

# REALIZING THE RIGHT TO SAFE WATER AND SANITATION

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## HEARING BEFORE THE TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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MARCH 3, 2011

Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.tlhrc.house.gov>

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## REALIZING THE RIGHT TO SAFE WATER AND SANITATION

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THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2011

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The commission met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 2118 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James P. McGovern [co-chairman of the commission] presiding.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Welcome, everybody. I'm Congressman Jim McGovern, and I would like to welcome you all to this very important hearing on the right to water. I especially want to welcome my friend and colleague, Congressman Earl Blumenauer, who is a leader in the House on these issues, and the author of the Water for the Poor Act. I also want to thank Ari Levin, a fellow with the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, for all of his work in coordinating today's hearing.

And let me just begin with a few observations. Water is one of our most basic and fundamental needs, and yet the World Health Organization estimates that 884 million people in the world, roughly one eighth of the global population, do not have access to safe drinking water.

2.6 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation, and 1.8 million children die every year as a result of water-borne illnesses. This is a severe global crisis, and I was, therefore, pleased to learn about the recent UN resolutions recognizing access to clean water as a human right.

I think this is a significant development at the international level, and I'm very interested in seeing whether placing this fundamental need of life within a rights framework will strengthen the ability of communities, NGOs, governments, and the international community to establish and advance standards of law that can help guide political and economic policies at the state and international level.

I do believe that these efforts reflect a growing awareness of the seriousness of water issues. The right to water is inextricably linked with other basic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to food, the right to health, and the right to education, among others.

As I noted, 1.8 million children die every year of diarrhea and other diseases caused by unclean water, a number that dwarfs the casualties associated with violent conflict. In addition, women and children often have to walk many miles a day to collect water. This is a heavy physical burden, and exposes many of them to water-contact diseases such as schistosomiasis.

The burden of collecting water also creates a significant gender gap in schools in many parts of the world, as young girls do not then have the time for education. Walking far away to collect water also increases the vulnerability of women and girls, and often young boys, to predatory attacks, such as rape, murder, kidnapping, human trafficking, or forced marriage.

Water is also directly related to food security. It is essential for a healthy and nutritious diet. It is central to preparing and cooking food. And agriculture, with its need for water and irrigation, is the primary source of food, income, and employment in developing countries, especially for women and for the poor.

We also know that water has been the basis for many territorial and violent disputes between various peoples and even nations, which is just one more link that water has to a human rights framework that promotes peace, equity, and stability.

Let me conclude by thanking all of our witnesses for being here. I hope that this hearing will help clarify some of the key issues and challenges confronting us when we evaluate water issues within a human rights framework, and I am interested in learning how such an evaluation of water as a human right can help us formulate and strengthen U.S. policies on water issues.

And I am now happy to yield to my colleague, Mr. Blumenauer, who, as I said, has been a leader on this matter. And if he has any opening comments, we welcome them.

[The statement of Mr. McGovern follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JAMES P. MCGOVERN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS AND COCHAIRMAN OF THE TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**Statement of James P. McGovern  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing on  
“Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation”  
2118 Rayburn HOB – Thursday, March 3, 2011 – 10 AM – Noon**

Good morning. I would like to welcome everyone to this very important hearing on the right to water. I especially want to welcome my friend and colleague, Congressman Earl Blumenauer, who is a leader in the House on these issues and the author of the Water for the Poor Act. I also want to thank Ari Levin, a fellow with the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, for all his work in coordinating today’s hearing.

Water is one of our most basic and fundamental needs. And yet, the World Health Organization estimates that 884 million people in the world—roughly 1/8 of the global population – do not have access to safe drinking water. 2.6 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation, and 1.8 million children die every year as a result of water-borne diseases.

This is a severe global crisis. I was therefore pleased to learn about recent U.N. resolutions recognizing access to clean water as a human right. I think this is a significant development at the international level. And I am very interested in seeing whether placing this fundamental need of life within a rights framework will strengthen the ability of communities, NGOs, governments and the international community to establish and advance standards and law that can help guide political and economic policies at the state and international level. I do believe that these efforts reflect the growing awareness of the seriousness of water issues.

The right to water is inextricably linked with other basic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to food, the right to health, and the right to education, among others. As I noted, 1.8 million children die every year of diarrhea and other diseases caused by unclean water, a number that dwarfs the casualties associated with violent conflict. In addition, women and children often have to walk many miles a day to collect water. This is a heavy physical burden and exposes many of them to water contact diseases such as schistosomiasis. The burden of collecting water also creates a significant gender gap in schools in many parts of the world as young girls do not then have time for education.

Walking far away to collect water also increases the vulnerability of women and girls – and often young boys – to predatory attacks, such as rape, murder, kidnapping, human trafficking or forced marriage.

Water is also directly related to food security. It is essential for a healthy and nutritious diet. It is central to preparing and cooking food. And agriculture, with its need for water and irrigation, is the primary source of food, income, and employment in developing countries, especially for women and the poor.

We also know that water has been the basis for many territorial and violent disputes between various peoples and even nations, which is just one more link that water has to a human rights framework that promotes peace, equity and stability.

Let me conclude by thanking all of our witnesses for being here. I hope this hearing will help clarify some of the key issues and challenges confronting us when we evaluate water issues within a human rights framework. And I am interested in learning how such an evaluation of water as a human right can help us formulate and strengthen U.S. policies on water issues.

I am happy to yield to my esteemed colleague from Oregon, Congressman Earl Blumenauer, for any opening remarks.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I deeply appreciate your leadership with the Human Rights Commission, focusing on the central role that water plays. And it's never been more timely. We're going to have World Water Day in just a few weeks. We look at the events unfolding in the middle east and north Africa; water is one thing that can bring us together.

It impacts everybody. It can bring stability and prosperity, or it can be part of what precipitates crisis. As seen by the outstanding work done by Friends of the Earth Middle East, water issues can help break down contentious silos that complicate relationships.

They are working directly with Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian communities to collaboratively address clean water and sanitation issues in that area. Because after all, if salt water penetrates that aquifer, it's not going to matter what nation, what religion. It's going to have profound effects upon them.

And I agree with your comments. I think that water is at the heart of all the critical issues that we deal with in Congress, and that face the world. Climate change, public health, you referenced education. Food security, economic development.

I mean, the lost productivity in developing countries because of the need, as you say, for the extra effort to gather water in the first place, or the loss to disease and illness -- half the people who are sick anywhere in the world today are sick needlessly from water-borne disease.

The evidence is that by the fact of increasing our access to safe drinking water and sanitation, it will contribute 30 percent to the achievement of each of our Millennium Development Goals. I won't repeat the statistics that you gave; they are horrific when we think about the impacts.

And collectively, as you say, it really dwarfs what happens with conflict. This is a war against families, children, women, on an ongoing basis. We made a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals in 2002. I was pleased to have authored the legislation, the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which for the first time established the first Millennium Development Goal that was built into U.S. law, to establish water and sanitation as a cornerstone of United States foreign policy assistance.

We've come a long way. Before we did that, we were looking at somewhere like 70 million dollars of total investment in clean water and sanitation, and only 10 million of that was in sub-Saharan Africa, which we know is the area of greatest need.

I'm pleased with what has happened. Secretary Clinton has been eloquent and forceful in taking to heart the impact of the legislation and putting it into effect. We look forward to hearing from Dr. SALZBERG. In the last two years, we've been able to beef up the investment in clean water. The 300 million dollars is still the proverbial drop in the bucket, but it is light years ahead. And most gratifying for me is 125 million dollars dedicated to sub-Saharan Africa. But we can and must do more.

And I appreciate the attention of the Commission. It's been famously said that for the cost of one half take-out pizza per year per family, the United States could meet our obligations that we have established moving forward. We have other legislation, Water for the World.

We almost got it across the finish line last session; it passed the Senate. For some reason, we could not get it in the declining days of the last Congress to be voted on, but this will help further strengthen the effort at literally no cost.

We can use our resources more effectively, and look forward to its re-introduction. And finally, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your framing it as a human rights issue. Because nothing is more vital. Nothing is going to make more difference for our realizing our goals for human development and for peace. I look

forward to working with you, and look forward to hearing the impressive witness panel that you have assembled.

[The statement of Mr. Blumenauer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EARL BLUMENAUER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF OREGON

- Good morning and thank you to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for taking the time to highlight this very important issue.
- It is extremely timely, being that World Water Day is just around the corner, on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the events unfolding in the Middle East and North Africa.
- Water is one thing that ties us all together and directly impacts everyone. It can bring stability and prosperity, or it can lead to crisis.
- As seen by the outstanding work done by Friends of the Earth Middle East, water issues can break down the silos in otherwise contentious relationships.
  - They work directly with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities to collaboratively address clean water and sanitation issues.
- It is at the heart of the most important issues of our time.
- You can't discuss global climate change, public health, education, food security, or economic development without addressing water – water availability, water quality, and establishing a reliable water supply, just to name a few.
  - This is in evidence by the fact that improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation will contribute 30% to the achievement of each Millennium Development Goal.
- The scope and severity that results from a lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation is staggering.
  - 4,000 children under the age of 5 die each day because of this crisis.
  - 1 in 8 people live without safe drinking water.
  - 2.5 billion do not have adequate sanitation.
  - Women in rural Africa spend roughly 26% of their time collecting water, keeping them out of school and unable to get jobs later on.
- In 2002 we made a global commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.
- And in 2005, I worked with House and Senate leadership to establish water and sanitation as a cornerstone of United States foreign assistance efforts, by enacting the “Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act.”
- As a result, we’ve come a long way from the days, in 2005, when USAID spent barely \$70 million on clean water and sanitation, of which less than \$10 million was directed to sub-Saharan Africa.
- Strong progress has been made:
  - There are now experts within USAID and State to help coordinate water policy.
  - From these investments, in 2009
    - Over 5.5 million people gained improved access safe drinking water.
    - 1.3 million gained improved access to sanitation.
  - For the last two years, we funded this Act at \$300 million, with \$125 million directed towards Sub-Saharan Africa; the area we know to have the greatest need.
- But we must do more to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to fully implement the Water for the Poor Act.
  - This is entirely within our grasp, technologically and financially.
    - There is a famous analogy that for just half of what American’s spend on takeout pizza in one year could turn the world’s number one health problem around.
- We must choose to make WASH a priority.
  - To date, more than \$350 billion has been spent by the US in Afghanistan since 2001, a monthly cost exceeding \$8 billion.
  - If we reprioritize, the amount we spend in one weekend there could save millions of lives elsewhere.
- The three areas of greatest concern to me are:
  - 1) The lack of a comprehensive WASH strategy from USAID and State
  - 2) A specific estimate of the resources they will need to implement this strategy, and
  - 3) The disproportionate level of resource allocation.
    - More money is being spent in areas of significant geopolitical interest to the U.S., and less where the needs are greatest.



