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Texts 6

Water Ethics

Principles and Guidelines

Globethics.net

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Principles and Guidelines

Globethics.net Texts No. 6

Globethics.net Texts

Series editor: Prof. Dr. Obiora Ike, Executive Director of Globethics.net in Geneva and Professor of Ethics at the Godfrey Okoye University Enugu/Nigeria.

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Managing Editor: Ignace Haaz
Assistant Editor: Samuel Davies

Globethics.net International Secretariat
150 route de Ferney
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Website: *www.globethics.net/publications*
Email: *publications@globethics.net*

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PREFACE

The formulation of the Water Ethics: Principles and Guidelines was submitted to Globethics.net by a Geneva based Association, Workshop for Water Ethics (W4W), under the conceptual and editorial guidance of Dr Benoit GIRARDIN. The Principles and Guidelines have been circulated to Globethics.net partners and members as a discussion paper. The present text has been significantly enriched by the comments that were submitted by experts in the field. Particular thanks are due to W4W members (Dr Dr Evelyne Fiechter-Widemann, Dr Gary Vachicouras, Dr Annie Balet, Dr Laurence-Isaline Stahl Graetsch and Dr Christoph Stuecki), Dr Ignace Haaz, Prof. Emmanuel Ansah, Prof. Susan Lea Smith, Prof. Christoph Stückelberger, the Ecumenical Water Network, Mr Richard Helmer (former World Health Organization employee in the environmental health department), Bread for the World, Waterpreneurs, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Commonwealth of Learning as well as others. The final consolidation of the text was then entrusted to the initial authors.

The text was approved by the Globethics.net Board of Foundation in August 2019.

A

INTRODUCTION

Water is essential for all life. It is a key element for a life with dignity and a condition of all human rights because without water, and food, no other rights can be implemented. Water is a critical common need for all human beings and all forms of life, including plants, animals, and the atmosphere.

There have been many international statements on water: the United Nations Human Rights Declaration 1948, Art 3 and Art 25; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, Art. 11; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966, Art. 6; the Mar del Plata Action Plan issued at the 1977 United Nations Water Conference; the 1992 Dublin Principles from the United Nations International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development; the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Commentary No 15, 2002, Art 1 et al; the July 2010 United Nations General Assembly 64/292 resolution on access to water and sanitation. Water for all is also at the core of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, Goal 6). Other United Nations agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, Right to Food Voluntary Guidelines 2005) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have also issued declarations, not to mention the Water for Life statement issued in 2006 by the World

Council of Churches/Ecumenical Water Network and the Ecumenical Swiss-Brazilian Water Declaration in 2005.

Globethics.net seeks to complement and complete these international statements in stressing the ethical considerations related to water, including the operational and practical dimensions of the management and use of water.

Globethics.net with its focus on Ethics in Higher Education contributes to the discourse on water as a cross-disciplinary topic affecting all lives as well as those of university students and staff. Ethical considerations of water use and management is a teaching and research topic in many faculties, from agriculture to the environment, from architecture/housing to urbanization, from anthropology and theology to economics and political science. Water is already featured in the Globethics.net Academy online courses on sustainability and other topics as well as in the Globethics.net Library resources and among the volumes available in the Globethics.net Publications series.

The sustainable use of water resources at local, regional and global levels requires a differentiated and integrative responsibility on the part of all users: individuals, households, public authorities, the private sector, and policy makers.

B

CURRENT WATER ISSUES: CASES AND CHALLENGES

1 Awareness of all kinds of users

Freshwater resources have always been limited, in some places they are insufficient, often unequally distributed and inequitable in access. An awareness of an overall limitation is emerging. More and more users are aware that drinking-water limits, waste water challenges linked to health as well as watercourse limits will soon be reached and that we cannot continue to believe, or make believe, that all water resources are simply available to all those who want to use them. This awareness affects all users, from individuals, families, local and regional authorities, watershed residents, farmers, industrialists and private sector actors to States and more generally to the international community.

