitary and hygiene needs (personal, domestic and food hygiene). The human right to clean drinking water and sanitation is considered an inalienable, imprescriptible right and essential for the full enjoyment of life and the realisation of all human rights.
 - **The human right to water** must be guaranteed as a universal right for every living creature, a right that extends beyond local, regional, international, boundaries, respects, cultural, social, environmental, and economic values, safeguards all present and future users (human and all other life forms), and recognises the rights of nature and all ecosystems.
 - **The realization of the human right to water** at a guaranteed minimum to sustain life and meet daily needs provides the necessary means to strengthen solidarity, reduce inequalities, contribute to the eradication of poverty, decrease the flow of environmental refugees and promote the peaceful coexistence of the world's peoples.
 - **National and local institutions** must ensure that they bear the costs necessary to guarantee the universal right to free access to drinking water (at the minimum level required for life) as well as the investment necessary to safeguard and protect available water resources and guarantee access for future generations.
- **Water is a common good**
 - **Water, the "source of life", is a common good**, which belongs to all humans and to every living species on Earth.
 - **Water is a natural resource** with limited availability both locally and globally; it is increasingly conditioned by climate change and should be used in a non-wasteful manner and without compromising present and future quality and accessibility.
 - **The preservation of the natural water cycle** is fundamental to the life of all living beings and ecosystems, and is essential to guaranteeing the human right to water.
 - **Water is about democracy and participation**
As water is a common public good, its **governance and management should be participative, democratic and inclusive.**
 - **The participation of citizens** and local communities is essential to the formulation of water policy, water management and conservation.

- Participation cannot be limited to the right to be informed but must involve citizens in the decision-making process itself.
- **The governance and management of water** resources available at local and regional level must be based on the principles of environmental sustainability, protecting water quality, and of solidarity to guarantee the universal human right to water for both present and future generations.

NOTING that

- 10 years after the UN Resolution which called upon Member States to guarantee access to water as a *specific, autonomous and universal right*, that right remains unfulfilled, a failure largely attributable to the absence of legally binding instruments.
- The UN 2030 Agenda, which identified seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), includes access to water as a human right among its goals (Goal 6), and yet Goal 11, which seeks to achieve safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable Cities, does not include specific commitments regarding universal access to water; neither does the Italian National Strategy for Sustainable Development.
- ***The realization of the human right to water requires that:***
 - **the international community** adopts legally binding instruments of international law that define the obligations incumbent on States in regard to: guaranteeing citizens access to the “vital minimum” of water required to meet daily needs, safeguarding water as a common good, and ensuring the violation of water rights is made a prosecutable offence.
 - **States** adopt legislative instruments which recognise the guiding principles and means with which to guarantee access to the vital minimum as a human right for all, and take responsibility for the costs.
 - **Local Authorities (Regional, Provincial, and Municipal)** adopt governance and management policies to protect water quality and its natural cycle to guarantee universal access as a human right.

GIVEN that

- Guaranteeing universal access to water will be one of the major challenges facing **Cities** worldwide in the coming years, due to ever-increasing demand, the effects of demographic growth and urbanization, the inevitable reduction in water resources caused by the effects of climate change, and growing social inequalities which will increase the numbers of citizens unable to meet the ever-rising costs of water provision;
- **City** authorities have *governance oversight* of utility companies and can therefore play a positive role in safeguarding water as a common environmental good linked to the dignity of human life.
- **City** authorities, in their capacity as *direct representatives of citizens*, should play a key role in safeguarding access to water as a universal human right and common good, and should conduct that role within a framework of *democracy and participation*.

CONSIDERING that

- 17 Sustainable Development Goals directly involve **Cities** and that **access to water** is among those goals, it is incumbent upon **City** authorities to ensure that water access, which has been established as a fundamental right and prerequisite to the enjoyment of all other fundamental rights, is **prioritized** in **City** policy initiatives and plans, not only in terms of environmental protection, or providing an efficient service, but **through actions that guarantee water access as a human and universal right**.
- **Cities**, in pursuing sustainable development policies in regard *to universal access to water*, have the potential to become:
 - **Inclusive** - if they guarantee access to a free minimum of water for all citizens, as individuals with human rights, rather than simply guaranteeing access to water services to them as customers and users.
 - **Safe** - if they guarantee the quality of water, the safeguarding of water resources, and protection of the environment.
 - **Resilient** - if they promote responsible water consumption among citizens so as to reduce waste and save water, and if they take steps to counteract water scarcity and climate change through prevention and appropriate environmental policy initiatives, rather than through adaptation strategies alone.
 - **Sustainable** - if they adopt **Water Safeguarding Plans** which, in addition to guaranteeing water services, also protect the natural water cycle, thereby protecting water rights.