- For example, the U.S. provides on average more than 21 times as much WASH funding per capita to the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as it does to Sub-Saharan Africa, despite the fact that average levels of need in Sub-Saharan Africa are more than twice as high for water.
- That's why in the last Congress – and as I will do in this Congress – I worked with Donald Payne in the House and Mr. Durbin in the Senate, to introduce the new “Water for the World Act” that will meet the global water crisis head on, and bring safe water to an additional 100 million people by 2015.
- We must work to secure robust funding for WASH in the FY12 budget and pass legislation to ensure that our gains cannot be reversed, only strengthened.
- With access to clean water and sanitation underpinning almost every development priority, including empowerment of women and girls, food security, climate change, health and educational attainment, WASH interventions should be a central element of the work of USAID missions globally.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Well, thank you very much. And I want to thank you again for your leadership on these issues. And hopefully, we will be able to make some modest accomplishments a reality in this current Congress.

Our first witness is Dr. Aaron Salzberg, who is the Special Coordinator for Water Resources at the U.S. Department of State. He's got an impressive background, but I, just for the record, should point out that he has a Ph.D. in genetic toxicology and an M.S. in technology and policy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

I'm partial to people from Massachusetts, who go to school there. You've got to be really smart if you go to school in Massachusetts. He also holds an M.S. in aerospace engineering, and has mediated more than 50 civil disputes as a mediator with the Harvard Law School. And he came to the State Department as a fellow at the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

And we are delighted to have you here, and we welcome your testimony. Thank you.

#### **STATEMENT OF DR. AARON SALZBERG, SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR WATER RESOURCES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Dr. SALZBERG. Representatives McGovern and Blumenauer, thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before you today and discuss water. This is an issue that the Secretary herself has described as a matter of national and human security.

I'm not sure I can do a better job than the two of you already have. I think you appreciate the issue very, very well. Both at home and abroad, water security is becoming one of the great challenges of our time.

As you mentioned, today more than 800 million people lack access to safe drinking water, and more than two and a half billion people lack access to sanitation. Nearly 6,000 people, mostly children under five, die each day from water and sanitation related diseases. And as you mentioned, women and children are disproportionately impacted by the effects of these issues.

Unsustainable water use and poor water resources management are becoming a growing impediment to food security and economic growth, and floods and droughts continue to kill thousands and displace millions.

Water is also becoming an increasing threat to peace and security. More than 260 basins, home to more than 40 percent of the world's population, are shared by two or more countries. As demands increase, competition over scarce water resources is likely to rise, both within and among countries.

These challenges are likely to grow. Experts predict that by 2025, nearly two thirds of the world's population will live under water-stressed conditions. And by 2030, the world's demand for fresh water is expected to outstrip global supply by 40 percent.

Climate change will have a profound impact. Specific conditions will vary, but wet regions will likely get wetter and dry regions will likely get drier. Greater variability in rainfall will increase the number and severity of floods and droughts. Melting glaciers will increase the need for water storage.

In sum, to meet future water needs, we are going to have to be smarter, and we are going to have to do more with less. U.S. efforts internationally are focused on improving water security. And simply put, this means that people and the environment have the water they need, when they need it, where they need it, while reducing the risks from extreme hydrologic events.

And to achieve this goal, the United States is working to increase access to safe drinking water and sanitation, improve water resources management, increase the productivity of water resources, and to mitigate the tensions associated with shared waters.

The integration of water and food, water and health, water and climate, is absolutely critical. Our food programs, for example, should not fail because the water isn't there. Last March, in her World Water Day Speech, Secretary Clinton outlined five streams of action.

The first was to build and strengthen institutional capacity at the local, national, and regional levels. Countries and communities must take the lead in securing their own water futures. We need to give them the tools to succeed.

Second, increase and better coordinate our diplomatic efforts. We need to work to raise international awareness, and encourage developing countries to prioritize water and sanitation in national plans and strategies. We need to build political will to address this issue.

Third, mobilize financial support. This will take money. Even if all the world's official development assistance were directed towards water and sanitation, it would still not be enough to meet developing country needs. That said, there is capital in countries. We need to focus on approaches that will mobilize local sources of capital and investment.

Fourth, promote science and technology. There's no technological silver bullet. That said, science and technology can make a huge impact, and we need to work harder to incentivize innovation of new technologies, and to share U.S. expertise and knowledge.

Finally, fifth, building partnerships. This is not a problem that we can solve on our own. There is a great deal of knowledge and experience that lies within the U.S. technical agencies, the private sector, and the US-based nonprofit community. We need to bring these resources to bear internationally.

The United States remains one of the largest bilateral donors to global water and sanitation efforts. In 2009, which is the last year we actually have complete data for right now, the United States invested over 750 million dollars for all water sector and sanitation related activities in developing countries.

More than 500 million of this went towards drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene activities. And this is in addition to U.S. support to UN organizations and multilateral development banks that are also engaged on these issues. In 2009, USAID alone provided nearly 6 million people with improved access to safe drinking water, and over 1 million people with improved access to sanitation.

We have also supported a range of activities to advance cooperation on shared waters in several basins around the world, including, for example, the Nile.

Perhaps I will stop here, and close with a quote from Secretary Clinton's World Water Day speech for all of you who, perhaps, weren't there. She said "It's not every day that you find an issue where effective diplomacy and development will allow you to save millions of lives, feed the hungry, empower women, advance our national security interests, protect the environment, and demonstrate to billions of people that the United States cares. Cares about you, and cares about your welfare. Water is that issue."

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before the Commission.  
[The statement of Dr. Salzberg follows:]

[No written statement submitted]

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much, and we appreciate your leadership. You know, I've come to appreciate this issue more and more every time I travel around the world to different countries. I was in Ecuador a couple of years ago, and I saw an entire region of the northeastern Amazon where communities, including indigenous communities, had no access to clean water because of decades of oil contamination.

And in the FY2010 Foreign Appropriations Bill, there was report language recommending that funds be used to promote clean water, mainly through rain catchment programs like the ones being carried out by UNICEF and the Rainforest Foundation in the region.

I was in Ethiopia, outside of Deri-Dawa, and visited an agricultural food security project in the community of Lagadini -- it sounded kind of Italian to me, but anyway, that was the name of the place -- which was coupled with a watershed management project. And I was really impressed with it.

You know, you saw our partners demonstrating the benefits of drip irrigation. I attended the ribbon cutting ceremony of a water project where there were separate water sources for their herd animals and for the people. And when the water came on, the community went wild. I mean, it was really quite inspirational.

In El Salvador, I visited the Barahona region where the drinking water had been contaminated by flooding, and where USAID was working with CARE and local communities to install new wells that would ensure that there would be drinking water, and that it wouldn't be contaminated by future floods.

And I do a lot of work with school feeding, and I visited countless school feeding programs throughout Africa and Central America where having access to clean drinking water is absolutely essential. Otherwise, our nutrition programs would do very little if people there are getting sick from the water.

And so these programs have a real meaning to me, and I'm interested in seeing them pursued within a rights framework, as I mentioned in my opening statement.

One of the -- and again, we're a nonpartisan commission here, but I can't help but think about some of the cuts in some of our developmental programs that were made in the continuing resolution. And a lot of the programs I know about because I deal with them. I mean, where's the McGovern-Dole School Feeding Program, or the Food for Peace Program?

But I've been really excited about Secretary Clinton's kind of taking this issue on, of hunger and water security. But all this costs money, and I'm wondering whether or not you would care to comment on whether or not some of the things that were left unfixed, whether or not that would have a detrimental impact on our ability to be able to pursue the goals that you and the Secretary have outlined.

Dr. SALZBERG. You know, I think that's part of the challenge. But the reality is, we are going to have to be more strategic going forward. And it may mean that we have to narrow our scope and focus on those countries where we can make the most meaningful difference. We need to think seriously about which countries we engage in where other donors are active, and where our efforts meet our skill sets, probably, in a more effective way.

We're going to have to be very focused on results with the limited inputs that we've got. And so I think we're all trying to adjust to the coming environment, and I think the key issue is just that we're going to have to be more strategic, more focused, and I think align our programming more effectively to the results that we hope to achieve.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I just came from a breakfast, an International Women's Day breakfast. And the focus, a lot of it was on food security. And water is a big part of it. You know, I argued in my opening speech that we should be moving aggressively in pursuing some of these projects to help provide food, and help communities become sustainable.

That's the goal here. It's not for us to keep on providing these, but for communities to be able to be self-sustaining. That is, that we should be doing these things not just because it's the right thing to do morally, or it makes us feel good, but it's also that it's a national security issue.

I mean, there are violent conflicts that have erupted all over the world over food and water. And to the extent that we could be viewed as a global leader, which I think we are, in trying to help countries and communities deal with these issues, I think it enhances our national security.

And so it's not just that we're all a bunch of do-gooders, there's a hardheaded realism here that it actually strengthens our country. And it's something that I wish, when we talked about these issues, that we invoked that language more. National security is not just the number of weapons we send overseas. It's also the technology and the people and the ability to help communities be able to feed themselves, and to be able to have access to clean drinking water for them and their kids.

Dr. SALZBERG. I think there's no question that the Secretary views the issue the same way. And both in terms of basic access and the importance of basic access to meeting our security issues, and to fighting counter-insurgency efforts, as well as regionally, and mitigating issues that might exist between countries, these are things that certainly resonate with her and are part of her message when she speaks about it.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Let me just ask you, how is money allocated? I mean, there are lots of needy countries around the world. How are the decisions made? How is the money allocated?

Dr. SALZBERG. Again, these are very challenging decisions to make. I think there are two factors that we weigh against each other very closely. One is need. So we do look at the countries. We look at how many people have access to safe drinking water, how many people have access to sanitation, diarrheal rates, other indicators that people are not getting access to the basic services.

We look at the impact of water on other sectors. The sustainability of water use in agriculture, how it's being used for energy production, and other types of issues. We look at the state of the water resource: is it healthy? Is it polluted? Are we seeing declining fisheries? Are industries scaling up in such a way that it's impacting water resources?

So we look at all those things holistically to get a sense of the need in a particular country, and then of course we look at that need compared to other priority needs in the development arena in that particular country.

We then have to balance that with opportunity. Again, we have to be strategic about where we engage. In places where there are other donors who are active, we develop relationships. We've got cases where the UK may be the lead donor on drinking water and sanitation, and we're working in the agricultural sector and managing water. So we try to balance each other.

We look for opportunities where we have the right partners on the ground. We look for where we have the right champions to invest. We look for places where our strengths can really complement and add value to what's going on the ground in that particular place. I mean, we really have to be focused on achieving measurable results in those countries.