2. Global responsibility and solidarity

The use of water brings together residents of the same watershed, riparian residents of the same watercourse or water surface, users of the same well or the same source. It thus induces co-responsibility and requires political will and geographical solidarity. However, such solidarity has been and still is ignored by some individual riparian communities who are unwilling to cooperate.

3. Historical evolution

The use of water has evolved over the course of history, particularly in the wake of droughts due to climate changes in the distant past, and more recently industrialization, intensive agriculture and exponential urbanization. Floods, droughts and water shortages have been mitigated by building dams and protective dikes. Extreme events such as floods, droughts and contamination have awakened the need to manage water resources better, regulate flows, and be better prepared for water related disasters. However, these mitigation measures and interventions may not be adequate, and implementation may be delayed by insufficient capacity.

4. Differences in mentalities. Waste and ignorance

Some of the current problems are related to mentalities shaped by traditions, cultural values, and perceptions forged in a rural or urban context of relative shortage. These mentalities are ill-adapted to the current context of water supplied through networks, pipes and taps under regular pressure — in other words of relative abundance. This is evidenced by the extravagant use of water in urban networks, excessive irrigation in agriculture and some overuse in industries, as well as insufficient awareness that any use requires treatment. In addition, age-old models persist, attributing heavy tasks such as fetching and supplying, cooking, washing to women, while men sail, fish and irrigate.

5. Complexity and fragility. Exposure and vulnerability

Nowadays, the understanding that water is part of a highly complex and relatively fragile system is becoming clearer. There is a better understanding that the water cycle should be considered from upstream to downstream, from extraction of springs or groundwater, to the treatment of wastewater and contaminated water. Due to the dramatic consequences

caused by pollution or simply by the transport of pathogens, the diffusion of micro-pollutants and micro-plastics, the importance of water in the food chain is more clearly understood now than in the past.

6. Overexploitation of the resource and efforts to contain it

Increasing demand for water due to urbanization and population growth, as well as intensive agriculture and industry, hydropower and other uses, has put great pressure on this resource. This might lead to a more distinct differentiation in valuating water depending on its origin: whether it is groundwater or runoff drainage or if it is desalinated, or whether it is water from rivers, lakes, swamps, or seas. Fresh water is used abundantly much too often for agriculture, irrigation and industries that could better accommodate used water.

7. Technological and economic efforts to contain water overexploitation

In terms of the use of resources, there is a tendency to disassociate or even to separate specific uses of drinking water, bathing and washing of clothes and cleaning water compared to the water used for flushing, cooling, irrigating, heating, transporting or generating electricity. Reclaimed water use needs to be further optimized. Separating wastewater collection systems from rainwater systems contributes to more efficient use. Treating wastewater contributes substantially to increasing the volume of usable water that is available. Technological solutions can be introduced to detect water leakages and measure and invoice water use in a more efficient and fairer way.

8. Political and international dimension of water

The management of water resources has led in the past to frequent conflicts, both between families of the same village or bordering the same watercourse or lake, between rural areas and agglomerations, as well as at between regions or states located up and downstream. The potential for conflict is high and some observers today predict that future conflicts will find their roots in the way access to water resources is managed. Already today, many areas in the world are affected by water conflict. Access to water thus has a political dimension at both local and national levels through the way in which priorities among users are negotiated or imposed by the strongest.

It also has an international dimension in that many rivers and aquifers traverse several countries and that pollution by one might affect others. A multilateral dimension can be added insofar as erosion resulting from deforestation, pollution of streams, seas and oceans, global warming and the resulting ice melting exceed the responsibility of riparian countries and concern the entire international community.

Although the water footprint can be easily figured out at a local level, the extended impact of water use, or misuse, also has an international dimension when crops that are grown, or livestock that are raised using a considerable amount of water locally are then exported by water stressed countries to countries endowed with abundant water. The level of damage due to water scarcity is not the same across all terrains and territories. A rebalancing scheme needs to be developed internationally as well as remedial measures specified and implemented to ensure equity.