AS CITY MAYORS, WE PLEDGE -

through the approval of specific municipal resolutions to:

- **adopt the aforementioned Principles of the Charter of Cities for the Human Right to Water ;**
- **plan appropriate measures to implement the three Principles and to establish the relevant methods and time frames for their implementation.**

ACTION PLAN

This package of measures aims to offer **City** authorities guidelines for fulfilling the human right to access water. It is a voluntary, illustrative and non-exhaustive framework based on a range of good practices, some of which have already been implemented by several local authorities. The various actions suggested correspond to the three fundamental principles mentioned above in relation to water access and its realization as a fundamental human right. The proposed measures may involve a range of City authority departments and policy areas (social policy, environmental, education, and trade policy) as well as policies designed to encourage cooperation and participation. These measures will also have an impact on a number of Sustainable Development Goals (1, 3, 6, 11, and 13). City authorities may draw up their own guidelines, identifying the actions best suited to their specific circumstances and including them in their Charter adoption resolutions.

1. Recommended measures to ensure the fulfillment of the human right to water

At local level

- **Include** statements recognizing the human right to water and the public nature of water as a common good in all Statutes, *Urban Programmes*, and Charters already signed by the City authorities, where not already established.
- **Implement** policies and instruments to guarantee universal access to the “vital minimum” of water required for life, with particular regard to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society at risk of having their water supply cut off by water utility companies.
- **Create** a network of water supply points (public water dispensers, water fountains, etc.) and basic sanitation facilities in local neighbourhoods, parks and other meeting places
- Support of international cooperation and solidarity projects to guarantee access to water in the poorest countries, including budgetary provision and allocation of city council funds for decentralized cooperation initiatives.

At national level

- **Call for** the adoption of a National Law that recognises water as a common good, which establishes and guarantees the human right to water in accordance with the recognised “vital minimum” and establishes the public management of the service.
- **Call for** the inclusion of universal access to water as a human right among the commitments included in Italy’s *National Strategy for Sustainable Development* and in the Urban Agenda for Sustainable Development of Cities.
- **Call for** Italy's commitment to supporting the adoption of binding international legal instruments that establish the obligation incumbent upon the **States** to implement the human right to water.

2. Recommended action to safeguard water as a common good

In terms of *governance* of Integrated Water Services:

- **Implement** the guidelines set out in (water) **Protection Plans** and in ATO (Ambito Territoriale Ottimale) **Plans** based on the **Water Safety Plan** to guarantee the quality of water for human use and the biodiversity of water sources.
- **Provide** online information on City council websites on the quality of the water provided by the local water supply (*labelling*), on tap water supply points (*mapping*), on good practices for saving domestic water.
- **Call on** ATO (Ambito Territoriale Ottimale) and service providers to achieve a reduction in leaks from the local water supply network to a threshold level of between 10 – 20% by 2030 (2/3 less than the current level).
- **Use** tap water in public places (city councils, schools, school canteens, etc.) and at public events.
- **Promote** the use of tap water in bars and on commercial premises.

In terms of *governance* for the protection of water as a common good:

- **Improve** the state of local ecosystems to achieve or maintain their “good state” in compliance with the European Water Framework Directive 2000/60.
- **Carefully assess** the environmental compatibility of awarding licences to divert water for the purposes of hydroelectric projects in Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) and in Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

- **Adopt** practices and tools to improve water quality and the monitoring of the same.
- **Promote** efforts to protect the natural water cycle and the quality of water available through the adoption of: water audits and protection plans; by monitoring groundwater quality and prioritizing human use.

2. Recommended action for sustainable and participatory public management of water provision

In terms of management:

- **Adopt** management models that secure total public control of the integrated water service and that channel profits into improving service provision
- **Promote** - through ATO - access to water for all in accordance with the “vital minimum” (established as a human right), with particular regard for the most disadvantaged in society and, in addition, facilitate a progressive tariff system for levels of consumption above the “vital minimum”.

In terms of sustainability:

- **Promote** domestic water savings and water reuse by: adopting appropriate technologies for domestic activities (for example, dual pipe systems); facilitating the collection and reuse of rainwater; recycling purified water for agricultural use.
- **Implement** measures to reduce the use of plastic bottles, particularly in public buildings and schools.

In terms of participation:

- **Disseminate** information among citizens and facilitate knowledge sharing through a variety of information channels.
- **Draw on** local knowledge and water management technologies that have a low environmental impact .
- **Implement and facilitate** tools for citizen participation, perhaps through the establishment of a Citizens’ Water Council, to help foster a culture that recognises water as a common public good.

The Charter has been approved by:



Rome Assembly 18/10/ 2018



Bologna Assembly 15/11/2018

The Charter is proposed and supported by ASviS Report 2019.