And so when we balance those two sets of issues, we often end up with a suite of countries where we feel the needs are strong, and where we can make a meaningful difference. And that's how we usually arrive at those decisions.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Let me just finally say, I hope that you will relate to the Secretary and to the Director of USAID that you've encountered at least one Member of Congress who is very excited about their holistic approach to food security and water security around the world.

I mean, I have to tell you, it really is refreshing that they're looking at this thing holistically, and that it's about trying to help repair countries so that the countries themselves can be self-sustaining in the areas of food and water security.

You know, we often times just respond to one catastrophe after another. Whether it's natural disasters or man-made disasters, we're always there to provide emergency food relief, or whatever relief they need. But I think what the Department is trying to do here is to change that in a way that yes, we will be there when we need to be there in terms of emergencies, but maybe we could prevent some emergencies from happening.

And to the extent that we can help countries get on their feet and be able to provide their own food and be able to manage their own water and be able to get this right, then we don't always have to be there. You know, they'll be on their own.

And that's what most countries want, and it seems like such a simple concept. But we just haven't pursued that over the years, which is somewhat of a puzzlement to me. When I went into Ethiopia and I saw that place in Lagadini, I was just like "Boy, this all makes so much sense. Why haven't we been doing this and encouraging this over the years?"

And instead we respond to one famine after another, but this was a way to teach people how to better manage their land, how to better utilize their water, how to protect their water, how to have alternative income -- in case there is a disaster, they can actually buy and purchase food on their own.

And it was really quite remarkable. And the community was incredibly excited at the progress. They saw the progress being made. I learned a lot about agriculture and watershed management just by visiting. I realized how dumb I am when it comes to some of these issues, but it really was incredible.

This holistic approach, this feed the future, this tackling the issue of global hunger and poverty and water security -- I think it's the absolute right thing to do, and I am really inspired by some of the things I've heard coming out of the administration, and certainly the work that you're doing. So thank you very much.

Mr. Blumenauer?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I do strongly identify with the comments that you made. I must say, Secretary Clinton's -- I was privileged to be in the audience when Secretary Clinton, at National Geographic last year, delivered what I think is the most powerful and comprehensive statement by any top-level American official in history, setting the stage for this work going forward. And I know you're doing the best that you can with limited resources.

I will just say that I hope that Secretary Gates and Secretary Clinton are able to reach an accord for more effective utilization of the resources. I think if what we are spending every month in Afghanistan, which has the potential of being transformational throughout that region -- water resources is an issue in Pakistan. It's a problem in Afghanistan. It's still an issue in Iraq, although we spent a wildly large portion of our resources available for water there over the years.

But I'm hoping that there's a way to rebalance, because what both you and Chairman McGovern said is, this is a security issue, as well as a human relations issue, a human development issue.

And I wanted, if I could -- I want to hear the other witnesses as soon as possible, but I wondered if I could just trouble you, Doctor, to just elaborate for a moment on the point you made about 260 basins where there are multiple countries, representing -- what did you say, 40 percent of the world's population?

Could you talk about a few of those basins where we're making some progress, or there are some opportunities looming that deserve extra attention, either for success or for opportunities moving forward?

Dr. SALZBERG. Well, I'd like to hope we're making progress in almost all of them, but there are some that I think are still somewhat troubling. The Nile is one. I

mentioned the Nile Basin. That's a basin where we're looking for opportunities to engage governments and reinforce the importance of a cooperative solution to managing those resources that all the countries can agree to. And that's not an easy process.

There are other places in the world. The Himalayas. Many, many countries. And how do we begin to strengthen their joint understanding of the resources, how they can manage those resources for the benefit of all the countries? and what type of institutional arrangements are useful for those countries to be able to manage these resources going forward in a cooperative way?

We have some agreements. The Indus Water Treaty is one example, and it's actually a very robust institution, and in fact it operates reasonably well. It may be a little outdated, but it's doing a reasonable job, and the countries are working through that process.

How do we begin to take some of those lessons and practices and expand them to the other basins within that region? It's critically important. Mekong Basin. Here we have a commission which involves a number of countries that are looking at some very challenging decisions about how they manage their water resources, as you know.

Do they start developing the mainstream Mekong River, which could conceivably impact the food production potential of many of the countries downstream? How do you reinforce the institutional structures that exist to be able to make those decisions with the best science and knowledge that we have at hand, so that they're sound and they make sense for the future?

We are looking for opportunities to work with those countries to do those things. It's not always easy. In most of these cases, the countries themselves really need to invite us in and embrace our support. And there are some places where that's not always going to happen.

In the Tigris-Euphrates, here's another place where, again, the governments themselves have sat down and restarted the trilateral process where they're working together to look at some of these issues, and that's a very positive sign.

In some places and basins where we can't work with the governments, we might work in a Track 2 process, where we support non-governmental actors, universities, others, NGOs, to strengthen their capacity to understand and model what the resources are like, hopefully laying the groundwork, then, for a broader set of discussions that might evolve with the governments over time.

These are long-term processes that require long-term commitment, require support of a broad collection of donors. And so there's also assembling the proper donor support that goes in parallel with the work that has to go on the ground.

And so it's a very careful dance of both development and diplomatic activities, and donor and riparian support. A very complicated set of problems.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Doctor, thank you very much for being here. We appreciate it, and this has helped a great deal. And again, we're trying to raise some of these issues to get our colleagues to also think about them as we're trying to figure out how best to allocate our limited resources here. But this has been very, very helpful. Thank you very much.

Our next panelist is Catarina de Albuquerque. Am I pronouncing that properly? I'm really awful at pronouncing names, so I just wanted to make sure of that. But she's the UN Human Rights Council Independent Expert on the Issue of Human Rights Obligations Related to Access to Clean and Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation.

She has been awarded the Human Rights Golden Medal by the Portuguese Parliament for her outstanding work in the area of human rights. And we are really thrilled to have you here, and we look forward to your testimony. Thank you.

## **STATEMENT OF CATARINA DE ALBUQUERQUE, UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION**

MS. DE ALBUQUERQUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for the opportunity that you are giving me to address you this morning on the human right to water and sanitation.

In March 2008, the UN Human Rights Council created the mandate of the independent expert -- I will not read the whole mandate, because it's too long -- and I was appointed as a mandate-holder in September of that year.

According to the resolution, I am entitled to prepare a compendium of good practices, to clarify the content of human rights obligations related to access to safe water and sanitation, and make recommendations that could help the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular of Goal 7.

I am also mandated to undertake country missions in order to assess the way in which the human right to water is being realized throughout the world. This is the reason why I have been in this country for the past two weeks.

As you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, history has been made around the world in the past several months in this area. On the 20th of July, the UN General Assembly recognized the right to water and sanitation, and in September of last year the UN Human Rights Council affirmed by consensus, thus with this country's support, the right, and further specified that the right to water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living.

What does this mean, and why does this matter? The human right to water and sanitation entitles everyone to water and sanitation that is available, accessible, affordable, acceptable, and safe or of quality. This obligation must be progressively realized by a country to a maximum of available resources, which means that a country must take concrete and targeted steps towards ensuring universal access to water and sanitation.

When domestic resources are insufficient for such efforts, countries must avail themselves to international cooperation and assistance. Human rights also require that this effort be undertaken in a non-discriminatory manner. There must be opportunities for meaningful participation. There must be transparency and access to information, and accountability mechanisms must be put in place to address cases where this right is violated.

How does all this translate to development policy concerning water and sanitation? I will use the example of the Millennium Development Goals to illustrate how development policy might change with an explicit focus on human rights.

As I said, the normative content of the right to water and sanitation entails that the water and the sanitation are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable, and safe. Each of these dimensions is equally important and must be factored into policies in the sector.

Sanitation that is not culturally acceptable, for instance by not ensuring privacy, is not adequate, because it will not be used. Water that is acceptable but unsafe is equally inadequate. The existing global development framework to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, unfortunately, does not fully reflect all the elements of the right to water and sanitation.

I will give you an example. The figure that you and the previous speaker mentioned of 884 million people without allegedly safe drinking water does, unfortunately, not correspond to the truth. 884 million people are those without access to an improved water source. And this is often interpreted as people without



access to safe drinking water. But, in fact, the number of people without access to safe drinking water is much, much higher.

I will give you an example. I was on a country mission to Egypt, where I went to visit a family that recently had a tap installed in the apartment, in the home. When I turned the water up, the water that flowed out was completely black. I even taped it. I made a film.

This tap, for the purposes of the Millennium Development Goals, is considered as an improved water source, regardless of the quality of the water that comes out from it. Regardless of the fact that the family cannot drink from it, and has to boil the water, or, when they have available money, purchase bottled water.

So the sad reality in the world is that water quality is simply not being monitored globally for the time being. If we add to the number of people who may have access to water, but simply cannot afford to pay for the service, that number increases even more.

The United Nations Children's Front, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization, are doing very important work to improve the indicators that they are using in order to measure progress, and also are addressing these dimensions in their country-level work. But a consistent approach is needed in the international development agenda to ensure that the core elements of the human right to water and sanitation are not neglected.

Human rights also require focus on the most vulnerable, those who are most often excluded from progress. Often these people are the most difficult to reach, but this cannot be a justification for neglecting them.

On the contrary, the Millennium Development Goals only foresee reducing those without access to water and sanitation by 50 percent. For some states, that is a simple feat, whereas for others it is a simple task.

From the perspective of human rights, we cannot stop at 50 percent. Human rights require, as I was saying, that progressive steps be taken in order to guarantee universal access.

Reaching those who are excluded can be politically complicated, and in some situations may risk cooperation with local governments. For instance, trying to improve the situation of slum-dwellers may be met with resistance by the government, under the pretext that slum-dwellers are illegal and providing services would grant them unjustified rights over the land they occupy.

But I must stress that everyone, without discrimination, has a right to water and sanitation. People who live in slums, people who live in rural areas, people who live in urban areas, indigenous people, everywhere. And if I might say, including in the U.S.

Human rights require the opportunity for active and meaningful participation by concerned individuals. This means transparency and the means to access information. This is also about creating space for all to participate in the decision-making process of policies that affect them.

"All people" includes, among others, people who live far away, illiterate people, people who speak other languages, people with disabilities, children. Participation is not only an obligation imposed by human rights, but also it helps to ensure more sustainable interventions. Without participation, interventions are more likely to fail.

Another important aspect of human rights is their binding nature. States have committed themselves to these obligations, and they are required to ensure these rights. It is not an optional add-on, but a legally binding information. When violations take place -- and they occur in every country of the world -- accountability mechanisms must be established to provide redress to the victims of such violations.

Finally, for me the most crucial dimension of human rights is their potential to empower people. Water and sanitation are no longer matters of charity that a government can give or take away. This is a human right that people can claim.

Governments are accountable to people for these human rights, and once people know that they have these rights the entire dynamic changes as they hold their officials to account.