9. Religious dimension of water

Water is a key element for all world religions. Water is a symbol of life, of renewal, of purification. It is used as a symbol in religious acts such as baptism, ritual washing and it is to some extent seen as holy. This

is evidenced by many tales and myths in which water is associated with life or danger, as well as with rituals of purification and blessing in ancestral religions, such as Hindu bathing practices in the Ganges, Christian baptism, ablutions prior to Muslim prayer, aspersion in Judaism and Sikhism. In African traditional religions, streams and lakes are often dwelling places of goddesses or gods, and statues of Hindu goddesses or gods are immersed in water.

C

ETHICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Water, its use, allocation, management, treatment, recycling and reuse, must be informed and led by values and principles. Water ethics is a part of global ethics across cultures and religions as water is a common need for all human beings and all forms of life, including plants, animals and the atmosphere.

10. Ethical values

Water ethics must be based on values such as *equity* (e.g. providing water as a basic need in a fair, impartial and inclusive way), *equality* (of affordable access to water[1]), *freedom* (of access), *responsibility* (e.g. in use and recycling), *peace* (e.g. in distribution mechanisms), *respect, inclusiveness* and *community* (in the sharing of limited water resources), *solidarity* and *sustainability* (in long term preservation of access to water) and others.

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[1] See in Globethics.net publications: Global Ethics for Leadership. Values and Virtues for Life, 2016 (Global Series 13); Christoph Stückelberger, Das Menschenrecht auf Nahrung und Wasser. Eine ethische Priorität (The Human Right to Food and Water. An Ethical Priority), 2009 (Focus Series 1); and Globethics.net Principles on Equality and Inequality for a Sustainable Economy, 2015 (Texts Series 5).

Water ethics is relevant across domains of ethics such as business ethics, political ethics, environmental ethics, bioethics, innovation ethics, ethics of technologies, cyber ethics, etc.

11. Ethical principles

Water management must respect the ethical principles of sustainability, justice, equitable rights to access, responsibility and solidarity. These values frame and ease the peaceful management of water resources, for example in cases of conflicts of interest, to promote a sense of security and ensure equitable rights between protagonists as well as an economic and sober use of the resources. A key dimension of its implementation lies in the governance and the process of considering the needs of the various users.

11.1 Principle of justice in access for all to a vital minimum of water

States must give priority to access to drinking water for communities over other uses, and thus ensure that water management and infrastructure is sufficiently robust and adequately maintained as well as better differentiate water according to whether it is drinkable or not. It should maximize the use of recycled water for other uses.

Public authorities must ensure that the price of supplied water is based on the fair use of meters, that it is affordable and accessible to all groups, including the most vulnerable, disadvantaged, women and children and that minority groups are not discriminated against.

11.2 Principle of sustainability and responsibility to protect

Water must be managed following the principle of sustainability, in order to avoid overexploitation, and depletion beyond the point of any possible recovery, with distribution measured and released on the basis of

supply. Pollution must be prevented and any damage caused by contaminants mitigated and effectively treated as a matter of utmost urgency. Sustainability refers also to the ability of the resource to regenerate, the so-called resilience of aquatic ecosystems.

Dual use, recycling and reuse strategies and initiatives must be implemented at all levels of society.

Management structures and strategies to protect and conserve the resource must be enforced to ensure sustainability.

11.3 Principle of equitable rights to access drinking water and responsibility to protect

Access to safe drinking water was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council in 2010. Everyone everywhere must have equitable access to safe drinking water.

Governments, the private sector, civil society and water users must share the responsibility of 'leaving no one behind'. The risks of leaving behind smallholder farmers, small herders, fisher-folk cannot be ignored and need checks, as well as remedial measures.

Terms of implementation, including management arrangements and allocation arbitration between users must be specified accordingly.

11.4 Principle of sobriety

Sobriety in the use of water by individuals, families, households and institutions deserves to be encouraged. Economic and financial incentives, as well as management instruments, must discourage the misuse of water, foster sober use of the resource and rule out making high consumption an attractive or viable choice. This requires promoting changes in behaviour and in the development and use of water fittings, appliances and technology designed to optimise water use.