On a more personal note, it has an impact on a person's sense of dignity, since he or she is no longer a recipient of aid, of charity, but a rights-holder with a legitimate claim.

To conclude, it is crucial that the United States actively participates in the design of the post-2015 international development agenda, so as to fully integrate the human right to water and sanitation. It is also critical that the United States fully integrate human rights into its own development priorities, policies, and programs.

Being one of the world's biggest contributors to ODI in the sector, the U.S. has a special responsibility not only to incorporate human rights, but to target its help to other countries so as to reach the poorest of the poor. I mean the most low-income countries, but also the most disadvantaged and poor people in those countries. And I hope that this country will resist the temptation of focusing on the low-hanging fruit.

Let me also add that the United States internally must obviously also take all necessary steps to make sure that this right is fully respected here. I will not yet pronounce myself on what I have seen and heard over the last two weeks during my country mission to the U.S.; nevertheless there are definitely serious challenges to be overcome to ensure that this right becomes a reality for all people living in the U.S. But I am confident that with the necessary leadership and political will, this will be accomplished.

Will applying a human rights perspective to development, and water and sanitation in particular make things more complicated? Yes, it will. The progress achieved thus far might not seem as great once viewing things through a human rights lens. Nevertheless, as with other human rights, we are painting a more honest picture of progress. We are getting closer to reality, and thus more able to devise strategies to change it for the better.

I have been honored and pleased to be here today, and to submit these remarks to the Commission. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. de Albuquerque follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATARINA DE ALBUQUERQUE

**Catarina de Albuquerque**  
**Testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**  
3 March 2011

##### Introduction

1. Honourable Congressmen McGovern and Wolf, members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. House of Representatives, congressional staff and representatives of civil society, thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning on the human right to water and sanitation.
2. In March 2008, through its resolution 7/22, the United Nations Human Rights Council created the mandate of the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and I was appointed as mandate holder in September 2008. According to the resolution, I am mandated to (1) prepare a compendium of good practices, (2) to clarify the content of human rights obligations related to access to safe water and sanitation, and (3) to make recommendations that could help the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular of Goal 7.
3. History has been made around the world in the past several months. On 28 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the right to water and sanitation. On 30 September 2010, the United Nations Human Rights Council affirmed the right and further specified that the right is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living. What does this mean? Why does it matter?
4. The human right to water and sanitation entitles everyone to water and sanitation that is available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and safe. This obligation must be progressively realized by a country to the maximum of available

resources, which means that a country must take concrete and targeted steps towards ensuring universal access to water and sanitation. Where domestic resources are insufficient for such efforts, countries must avail themselves to international cooperation and assistance.

5. Human rights also require that these efforts be undertaken in a non-discriminatory manner. There must be opportunities for meaningful participation; there must be transparency and access to information; and accountability mechanisms must be put in place to address cases where this right is violated. How does all this translate to a development policy concerning water, sanitation and health? I will use the example of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to illustrate how development policy might change with an explicit focus on human rights.

6. There are many misconceptions about the human right to water and sanitation, and I think it is important to clarify these at the outset:

- a. Do human rights require that water and sanitation services be provided for free? No.
- b. Do human rights prohibit private sector participation in water and sanitation service delivery? No.
- c. Do human rights require that everyone everywhere have access to a tap and a flush toilet? No.
- d. Does recognizing the right mean everyone is entitled to water and sanitation immediately? No.
- e. Is there enough water in the world for the realization of the human right to water and sanitation for everyone?  
Yes.

#### Normative content of the right to water and sanitation

7. As I said previously, the normative content of the human right to water and sanitation entails that water and sanitation are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and safe. Each of these dimensions is equally important and must be factored into policies concerning water and sanitation. Sanitation that is not culturally acceptable, for instance, by not ensuring privacy, is not adequate because it will not be used. Water that is acceptable but unsafe is equally inadequate. The existing global development framework to achieve the MDGs unfortunately does not fully reflect all the elements of the right to water and sanitation. The estimated 884 million people without an improved water source is often interpreted as people without access to safe drinking water. In fact, that number is much higher. For example, I was on a country mission to Egypt, where I went to visit a family that recently had a tap installed in the home. When I turned on the tap, the water that flowed out was completely black. This tap, for purposes of the MDGs, is considered an improved water source, regardless of the quality of the water that comes out from it.

8. If we add to the number of people who may have access to water, but cannot afford to pay for the service, the number increases even more. The United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization are doing important work to improve the indicators of the Joint Monitoring Programme of the Millennium Development Goals, and also are addressing these dimensions in their country-level work. But a consistent approach is needed in the international development agenda to ensure that the core elements of the human right to water and sanitation are not neglected.

#### Non-discrimination

9. Human rights require a focus on the most vulnerable, those who are most often excluded from progress. Often, these people are the most difficult to reach, but this cannot be a justification for neglecting them – on the contrary. The MDGs only foresee reducing those without access to water by 50 per cent. For some States that is a huge feat, while for others it is a simpler task. From the perspective of human rights, we cannot stop at 50 per cent. Human rights requires that there be universal access.

10. Reaching those who are excluded can be politically complicated and, in some situations, may risk cooperation with the Government. For instance, trying to improve the situation of slum dwellers may be met with resistance by the Government under the pretext that slum dwellers are illegal and providing services would grant them “unjustified” rights over the land they occupy. But I must stress that everyone, without discrimination, has a right to water and sanitation. People who live in slums, people who live in rural areas, people who live in urban areas, poor people, rich people, indigenous people, everyone.

#### Participation, accountability and empowerment

11. Human rights require the opportunity for active and meaningful participation by concerned individuals. This means transparency and the means to access information. This is also about creating space for all to participate in the decision-making process of policies that affect them. All people includes, among others, people who live far away, illiterate people, people who speak other languages, people with disabilities. Participation is not only an obligation imposed by human rights, but also it helps to ensure more sustainable interventions. Without participation, interventions are more likely to fail.

12. Another important aspect of human rights is their binding nature. States have committed themselves to these obligations, and they are required to ensure these human rights. It is not an optional add-on but a legally binding obligation. When violations take place, and they occur in every country of the world, accountability mechanisms must be established to provide redress to the victims of such violations.

13. Finally, for me, the most crucial dimension of human rights is their potential to empower people. Water and sanitation are no longer matters of charity that a Government can give or take away. This is a human right that people can claim. Governments are accountable to people for this human rights and once people know that they have this right, the entire dynamic changes as they hold their officials to account. On a more personal note, it has an impact on a person's sense of dignity since he or she is no longer simply a recipient of aid, but a rights-holder with a legitimate claim.

#### Conclusion

14. It is crucial that the United States actively participates in the design of the post-2015 international development agenda. It is also critical that the United States fully integrate human rights into its development priorities, policies and programmes. Why not use water and sanitation as a test case? This is what UNICEF and WHO are doing regarding the MDG indicators. Let me also add that the United States must obviously also take all necessary steps to make sure that this human right is fully respected in this country. I will not yet pronounce myself on what I have seen and heard over the last two weeks during my country mission to the U.S. Nevertheless, there are definitely serious challenges to be overcome to ensure that this right becomes a reality for all people living in this country, but I am confident that with the necessary leadership and political will this can be accomplished.

15. Will applying a human rights perspective to development, and water and sanitation in particular, make things more complicated? Probably yes. The progress achieved thus far might not seem as great once viewing things through a human rights lens. Nevertheless, as with other human rights, we are painting a more honest picture of progress. We are getting closer to reality and thus more able to devise strategies to change it for the better.

16. I have been honoured and pleased to be here today and to submit these remarks to the Commission. Thank you.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much, and I appreciate your efforts in this area. You touched on something that I was wondering about, and that is -- you know, we acknowledge that this is a right, and then what? I spoke to the United Nations at a conference on the issue of food as a right, and the point I made is that it's great that we all recognize that it's a right, but what are we doing to enforce it?

Because otherwise it doesn't mean very much. And in the area of food security, we see -- again, it's not just the United States, but the world community, in general -- as we speak, we're not living up to our obligations of trying to deal with the issue of global hunger.

I mean, you have close to a billion people on the planet that are hungry, and yet we have summits and conferences, and we all get up and say "Food is a right," and we're going to cut hunger in half by this year, or we're going to eliminate it by this year. And those years come and go, and we make some progress in some areas, but we're not achieving that goal.

On the one hand, I'm really glad that we're acknowledging that this is a right, but I guess a cynic might say, so what. What will be different with this in terms of enforcement, in terms of benchmarks, in terms of making sure we're reaching our goals?

Ms. DE ALBUQUERQUE. Thank you. And I'm happy that you asked that question, because on the 20th of July, I was coming from a country mission to Japan. And on the 20th of July, the UN General Assembly recognized the right to water and sanitation.

And of course I had been involved in the whole process, so in theory I was very happy. It was a happy day for me. And then journalists started calling me, and when I was explaining what had happened, I felt immediately the same sense of frustration that you are mentioning now. And I was asking myself, "So what?"

So what for the lives of the people that I have been meeting throughout the world, and who do not have access? Exactly the same. So I think that, of course, recognizing the right to water and sanitation as a human right, it's an important first step, but it is only a first step. It is a sign of political will.

Maybe if the right hadn't been recognized, we wouldn't be here today. And I see, as I was mentioning, within the UN and those who are putting together the indicators to measure progress in the sector, water and sanitation, because the right was recognized, are now working in order to ensure that the new indicators are guided by human rights criteria. The ones that I was mentioning: affordability, water quality, et cetera. Non-discrimination.

So I think that it is a long process, and I think it's a marathon. It's not a 100-meters run. It's a marathon. But I think that we are walking the right path, in the right direction.

I also hope that this will influence states nationally, for example the U.S., in making sure that the poorest, the homeless, the Indian Americans, people living in rural areas, migrant workers, are not forgotten in the huge progress that this country has made to make this right real, and also in the overseas official development assistance, that countries make sure that they also target the poorest countries, the poorest people in the countries, et cetera.

In my work, I also have the possibility, besides making country missions, where at the end of the mission -- this is what I'm going to do tomorrow -- I share with the press preliminary conclusions and recommendations to the country. So having recognized, as the U.S. has done, and supported the right to water and sanitation formally makes a difference. And I think it increases the responsibilities of the state or the country.

I also write reports that I present to countries, and I think that with the recognition of the right to water and sanitation, the obligations are greater. I also

receive complaints from individuals against their states, and I think again that the recognition of the right to water and sanitation makes, also, my possibilities of action better.

I think this is what I wanted to say. Thank you.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you. Just one final question. The agricultural sector is one of the major users of water, which in effect makes water key to establishing food security, and makes it key to achieving the right that everyone should have to food.

Do you see any tensions between the right to food and the right to water? And if so, how do we resolve them.

Ms. DE ALBUQUERQUE. In theory, yes. In practice, no. And I've been working also with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, precisely on these issues. What are the boundaries between our two mandates?

What human rights law says is that water for personal and domestic uses gets priority over other water uses. And we are talking about a fairly limited amount of water. It's water that we all need for our personal hygiene, to drink, to cook, and to wash our homes, to clean our homes. That's what the human right to water and sanitation means. And these amounts of water, that are crucial for our survival, should get priority over other water uses.

And normally, if you mention subsistence agriculture, this might be even included. If I have a home garden where I have my little vegetables for my own consumption, this could even be a part of the right to water. When we are talking about bigger agricultural users of water, then I think that -- of course, these are the biggest consumers of water in the world, an average of 70 percent of all water use.

But what is interesting is that out of this huge amount of water being used for agriculture, 70 percent of the whole total water use, I would say that 70 percent of those 70 percent are used to produce luxury food. It's not for the realization of the right to food.

So in my opinion there is a kind of a false, partially false tension between the two rights. And of course, there are new technologies and new ways to make sure that agriculture is more sustainable, uses less water, et cetera.

So I don't fully agree that there -- at first sight, there might be tensions, but I think that with proper programs, policies, and a holistic vision, these tensions do not have to take place.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you. Mr. Blumenauer?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you. I appreciate the clarification you just made, the notion of both technology and diet. If everybody in the world is going to be feasting on the functional equivalent of American Big Macs, we've got real problems.

And the technological applications are important. We can make a huge difference in terms of the right crops in the right place. And I think it's important that you mentioned a little bit about the United States, because at a time when we don't have resources to help with our international obligations, and we have problems here at home, we're subsidizing American farmers to grow cotton in the desert, and then we're turning around and giving Brazilian cotton farmers 147 million dollars a year, because we're out of compliance with our international agreements. It does seem to me that it's important for us to reflect on our own policies and programs.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Don't get logical on us, now.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. But it is an important message that globally, there's a lot we can do to realign our priorities. And I would just ask, if you wanted to make just one minute of comment about what you've seen here, about what's happened with Native Americans, what's happened with our aging systems.

In the United States, we are leaking enough water out of aging and damaged water systems to fill Olympic-sized swimming pools from Washington, DC to

Pittsburgh every day. But if you had a brief comment for us about what you've seen in our country, I would be interested.

Ms. DE ALBUQUERQUE. Thank you. As a matter of fact, I am not allowed to talk about what I have seen until tomorrow morning.

I have just prepared the statement that I will hold tomorrow. I have shared it with the Department of State. I am having a meeting there tomorrow morning, and I think it's at noon that I will hold a press conference.

But let me say what I want to say about the U.S., but apply it to another country. And then we will all understand what I am trying to say. There is no single country in the world which is not facing problems regarding the realization of this right internally.

And I have to say that in the visits I have undertaken, I am more shocked when I visit rich countries that do not manage to make sure that the poorest and the most forgotten people in their populations, and the most marginalized segments of the population, don't get access to water and sanitation.

I visited Slovenia. Everybody has access to water and sanitation except some 3,000 people who, by coincidence, are Roma. And they have to walk. They have no access to sanitation. They have to walk for three hours in order to get clean water. And this is a European Union member state.

So the homeless people -- I've met homeless people in other countries, and unfortunately also here, who are undergoing a situation as the one I've seen in Bangladesh, having to deal with human waste. Having to clean human waste with their own hands, and dispose of it just because the society is not paying attention to them, and closes its eyes to people who are in these dramatic situations.

These are people who are much more voiceless than we are, simply because they don't speak the same language of the majority of Amer -- whoops, not Americans. Because I am not talking about the U.S. -- that the majority of the population speaks. Because they have another skin color. Because they are living far away in the rural areas.

So there is no single country that is not facing problems. I think that, of course, if we are talking about and analyzing the situation of richer countries, the situation becomes more shocking.

I am not sure that it is all a problem of lack of resources. Because I think that if resources are allocated differently, i.e. really used to target those who need them, things could change for the better. I also think that, as we were mentioning before, there is new technology. There are great systems and great inventions being developed and put in place, with great results, in other countries. And I think that developed countries could look at developing countries and at what they are doing in this area of creating cheap technology to make sure that everyone has access to water and sanitation.

And I cannot say more.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I think you've said enough. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I apologize. I am speaking on the floor here for a piece of legislation from my committee, but I deeply appreciate --

Cochairman McGOVERN. I want to thank your leadership and your inspiration for this. And I want to thank you for being here, and you have just given us enough of a teaser that we're all going to pay attention to that press conference tomorrow, because we are anxious to hear what you really have to say about all of us. But thank you for your leadership on this issue very much. Good luck.

Our final panel I want to call up to the table now. Reverend William Schulz, the President and CEO of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. Reverend John L. McCullough, the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Church World Service. Dr. Katherine E. Bliss, the Director of Project on Water Policy,

Center for Strategic and International Studies, and John Oldfield, Managing Director of WASH Advocacy Initiative.

So we are grateful that you are all here. Bill, we'll start with you. And thank you so much for being part of this panel this morning.

## **STATEMENT OF REV. WILLIAM SCHULZ, PRESIDENT AND CEO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE**

Rev. SCHULZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to represent the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, which is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, we might consider that a suburb of Worcester.

Cochairman McGOVERN. That's why you're here.

Rev. SCHULZ. Exactly. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is a non-sectarian organization, founded in 1940 to advance human rights and social justice. WE have 37,000 members, and 40 grassroots partner organizations around the country.

I want to direct my remarks, Mr. Chairman, to this question of whether or not water is a human right, and if so what difference does that make. Now, of course, what could be more fundamental to human life than access to water? If it's not a human right, nothing is.

But why do we need to establish it as a human right? If I were to claim that the obligation to ensure that anyone accused of a crime had access to an attorney was merely a nice idea, and not a right, all of us would scoff at that notion.

You would recognize -- all of us would recognize -- that nice ideas can be revoked. That nice ideas are subject to political whim, and that nice ideas are not justiciable. They cannot be legally enforced.

More and more countries are recognizing the access to safe, clean, affordable water as a human right. Ecuador was one of the most recent to do so, but interestingly enough every single country that has adopted a new constitution within the last 20 years has included in that constitution a right to water.

We've heard that the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, have done that. But interestingly enough, major corporations have done it to, including PepsiCo, Intel, Proctor and Gamble, Connecticut Water. They have all adopted policies recognizing their obligation to implement that as a right around the world.

Both houses of the legislature of our largest state, California, recognized that right in 2009. And it is therefore, I think, far past time for the United States, for the Federal Government, to do so as well. We have already recognized other social rights.

I offer to you the right to education. The right to education is justiciable. It is enforceable. This is not a radical step. But as you said, Mr. Chairman, establishing a right and seeing it implemented are two different things. Both public and private providers are challenged to meet this obligation.

I was in Cuzco, Peru just a few months ago. I visited a water facility there where the water authority, along with one of our partner organizations, the Federation of Water and Sanitation Workers, are creating a new public management model. The utility in Cuzco has linked with a water utility in Uruguay to share best practices, to make water affordable, and to prove that it is not just private corporations that can operate water facilities with skill and effectiveness.

We are very encouraged by what we have heard from the administration. I'm not going to repeat the kinds of commitments the administration has made. The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which was enacted in 2005 with bipartisan support, is a vital step.



The administration has taken important steps, but it is handicapped by the fact that the United States has not ratified several treaties that have a direct impact on the human right to water. And those, of course, include the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

So we urge Congress to adopt those treaties, to help set that framework so that those rights can be enforced, justiciable. We urge Congress to ensure full funding and implementation of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, with aid for sustainable, appropriate technology and water and sanitation services, not only to larger countries but to the most marginalized countries in the world, and to communities within those countries that have the greatest need.

We support the redefinition of the mandate of the Independent Expert from whom we have just heard, from that of an Independent Expert to that of a Special Rapporteur. This is not just a technical change. A Special Rapporteur may receive and investigate claims of violations of the right to water and sanitation.

We hope, in light of the last few comments with the Independent Expert, that Congress will hold hearings to review her recommendations with regard to the United States, and to take action that addresses the needs of the lowest-income communities here in the United States and abroad.

We know there are examples of discrimination in this country in this respect, and it's up to Congress to expose those and take action. We hope that through U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy, the government will encourage foreign governments to prioritize funding in their national budgets for water and sanitation services.

And let me just conclude these brief remarks by saying that water is a universal human need. It is a common inspiration. And this was brought home to me by a charming story from Kenya, where a courageous group of human rights defenders have spent their lives, and sometimes literally their blood, to save the last rainforest from tea plantations, to plant trees and crops, to save the streams that feed Lake Victoria, the headwaters of the great Nile River.

And many of these trees, that have a direct resource on water resources there, are planted on school grounds. And the teachers have told us that the trees and the water are having an incredible effect on the children. They find the children under the trees, resting, smiling, singing, thinking, and most importantly, the fighting on the school grounds among the children has greatly diminished.

And I hope that we may be as inspired as those children. The human right to water is truly a bipartisan issue, because the human need for water is a universal need. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding these hearings.

[The statement of Rev. Schulz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REV. WILLIAM F. SCHULZ

**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. House of Representatives  
"Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation"**

**Testimony by  
William F. Schulz, President and CEO  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
March 3, 2011**

Good morning Chairman McGovern, Chairman Wolf and the members of the Lantos Commission for Human Rights. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the human right to water and sanitation at this important hearing.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a nonsectarian organization founded in 1940 that advances human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. On behalf of our 37,000 members and our 40 grassroots partner organizations around the globe, I am eager to share a few insights from our work for environmental justice. We are also extremely grateful to the UN Independent Expert on the human right to water for her diligent efforts to secure access to this vital resource for communities here and overseas.

What could be more fundamental to human life than access to water? If that is not a human right, nothing is. UUSC's goal is to ensure sustainable access to safe, sufficient, affordable water to every person on the planet. Let me give you some examples of how we and our partners are doing that.

First, we need to establish that access to water is indeed a human right. I recently traveled to Peru and Ecuador to visit with our program partners there. In Ecuador, I was privileged to meet indigenous leaders and young people from our partner El Movimiento Mi Cometa (the "My Kite" Movement) who campaigned successfully for the newly adopted Ecuadorean Constitution to include not only a human right to water provision but a commitment to the rights of the Earth itself. This is a groundbreaking development in human rights jurisprudence and the national ombudsman, Dr. Fernando Gutierrez Vera, whose duty it is to protect the rights of nature assured me that those rights will be enforced.