D

INNOVATION ETHICS: SOLUTIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

12. Technical solutions

The capacity to recycle polluted, waste, saline or brackish water has greatly improved in recent decades. Innovations — particularly in filtering membranes, ionization, double osmosis, oxygenation and so on — are promising and need further improvements as well as open sharing of research.

Similarly, techniques to conserve water or reduce demand in agriculture and industries and to differentiate more effectively between the supply of fresh drinkable and non-drinkable water and used water needs continued refinement. Technologies to detect water leakages in pipes and water meters in households combined with bills based on water meters can substantially increase efficiency and decrease corruption in water management.

Innovations with respect to less water-intensive crops represent an incentive for agriculture to adapt to the decreasing volume of available water.

Replacing water-intensive crops with less water-intensive ones – for instance rice replaced by millet, or maize by sorghum – are important. They need further investigation with regards to its feasibility and acceptance by producers and consumers.

13. Scientific innovation

The measurement of the water footprint locally tapped and processed, as well as the water footprint of goods grown with quantities of water and exported between regions sharing diverse levels of water scarcity through international trading of commodities needs to be further researched. This is in order to supply proper instruments in the processes of attributing a water scarcity footprint to regions, that might be set nationally or through international negotiations.

A mix of criteria to assess allocation claims by users and stakeholders and weigh them in terms of equality, effectiveness, sustainability, solidarity and inclusiveness needs to be further articulated and specified. Also, ways to secure proper acceptance of allocations by all must be identified, tested, analyzed, documented and disseminated.

Further research should also focus on the feasibility and positive benefits of behavioural changes, to ease adaptation of ancestral and modern day habits in the use of water.

14. Institutional innovation

Successful negotiation processes aimed at fair allocation among stakeholders need to be analyzed, documented and shared. Avoiding traps, as well as identifying incentives towards fostering sustainable and sober water use need to be further analyzed and documented. Best practices once confirmed need to be disseminated and the means put in place to implement the learning as appropriate. The state authorities for water management play a key role and have to increase procurement transparency and anti-corruption mechanisms.

15. Ethics of innovation

Innovation must align with responsibility and meet the ethical requirements of open sharing, it must be evidence based, checked against the reality, use solid methodologies and be open to frank debates with the common good put above the interests of the different parties.

E

ECONOMIC ETHICS: PUBLIC GOOD AND ECONOMIC MARKET VALUE

16. Free water and the potential for misuse

Water is fundamentally a public good but it also has an economic value, which is determined by the level of scarcity/availability, seasonal variations, water quality, infrastructure for distribution and the competing needs of local populations, industry and agriculture in the different regions around the world. When water is simply free, the door could be opened to profligate usage - faucets that flow uninterrupted, irrecoverable losses - or to water resources being commandeered for the exclusive use of the most powerful or most influential users, without regard to limits or costs to the environment or 'local communities.

17. Cost of water

Water as such is priceless, but using it has a real cost, including investments related to extraction or collection, upstream filtering, pipeline routing, instruments for measuring quality and volumes consumed, equipment for waste reduction and wastewater recovery, treatment and recycling. There are also costs related to the maintenance of the entire system and the administrative costs required for this management, whether it is carried out by public authorities or subcontracted to private operators or

associations. All of this involves investments, maintenance and research and exploration expenses to expand or develop new modes of use and savings in consumption.

18. Calculating the price of water

The price of water must be calculated in the most transparent way possible taking into consideration all the costs involved: initial investments, operation and maintenance, new investments as well as research and development, in order to show the profit margins realized by the operator, if any. This "true" price can be accepted all the more easily since users realize the benefits of quality water, considering the savings made on the cost of purifying water and treating waterborne diseases. This supposes that the volume consumed can be measured and invoiced, and that the tariff structure and tiers are set in a straightforward way.

19. Encouraging the economical use of water

Establishing the price of water based on the volume consumed can easily be an incentive leading to more sober usage, and savings in energy. This is true in both publicly administered and informal jerry can water delivery systems. Reverse-tiered tariffs meant to discourage over-consumption while pricing high consumption at a higher level has proven to be a solid tool in that respect. New technologies such as ‘water ATMs’ combined with tokens and instant payment via mobile phone are low cost methods for increasing the accessibility and affordability of water.

20. Polluter pays principle

Costs related to decontamination, or at least the containment of pollution must be borne by those responsible for this pollution. It is only when

those responsible cannot be identified that public funds and donations should be solicited.

21. Imperative for decision-makers to provide subsidies or vouchers for the poorest

It is up to the political decision-makers to define the limits of possible subsidies or vouchers for disadvantaged groups as well as equalization systems making these subsidies or vouchers possible and measurable. They should also be responsible for defining the price modulation criteria according to the level of consumption, in order to differentiate between big consumers (industries, institutions, irrigation) and the more modest uses of households and small businesses. Decision-makers must do this while keeping in mind the principles of cost recovery within the overall water supply and treatment budget, as well as prioritizing the use of drinking water for individual users and encouraging savings in consumption.

22. Water infrastructure: establishment, maintenance and renewal

Construction costs of infrastructure designed to extract and collect water, protect sources, treat and store water, such as dams and reservoirs are quite expensive and might incur loans or grants that must be paid back over time. There are similar costs related to the infrastructure needed to keep regular pressure in the network, collect used water, treat and possibly reclaim it. On top of the construction costs, the infrastructure needs to be maintained and renewed. The whole pipe network needs to be extended and replaced when heavy leakages are traced. Responsible budget and financial planning should keep in mind amortization costs, maintenance and renewal.

F

PEACE ETHICS: MANAGING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN USERS

23. Volumes of water available: when demand by many users exceeds supply

Conflicts of interest between types of use and conflicts between users are involved in any form of access to water by human groups. Householders expect to be able to drink, cook their meals, wash themselves and their clothes and evacuate sewage. Farmers want to water their crops in a timely manner. Industries expect to be able to use water to add to products, to clean and to cool or heat installations during their production processes. Fishermen want to ensure that streams are not diverted to the point of drying up. River boatmen and river carriers are concerned about low water levels preventing any transport or reducing the volumes of goods that can be loaded. Cities try to avoid epidemics caused by waterborne infections, manage resources and supply residents, industries and public fountains, and clean public roads, water public parks, secure water for fire hydrants and fire departments. All these expectations may be hard to meet at the same time or in the expected volumes.

24. Spreading pollution of surface water and aquifers

Conflicts may also arise about water quality, as can be seen in polluted rivers. They may concern surface water but also groundwater, also called aquifers. It is a characteristic of water to facilitate a rapid diffusion and expansion of pollution, unlike soil in which pollution can be more easily isolated, circumscribed and controlled.

25. Water as a weapon

In some cases, water even becomes a weapon of pressure, blackmail or threat by one group against another, especially groups living upstream acting against those living downstream, or groups bordering a lake on other riparian area. Water may be used by terrorist groups or even regimes at war. Deliberate poisoning of wells and streams is an ancient practice, a practice that is still carried out today as a weapon of war.

26. Arbitration among different users

The main issue is not about the possibility of avoiding conflicts, but about the optimal way to manage them. The management of water conflicts implies first that one acknowledges that they exist, and that available resources are assessed in the short, medium and long term, and then communicated among the parties involved with a view to finding solutions and to resolving conflicts.

It is important that the most neutral authority possible - or the least subject to particular or vested interests - is identified and agreed on to arbitrate disputes. Then, the parties must reckon with the interests and needs of the different stakeholders/users (households, industries, farmers, communities) and work towards consensus. In order to achieve this, there must be convergence with regards to prioritizing the needs of users and weighting them, to more efficient management as well as to transparency

and accountability. Consequently, the level of flexibility can be enhanced in terms of timely and seasonal adaptation by type of users. Trans-border lakes and rivers water agreements should follow the same process.[2]

27. Priority to be given to the assessment of available water volumes

The assessment that must be made first and foremost concerns the volume of drinking water available compared to the volume of water that is not necessarily potable, taking into account the seasonal variations of both.