But establishing rights in a Constitution is one thing; seeing them take form in reality is another. In Cusco, Peru, the Federation of Water and Sanitation Workers of Peru (FENTAP) are working with the public utility of Cusco to create a new model for implementing the human right to water. The utility in Cusco is partnering with another public utility in Uruguay, in a "public- public" partnership, to share "best practices," increase efficiency; make water services an affordable reality and in the process prove that it is not just private companies that can operate water facilities with skill and effectiveness.. This is a model for many others around the world to emulate.

And Latin America is not the only part of the world where this issue is percolating. In Tanzania, the government has established a centralized water ministry that has doubled the national budget for water and sanitation services. In South Africa, communities are working through the national and international courts to ensure that the right to water, enshrined in the South African constitution, is more than just a rhetorical flourish in places like Soweto.

We are very encouraged by President Obama's interest in providing safe drinking water for vulnerable communities at home and abroad. On World Water Day 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recognized that "Water represents one of the great diplomatic and development opportunities of our time...[it] will allow [us] to save millions of lives, feed the hungry, empower women, advance our national security interests, protect the environment and demonstrate to billions of people that the United States cares....." The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, enacted with bipartisan support in 2005, is a vital initial step towards these goals but there is much more that must be done.

The Obama Administration has taken important steps to signal support for the realization of the human right to water but is limited by the fact that the U.S. has not ratified the treaties that require direct human right to water obligations, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. But the US is a member of the World Health Organization, which has worked in support of the human right to water, and of the UN Development Programme, which recommended in a 2006 report implementation of the human right to water as a key path to development and way out of poverty

Now we urge Congress to:

- Work to ensure full funding and implementation of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, with aid for sustainable, appropriate technology and water and sanitation services to the most marginalized communities in countries with the greatest need;
- Support the redefinition of the mandate of the Independent Expert to that of a "Special Rapporteur" so that she may receive and investigate claims of violations of the right to water and sanitation;
- Hold Congressional hearings to review the findings of the Independent Expert's mission to the United States and take action on recommendations that address the needs of the lowest income communities in the United States and abroad;
- Through U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy, encourage foreign governments to prioritize funding in their national budgets for water and sanitation services for the most marginalized populations; and
- Urge the Obama administration to adopt an executive order to create an interagency commission to implement human rights at home, including the human rights to water and sanitation for the poorest communities, regardless of age, gender, race, or religious and ethnic background.

Water is a universal human need and a common inspiration, something that was brought home to me by a story from Kenya where a courageous group of human rights defenders have spent their lives and their blood, literally, to save the last rain forest from tea plantations; to plant trees and crops; and to save the streams that feed Lake Victoria, the head waters of the great Nile River. Many of these trees are planted on school grounds and the teachers have told us that the trees and the water are having an incredible effect on the children. They find them out under the trees, resting, smiling, singing, and thinking. Most importantly, the fighting on the school grounds among the children has greatly diminished. May we be as inspired as those children. The human right to water truly is a bipartisan issue because the human need for water is a universal need. Thank you again for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much. Reverend McCullough?

**STATEMENT OF REV. JOHN MCCULLOUGH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AND CEO, CHURCH WORLD SERVICES**

Rev. McCULLOUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to speak on behalf of Church World Service, an international development, relief, and refugee assistance organization serving around the world, including here in the United States, and serving on behalf of 37 U.S. national churches, many of which are international in character as well.

I am honored to address you on the vital matter of the right to water and sanitation, on behalf of CWS, as an advocate for those who have struggled far too long to live without it, and those who believe the lack of access to water and sanitation is an injustice that can be corrected.

I also want to commend the United States Government for extending its invitation to the UN Independent Expert, Catarina de Albuquerque, to make an official visit to the United States, and express my appreciation to the Lantos Commission and to its co-chairs, you, Congressman Jim McGovern, as well as Congressman Frank Wolf, for providing her and other witnesses with the opportunity to speak to this body.

Church World Service recognizes the extraordinary meaning and power of water. Water, in the worship practices of many religions, flows with the element of promise about our humanity, and confidence in the future. These practices, and our narratives of God's creation of the universe, are indicators of a profound, continuing human understanding of this reality: that all life has begun in, and depends on, water for its survival.

Water has a sacred character, and it is the creator's gift to us, to be respected, preserved, and shared for the benefit of all people and the wider creation. The right to water is inherently a universal human right. By its very nature, it cannot be treated as just another commodity among many. Water is a public trust and a public good.

The crisis in water and sanitation affects foremost the most vulnerable in the human community: the marginalized and the excluded, the poor and the oppressed. This disproportionate impact should be repugnant to our sense of justice and fairness in human society, and to our respect for the equality of human persons in their basic human needs and rights.

Church World Service has extensive experience in the development of water and sanitation projects with communities in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, very much like those that you have lifted up in this hearing today.

Our work embodies a rights-based approach that begins with inviting the formation of village water committees. This foundational step promotes community solidarity, empowers women, and fosters a sense of water and sanitation as necessary for dignified human life.

This is followed by the introduction of appropriate technology, with training in the means to build and maintain it. The goal is an outcome that is technically, economically, and environmentally sustainable by the community.

Our work in rural Cambodia may provide a useful example, where partner communities identify their needs, organize the work, and provide the labor. CWS provides training and materials. By working together in this way, communities in Cambodia have improved wells and built latrines.

One simple technology they have utilized is a biosand filter, at a cost of approximately 15 to 20 U.S. Dollars. This is a simple catchment box with gravel covered by sand, the surface of which forms a biodynamic wet film that traps and consumes microorganisms.

Biosand filters can remove most e. coli, worms, and parasites, iron and manganese, and other toxicants from contaminated water. The results are less water-borne diseases, including chronic diarrhea and typhoid, and improved health.

Repeatedly, in our experience, people struggling to overcome poverty have assumed responsibility for the good management of their new resource, and have expanded and derived benefits from it that we often did not imagine. They often go on to accompany others on similar journeys.

Health improves. Hours spent collecting water become available for other tasks. Children are free to attend school, and the benefits compound. Best of all, people discover in themselves new power and ability to organize and to implement plans for the betterment of their communities, and their faith in the future becomes inspired.

Water and sanitation are fundamental to life and human flourishing. So I want to close by urging Congress to fully fund the accounts for poverty-focused humanitarian and development assistance for 2011 and 2012. These accounts total less than one percent of the budget, but they are vital for helping provide clean water and meeting other basic needs of impoverished people.

Let us not weaken or abandon our moral and humanitarian responsibility to help vulnerable members of the human family. Our lives here in the United States are bound together with the lives of others, and so is the sustainability of our common future. We cannot ignore their needs without endangering our own.

As a people, we can be compassionate with our neighbors, helping to build a more just world with enough for all. We can assist our neighbors around the world to help themselves. For God's sake, and for the sake of one another, let us do no less.

[The statement of Rev. McCullough follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REV. JOHN MCCULLOUGH

**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing:**

*Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation*

March 3, 2011  
Testimony



**CHURCH WORLD SERVICE**

*The Reverend John L. McCullough,  
Executive Director and CEO, Church World Service*

Mr. Chairman, honorable members of the House of Representatives, distinguished members of this panel, and honored guests. I am the Rev. John L. McCullough, Chief Executive Officer of Church World Service, an international development, relief and refugee assistance organization - including here in the United States - and serving on behalf of thirty-seven U.S. national Churches. I am honored to address you on the vital matter of the right to water and sanitation, on behalf of CWS as an advocate for those who have struggled far too long to live without it, and those who believe the lack of access to water and sanitation is an injustice that can be corrected.

I commend the United States government for extending its invitation to the UN Independent Expert Catarina de Albuquerque, and express my appreciation to Congressman Jim McGovern and Congressman Frank Wolf, co-chairs of the Lantos Commission, for providing her and other witnesses with the opportunity to speak to this body. Church World Service recognizes the extraordinary meaning and power of water. Water, in the worship practices of many religions, flows with the element of promise about our humanity and confidence in the future. These practices and our narratives of God's creation of the universe are indicators of a profound continuing human understanding of this reality - all life has begun in and depends on water.

Water has a sacred character and is the Creator's gift to us: to be respected, preserved and shared for the benefit of all people and the wider creation. The right to water is inherently a universal human right. By its very nature it cannot be treated as just another commodity among many. Water is a public trust and a public good. The crisis in water and sanitation affects foremost the most vulnerable in the human community: the marginalized and excluded, the poor, and the oppressed. This disproportionate impact should be repugnant to our sense of justice and fairness in human society, and to our respect for the equality of human persons in their basic human needs and rights.

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Our work in rural Cambodia may provide a useful example, where partner communities identify their needs, organize the work and provide the labor. CWS provides training and materials. By working together in this way, communities in Cambodia have improved wells and built latrines. One simple technology they have utilized is a bio-sand filter, at a cost of \$15-20. This is a simple catchment box with gravel covered by sand, the surface of which forms a bio-dynamic wet film that traps and consumes micro-organisms. Bio-sand filters can remove most e-coli, worms and parasites, iron and manganese, and other toxicants from contaminated water. The results are less water-borne diseases, including chronic diarrhea and typhoid, and improved health. Repeatedly in our experience, people struggling to overcome poverty have assumed responsibility for the good management of their new resource, and have expanded and derived benefits from it that we often did not imagine. They often go on to accompany others on similar journeys. Health improves, hours spent collecting water become available for other tasks, children are freed to attend school, and the benefits compound. Best of all, people discover in themselves new power and ability to organize and to implement plans of the betterment for their communities; and their faith in the future becomes inspired.

Water and sanitation are fundamental to life and human flourishing, so I want to close by urging Congress to fully fund the accounts for poverty-focused humanitarian and development assistance for 2011 and 2012. These accounts total less than 1 percent of the budget, but they are vital for helping provide clean water and meet other basic needs of impoverished people. Let us not weaken or abandon our moral and humanitarian responsibility to help vulnerable members of the human family. Our lives here in the United States are bound together with the lives of others, and so is the sustainability of our common future. We cannot ignore their needs without endangering our own.

As a people, we can be compassionate with our neighbors, helping to build a more just world with enough for all. We can assist our neighbors around the world to help themselves. For God's sake, and for the sake of one another, let us do no less. Thank you.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much. Dr. Bliss, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF DR. KATHERINE BLISS, DIRECTOR, PROJECT ON GLOBAL WATER POLICY, CSIS**

Dr. BLISS. Thank you, Chairman. It is an honor to be here today. And thank you for the opportunity to speak with the Commission regarding the recent recognition of the United Nations that access to water and sanitation are human rights.

Why should global leaders focus on water and sanitation? Well, first, the world's health depends on water and sanitation access. Each year, at least 1.5 million people die from largely preventable diseases caused by drinking unsafe water. The vast majority are children under the age of five living in developing countries. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 80 percent of the global burden of disease is water-related.