28. Promote an open and informed debate

It is then essential that the main principles of water resource management are defined by the public authorities, not by technocrats, and that the inputs expected from experts be limited to establishing water management procedures and evaluating the consequences of choices made. The criteria for valuing and prioritizing the various needs must be the subject of an open and informed debate. Vested interests should be kept under check and named. Too often the power given to experts is excessive and risks opening a wider door to targeted corruption.

29. Scarcity of the resource and reasonable consumption

Paradoxically, it is the recognized scarcity of the resource that facilitates the process of prioritization and global distribution. So long as the

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[s] See Globethics.net study on the Great Lakes region: Lucien Wand'Arhasima 2015, La gouvernance éthique des ressources en eaux transfrontalières. Le cas du lac Tanganyika en Afrique, Globethics.net Focus 25, 2015.

resource seems unlimited, the need for prioritization seems to be an artificial and even unnecessary exercise, and users seem unwilling to reduce their consumption.

30. Virtual water cost fully considered in international and interregional trade

With regards to fresh water consumed in the growing of agricultural commodities and livestock that are traded between regions and countries, the resulting water scarcity footprint should be adequately taken into consideration by the exporting countries and acknowledged by importing countries. Costs incurred by deforestation, soil impoverishment, groundwater depletion and decreasing biodiversity cannot be ignored or downplayed. Overall sustainability as well as damage caused to vulnerable smallholder farmers need proper consideration, which should be an integral piece in international trade arrangements.

G

GOVERNANCE ETHICS: REGULATING AND MANAGING WATER

31. General debates on water

Regional and national political authorities have every interest in convening general debates on water, inviting representatives of all users and stakeholders to sit around the same table. The purpose would be to learn about current and future available resources regionally or nationally as well as about the quantities consumed or required by the various user groups, households and individuals, firms and industries, farmers, the transport industry, fishermen and public institutions including fire departments. The state of play drawn up by this type of multi-stakeholder platform must be as precise as possible, and solidly documented. Seasonal variations as well as historical records and prospective trends should also be considered.

32. Towards zero tolerance of corruption

Corruption related to water shares, water infrastructure projects, water legislation, etc., not only entails serious breaches of equity and sustainability, but also results in wasting water and in the non-economical use of the resource. As a consequence, local, regional and national authorities need to make it their priority to minimize impunity and impose serious

sanctions on abuses; in other words, they must adopt a policy of zero tolerance of corruption.

33. Mode of management debated and adopted according to a consensual alternative to a majority judgment

A series of essential criteria for water management must be identified and endorsed by the entire multi-stakeholder platform. The main criteria refer to equality of access, sustainability and recycling potential, production and growth, potential to anticipate and adapt to change, pollution impacts and effects exacerbating climate disruptions. Risks incurred due to shortages and breaks in supplies must be discussed and assessed by the platform.

The assessment of all these values and risks is then carried out, if not by consensus, at least by a qualified majority of participants. The framework of a management system can thus be assumed and owned by all stakeholders.

Such a hierarchy makes it possible to face situations of scarcity and exacerbated competition between users according to the seasons or changes of context. It is not a miracle cure, but provides guidance to absorb shocks, prevent overly destructive conflicts and punish offenders. It has the advantage of being dynamic, flexible, adaptive and innovative.

34. Fair and credible system to settle divergences

Governments must represent the interests of the whole human population of a country/legal entity and of the environment. They must also respect the interests of human beings and the environment in neighbouring countries. In addition, when States act as neutral arbiters, inviting protagonists to join inclusive platforms and encouraging everyone to be realistic and respectful of the needs of others, they reinforce the interdependencies between different uses and user groups. In this way States

strengthen the foundations for solidarity. States must ensure methodical rigor and that every stakeholder is listened to. They are well placed to point out the terms of arbitration and weight of the respective interests. States that are engaged and assume their responsibilities as decision-makers can capitalize as much as possible on convergences and the understanding of interests in competition. States must keep in mind that corruption that favours the interests of a single group breaks the trust required for the implementation of the process and the need to commit to aim for zero tolerance of corruption.

35. Decisions taken to be implemented under penalty of punishment

States ensure that a legal frame is established and enforced, within which effective remedies and punishments of offenders are enacted by a judiciary system that is as impartial as possible. In this way all stakeholders can develop a solid trust in the judiciary and see the risks of violent antagonisms being minimized.

36. Holistic and interdisciplinary approach to be promoted at the local level

The State also ensures that the different dimensions of water management — technical, social, legal, ecological — can be part of a holistic approach and that its interdisciplinarity be ensured by the help of various specialists and community representatives. It avoids an exclusively technical approach and avoids asking questions about the use and distribution of water in purely technocratic terms.

37. Holistic and interdisciplinary approach to be promoted at the international level

A similar approach can be implemented in cases of water management in an international setting. The role of arbitrator must then be devolved to a continental body (European Union, African Union, regional cooperation) or to the United Nations. Promising multi-stakeholder alliances have been established (by the United Nations Environment Programme for example) and need to be strengthened, such as the World Water Quality Alliance, the Circular Economy Alliance, the Global Waste Water Fund, the Water Branch of the Global Compact and others.

H

RELIGIOUS ETHICS: SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS

38. Symbolic significance of water

The great religious and spiritual traditions all recognize the symbolic importance of water vis-à-vis purification and regeneration, as well as its general utility [see § 8 above].

39. References to world religions

World religions speak of the gift of watering the earth to fertilize it, to allow it to bear fruit and to regenerate (Bible Genesis1; Job 5:10; Quran Surah 21,30; 22,63; 24, 45). However, it is also seen as a real and potential danger in the event of floods (Bible: Genesis 8; Jonas 1). The Hindu god Narayana is said to live on water; in Buddhism, Bodhisattva is sitting on the lotus, a water plant. Taoism compares man's path to life with a stream of water (Zhuangzi 19/ i / 49 – 54). In ancient Greek and African world views, goddesses often dwell in seas, lakes and streams.

Many religions stress the importance of purification by water. Hinduism considers rivers, particularly the Ganges, as sacred. Water is associated to purification in Jewish washing rituals and Muslim death rituals as well as to conversion and regeneration in Christian baptism and blessings.

In Islam ablutions form the first step of each of the five daily prayers. Shinto rituals such as *misogi* refer to water. Major holy places in Sikhism and Hinduism have a link to water pools where purification rituals take place. Monotheistic religions highlight water as a divine gift and emphasize respectful use and adequate management of the resource.

40. Duty to give water to the thirsty

Abrahamic and Dharmic religions regularly stress the duty to provide the thirsty with water. Nowhere in the sacred texts can refusal to give water to those who are thirsty be justified. All water deprivation is forbidden, even the enemy cannot be deprived of water (Bible: Proverbs 25:21; Romans 12:20; Hadith al-Bukhari 3.838), thirst should be quenched.

41. Call to stewardship

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all stress humankind's responsibility with respect to stewardship and custodianship of water as a resource and public good.

42. Lack of attention to the 'socius'

Although spiritual and religious traditions recognize their neighbour's thirst and are obliged to ensure that their neighbour's thirst should be quenched, they have not really addressed the economic value of water and have downplayed the dimension of costs and markets. The importance of reaching a fair market value for water has been minimized and that could pave the way for overexploitation or pollution following the logic of power and irresponsibility. 'Objective solidarities' with others or 'mediated solidarities' with other humans that one never meets, but with whom water is shared through watersheds, systems, networks and institutions, need to be kept in mind.

43. Conclusion

Both states and local authorities, as well as religious, academic, private sector, civil society and individual voices must call for a responsible, respectful and sustainable use of water, join hands and challenge each other to improve sustainable, equitable and effective water sharing.

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