Second, there is an economic component to drinking water and sanitation access. At any moment, around half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by people suffering from water-borne disease. Beyond the costs that work absenteeism implies, there is a burden carried by family members who must also miss work to care for loved ones. In some societies, as we have heard, women and girls spend long hours walking to collect water, forgoing education or lucrative activities.

A third issue is that of security. Having to travel to remote areas for water collection renders women and girls vulnerable to sexual violence or attack. In communities where there is not enough water for all, conflict and violence can erupt.

Now, the global community has determined that access to safe, clean water and sanitation is a human right. But world leaders must consider the other ways in which fresh water is used if they wish to design programs that can balance competing needs.

As we discussed in the previous section, about 70 percent of fresh water supplies are used in agriculture, and 20 percent are used in energy and industry, leaving just about 10 percent for domestic and personal use.

Now, agriculture depends on water for crop cultivation, growing livestock, and transporting goods to market. In developing countries, agriculture remains an important source of income for rural families and contributes to food security for the broader population.

With undernutrition a leading cause of childhood illness, agriculture contributes directly to child health. But practices such as irrigation can waste water, while fertilizers or pesticides can pollute water, leading to conflict between agricultural producers and domestic users.

Water is also an integral component of energy production, whether for hydropower, for cooling, or for extracting and refining energy sources. Promoting households' energy security saves time, creates economic opportunities, and improves health.

For example, traditional energy solutions that rely on fires for cooking put household members at risk for burns and respiratory infections caused by indoor smoke. Industries as diverse as mining, textiles, and electronics depend on water for production.

In emerging economies, expanding industries consume ever-greater amounts of water. Industry fuels economic growth and population well-being, but careless water use by industry can create tensions with domestic users and farmers.

Despite the ever-greater demands for water resources, the fact is that the volume of fresh water on the planet is relatively fixed, meaning that there will be less water available per capita as time goes by. At the same time, ground water sources,

which can be slow to replenish, are being rapidly depleted or polluted, leading to scenarios in which there will be less water available or suitable for all to use.

Thus policymakers must consider future scarcity in developing programs to protect the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. In considering the way forward, let me propose several options.

First, governments, communities, and the agriculture, energy, and industrial sectors should work together to implement watershed-level protections to safeguard water sources and reduce downstream water pollution.

Second, water governance schemes should incorporate the perspectives of all who have an interest in using water, whether for agriculture, energy, health, or education, to ensure that those who require access to safe drinking water's voices are heard.

Considering that fresh water is a finite resource, policymakers should stimulate technical innovation to reduce water pollution, promote water conservation, improve efforts to safely reuse waste water, and originate low-cost and sustainable water and sanitation delivery mechanisms.

Finally, policymakers should encourage the non-government sector to focus on water and sanitation. In the United States, government agencies, including USAID, the Department of State, and the CDC, have played an enormous role in improving global access to safe drinking water and sanitation, but private citizens, through volunteer groups, universities, and business ventures, can also play an important role.

Improving access to drinking water and sanitation remains a serious global challenge, with health, economic development, and security implications. In protecting the right to water and sanitation, policymakers must recognize the competing demands for fresh water, and identify sustainable ways to protect and share precious resources for the common good. Legal, political, technical, educational, and research solutions can help pave a path forward to address this important challenge.

Thank you.

[The statement of Dr. BLISS. follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. KATHERINE BLISS

Katherine Bliss, Ph.D.  
Director, Project on Global Water Policy  
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)  
March 3, 2011  
2118 Rayburn House Office Building

#### **Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation** **Katherine E. Bliss, Ph.D.**

Chairman Wolf and Chairman McGovern, it is an honor to be here today at this hearing on "Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation". Thank you for the opportunity to share with you and the Committee some thoughts and recommendations regarding global water and sanitation challenges in light of the recent recognition at the United Nations that access to water and sanitation are human rights. First, let me outline some of the key elements of the global challenge related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program's 2010 Update reports that 884 million people lack access to an improved drinking water source. Beyond that, at least 2.6 billion do not have access to improved sanitation facilities, such as a toilet or even a pit latrine. In 2000 world leaders came together at the Millennium Summit to ratify the Millennium Declaration and articulate a series of global commitments focused on raising living standards for the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations over the next decade and a half. Shortly thereafter the UN released the Millennium Development Goals. Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals is to ensure environmental sustainability. Recognizing the close links among water, sanitation and well-being, Goal 7 has, among its targets, the commitment to cut in half the proportion of people without access to an improved water source and the proportion of people without access to improved sanitation facilities by the year 2015.

According to data released at the 2010 high-level plenary on the Millennium Development Goals held in New York last September, most countries are doing relatively well in reaching the water target; however, the world is not on track to meet the sanitation target. Water and sanitation challenges are particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where the percentage of people

without access to drinking water or sanitation continues to be high, and in Asia, where the sheer number of people without access to water and sanitation is staggering. Reasons for the failure of countries to reach the water and sanitation targets include the costs of implementing water and sanitation services, the cost of maintaining existing systems, and a lack of political will in some areas to prioritize water and sanitation interventions. Over the last eleven years national governments and donor governments, including the United States, have made significant progress in addressing water and sanitation deficiencies in developing countries, but the challenge persists.

Why should global leaders be concerned about population access to water and sanitation? First, the world's **health** is intimately linked to water and sanitation access. At least 1.5 million people die from water related disease every year, and the vast majority of those who die are children under the age of 5. Indeed, the WHO estimates that more than 80% of the global burden of disease – that is, all diseases -- is water related. Thus, promoting access to safe drinking water is integral to efforts to ensure child survival, to reducing rates of diarrheal disease, and reducing the rates of other, hygiene associated diseases, such as respiratory infections, which are among the leading causes of death among children, and trachoma, which causes blindness. Moreover, water is clearly integral to the global fight against HIV/AIDS, as it has been shown that patients with compromised immune systems will have a better response to their anti-retroviral therapies if they have safe drinking water to use in taking their medications and in carrying out their daily activities.

Second there is an **economic** component to improved drinking water and sanitation access. At any given moment around half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by people suffering from waterborne diseases. Beyond the obvious costs that work absenteeism implies for employees and employers there is also a significant economic burden carried by the family member who must also miss work, stay home or travel to distant health care facilities to care for loved ones. Women and girls in many societies must spend long hours walking to collect and then haul water, meaning they must sometimes forego educational and work opportunities to provide water for the households in which they live. The WHO estimates that up to 40 billion working hours are lost each year in Africa to water gathering efforts. When parents are reluctant to send daughters to school because local educational institutions do not count on private, sex segregated bathroom facilities, girls lose out, as well. The Water and Sanitation Program administered by the World Bank recently reported that inadequate investments in sanitation facilities cost India \$53.8 billion dollars per year, with losses due to health care expenditures, opportunity costs, and stunted growth in the tourism sector.

A third -- and closely related -- issue is that of **security**: Having to travel great distances or to remote areas for water collection renders women and girls vulnerable to sexual violence or attack. In communities where there is not enough water for all, conflict and even violence can erupt. This has happened in Somalia, where armed gangs control and limit local populations' access to pumps or other water supplies. In Yemen, in 2006, local media reported protracted armed clashes between two tribal groups over access to a water well, leading to migration and arrests on both sides.

In the summer of 2010 the UN General Assembly recognized "safe and clean water and sanitation as a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights." In the fall of 2010 the UN Human Rights Council affirmed this position with resolution 7/22, which emphasized that "international human rights law instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child entail obligations in relation to access to safe drinking water and sanitation." The global community has now determined that access to safe, clean water and sanitation is a human right. As it considers how to put this recognition into practice, there are a number of issues to keep in mind, particularly if the issues of health, economic development, and security are kept in focus. But before I go on, let me put the question of domestic water use into broader context. Simply put, the amount of water dedicated to household water use, domestic water use, or personal water use, which is what we are referring to when we talk about access to safe drinking water and sanitation, makes up only a small proportion of the uses to which global freshwater supplies are put. Proportions vary across region and by country, but on average, according to data from 2001, about 70% of freshwater supplies are used in agriculture and 20% are used for energy and industry, leaving 10% for domestic use.

As I've already mentioned, the majority of freshwater supplies are used for agricultural production, whether it is cultivating crops, growing livestock, or transporting goods to market. In much of the developing world, where drinking water and sanitation challenges are most acute, agriculture is an important source of income for families and communities. The availability of fresh food in local markets is also an important determinant of nutrition. With under-nutrition a leading cause of childhood illness in the developing world, agriculture plays an important role in promoting child health. Given the importance of agriculture to economic development, food security, and nutrition, it is important that policymakers working to improve drinking water and sanitation access be mindful of the important role water in agriculture plays with respect to health, economic development, and food security.

A second point to keep in mind is that water is an integral component of energy production and industrial output. Water can be a source of energy, as in hydropower, or it can be used for cooling energy production facilities, such as power plants. Water is also used in producing and refining energy sources, such as oil. Industries as diverse as mining, textile manufacturing, and electronic components all depend on water for production. While industrial production may not generate significant demand for water supplies in some developing countries, in emerging economies such as India and China expanding industries consume an ever greater amount of water, fueling economic growth and improving well-being for residents but also leading to tensions with farmers and domestic users in some cases. Certainly promoting access to improved energy sources is also a key element of economic development, freeing household members from firewood gathering chores and allowing more time for educational activities or entrepreneurial pursuits. The link between improved energy access and health is clear at the household level, where reliance on traditional methods of heating and cooking, such as burning wood or other biomass, put families – especially women and children – at risk for burns as well as acute respiratory infections and pulmonary disorders associated with exposure to



indoor smoke. Thus, as with agriculture, it is also important to consider the relevance of water for energy when we talk about water in the context of health, economic development and security.

Given the many competing demands for and uses of water, it is striking to realize that the amount of freshwater available for the world to use is diminishing. This does not mean that the world's total volume of fresh water is disappearing. The volume of freshwater on the planet is relatively fixed, yet because of population growth and changing lifestyles, there are ever greater and more complex demands for the fresh water that is available. Also, as ground water sources are depleted or polluted and as dam and irrigation schemes in some regions have disrupted ecosystem processes, there is less water available in areas where it has traditionally been a reliable source for needy communities. It will be imperative that policymakers not only consider competing uses of water in protecting the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, but that they be mindful of water scarcity scenarios, as well.

The issues, then, will be to protect water quality and quantity, to ensure that those who need access to safe drinking water have it, as is their right, and to protect access to water for other productive sectors, such as energy and agriculture, which are linked to similarly important health-related, economically-important, and security relevant activities. In considering the way forward, several potential solutions come to mind:

- First, to ensure water quality, governments, communities, the agricultural, energy, and industrial sectors, must agree to legally-binding watershed protections to both protect water sources and reduce the potential for pollution of water supplies downstream. Regulatory measures to ensure water is priced appropriately, while ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable populations have affordable and sustainable access for their drinking water needs, may also be considered to create incentives for water conservation and to reduce waste.
- Second, governance processes at the local and national levels should be developed to incorporate the voices and perspectives of all who have an interest in using water – whether for agriculture, energy, and health, education or women's empowerment. This could involve strengthening local water councils, ensuring that women are incorporated into institutions that oversee water management, or creating national level structures to promote inter-sectoral cooperation and communication and ensure that those communities that require improved access to safe drinking water are about to make their views and needs known.
- Third, national governments, donor governments, and international organizations should encourage research and technical innovation to reduce pollution from agricultural and industrial processes, promote water conservation in business and production activities, and promote the development and dissemination of low-cost and sustainable water and sanitation delivery mechanisms to fulfill the needs of the most vulnerable sectors.
- Fourth, it will be essential to strengthen the political will of national governments around the world to invest in facilities to deliver the safe, clean water and sanitation to which their citizens have a recognized right. The Millennium Development Goals and the recent recognition of water and sanitation access as human rights are an important step. Efforts such as UN Water's Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water and the work of the Water and Sanitation Program's Economics of Sanitation Initiative also help make the case regarding the positive financial impacts of water and sanitation investments.
- Fifth, it is important to develop mechanisms to ensure coordination of efforts in developing countries, both within national governments and among donor governments. Not only is it important that the water, health, agriculture, energy, industrial, and education sectors communicate and coordinate around water usage and access, but the international groups that seek to address the developing world's water challenges must also do a better job of coordinating among themselves to avoid duplication of effort and to reduce the burden of coordination placed on host countries and communities.
- Finally, it is important to incorporate a diverse array of sectors into the effort to address global water challenges. In the United States, government agencies such as the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have contributed significantly to improving global access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The 2005 Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act has made advancing work on drinking water and sanitation an important element of U.S. foreign policy. However, U.S. citizens, through private voluntary organizations, through NGOs, and through private sector entities, have made significant contributions to resolving global water challenges, as well. One group that contributes enormously to overseas work on water, sanitation, and hygiene is the U.S. higher education sector, which carries out independent research regarding what works, builds capacity through training programs, and partners with universities in developing countries to identify and implement solutions to drinking water and sanitation access problems. Policymakers

should strengthen opportunities for U.S.-based volunteers, businesses, researchers, and educators to contribute to global work on water, sanitation and hygiene.

In conclusion, the fact that nearly 900 million people lack access to safe drinking water and more than 2.6 billion lack access to improved sanitation facilities is serious global challenge with health, economic, and security implications. Global leaders, through the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have now recognized that access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a human right. Other sectors, such as agriculture, industry, and energy, also rely on freshwater sources for production and contribute to health, economic growth, and security, as well. It is important for policymakers to recognize the many competing demands for freshwater and to identify sustainable ways to protect and share precious resources for the greater good. Legal, political, technical, educational, and research solutions can help chart a path forward to address this important issue.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much. Mr. Oldfield?

**STATEMENT OF JOHN OLDFIELD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, WASH  
ADVOCACY INITIATIVE**

Mr. OLDFIELD. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to Congressman Frank Wolf for convening us today. And first of all, thank you both for your co-sponsorship of last Congress' Water For the World Act as well.

We had hoped to have Matt Damon testify on behalf of the NGO community here. I think he's from Massachusetts. I am not Matt Damon, and I am as disappointed as you are in that fact, but I'm going to go ahead and push ahead.

And also, before I begin, I want to acknowledge Tom Lantos, an outstanding American who inspired many in America and around the world throughout his life, throughout his career, to join him in the fight for what is right. I am personally honored to testify before a commission bearing his name, and I am confident that he would be proud of the work of this commission today.

We at the WASH Advocacy Initiative are grateful for Congress' bipartisan leadership on the water and sanitation issue. Many members of the Human Rights Commission itself, of course, have been strong supporters of the Water For the Poor Act over the last few years, including yourself and Congressman Blumenauer.

My personal commitment to water and sanitation actually began in the 1990s, as I was working on democracy and governance programs on behalf of the U.S. Government in Africa.

I learned that democracy requires a great deal of work, and that democracy, even basic security, basic stability, is a struggle for those people fighting to get enough food, fighting to get enough water, fighting to get enough basic health care to keep their kids alive, in school, healthy enough, strong enough to learn.

I was thus drawn personally to advocating for safe, affordable, sustainable access to drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene for the greatest number of people in developing countries.

Water, as we have heard today, is a fundamental human necessity in its own right, but also vital to sustainable progress in health, in hunger, in nutrition, in education, in gender equity, poverty alleviation, and so on.

More than 25 diseases caused by inadequate water and inadequate sanitation create about 10 percent of the global public health burden. These diseases kill 2 million people a year, conservative estimate, 90 percent of whom are kids under five. And that's way more kids that die from unsafe water than from HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria combined.

They also, which might be of interest to the food security group, trigger 50 percent of the world's malnutrition. These diseases are preventable. This is preventable. Pint-size coffins suck. The world does not need to bury millions more of its kids in the coming years when we essentially know how to prevent water-borne disease today.

Safe water is medicine. Toilets are medicine. Hand-washing with soap is medicine. And each dollar that we or others invest in the water and sanitation sector leads to an 8:1, an 8x multiple return on investment from, primarily, reduced health care costs and time savings.

The WASH Advocacy Initiative is a collaborative advocacy effort here in DC, designed to get safe, affordable, and sustainable WASH -- water, sanitation, and hygiene -- to more people in developing countries. We are proud to be fully supported financially by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Wallace Genetic Foundation, and by four non-profits: Water.org, The Global Water Challenge, CARE, and Water For People.

Many organizations working actively on WASH advocacy are here in the room today, including the Millennium Water Alliance, PSI, PATH, Catholic Relief Services, and those of us on the witness stand here.

Whether it is described as a human right or simply as the right thing to do, the important goal is that everyone across the globe has access to safe, affordable, and sustainable drinking water and sanitation.

So the message that we want to leave you with is that the global water and sanitation challenge is solvable. It's being solved, sustainably, by communities all over the world. And we at WASH Advocates are simply doing what we can to accelerate those solutions.

Thus, we humbly request the U.S. Government to, first of all, preserve funding for foreign assistance, while providing the oversight, of course, to make sure that that funding is well-spent.

Secondly, continue to appropriate funds to fully implement the Water for the Poor Act. A recent report from Water Aid, NRDC, and CARE concludes that the implementation of the Act is moving in the right direction, but not fast enough. The WASH sector, as a quick aside, vigorously applauds the appointment of Chris Holmes as global water coordinator at USAID as a significant step forward.

Third, we would ask that the U.S. Government increase the effectiveness of WASH assistance, provide increased oversight, promote monitoring and evaluation over longer periods of time, promote more interagency and international coordination, and encourage the U.S. Department of State and USAID to develop a true strategy, as we have heard, to implement the Water for the Poor Act.

Lastly, we would ask the U.S. Government, and the Congress in particular, to improve the targeting of WASH assistance by directing as many of these resources as possible to countries in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, where the need for first-time access to WASH is most severe, and frankly where assistance could be particularly transformative.

These are concrete, specific suggestions which we believe will likely catalyze more support from private philanthropists, private foundations, corporations, civic organizations like Rotary International and the Lions' Club International Foundation.

We believe that this will inspire more support from faith-based groups across the United States. We believe that this will encourage powerful grassroots organizations like charity: water and ONE to redouble their efforts for safe water and sanitation.

Our goal today is simply to inspire the U.S., public and private, to do more. This is a genuine leadership opportunity for the United States. It is a great but solvable development challenge which can save millions of lives, unite Americans, and improve the image of the United States abroad.

These are unsure times on Capitol Hill, and far beyond. But here's the deal. No one in this room is worried about our children dying from easily preventable water-borne disease today. Water-related death and disease traditionally have been unavoidable. Let us together make them unacceptable.

Thank you to you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, and to the UUSC for this opportunity. The entire WASH sector is grateful for your support and interest, and we look forward to working with you.

[The statement of Mr. Oldfield follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN OLDFIELD

**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress**

*Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation*

March 3, 2011

Testimony by:

John Oldfield, Managing Director

## WASH Advocacy Initiative

### *Safe Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for All*

Thank you to co-Chairs Congressman Jim McGovern and Congressman Frank Wolf for convening us, and for your cosponsorship of last Congress' Water for the World Act. I also want to also acknowledge Tom Lantos, an outstanding American who through his life and career inspired many in America and around the world to join him in the fight for what is right. I am honored to testify before a commission bearing his name and I am confident he would be proud of this Commission's work today. We at the WASH Advocacy Initiative are grateful for Congress' bipartisan leadership on the water and sanitation issue. Many members of the Human Rights Commission have been strong supporters of the Water for the Poor Act over the years.

My personal commitment to water and sanitation began in the 1990s working on democracy and governance programs throughout Africa. I learned that democracy requires a great deal of work, and that democracy - and even basic security and stability - is a struggle for those people fighting to get enough food, water, and healthcare to keep their children alive, strong, and in school. I was thus drawn to advocating for safe, affordable, and sustainable access to drinking water and sanitation for the greatest number of people worldwide. Water is a fundamental human necessity in its own right and vital to sustainable progress in health, education, gender equity, and poverty alleviation.

There remain almost one billion people on the planet without safe drinking water, and 2.6 billion without adequate sanitation facilities. More than 25 diseases caused by inadequate water and sanitation create 10% of the global public health burden. They kill two million people a year (90% of whom are children under five: more children than from AIDS, TB and malaria combined) and trigger 50% of the world's malnutrition. This is preventable. Pint-size coffins suck.

The world does not need to bury millions more of its children in the coming years when we know how to prevent waterborne disease today. And each dollar invested in water and sanitation leads to an 8:1 return from reduced healthcare costs and time savings. The WASH Advocacy Initiative is a collaborative advocacy effort designed to get safe, affordable, and sustainable drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene to more people in developing countries. We are fully supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Wallace Genetic Foundation, and by four nonprofits: Water.org, the Global Water Challenge, Water For People, and CARE. Many more organizations working actively on WASH advocacy are here in the room today including WaterAid, PSI, Millennium Water Alliance, PATH.

Whether it is described as a human right or simply as the right thing to do, the important goal is that everyone across the globe has access to safe, affordable, and sustainable drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. The message we want to leave you with is: the global water and sanitation challenge is solvable, it is being solved sustainably by communities all over the world, and we are doing what we can to accelerate those solutions.

We humbly request the U.S. government to:

- 1) Preserve funding for foreign assistance, while providing the oversight necessary to ensure it is well-spent.
- 2) Continue to appropriate funds to fully implement the Water for the Poor Act. A recent report from WaterAid, NRDC, and CARE concludes that the implementation of the Act is moving in the right direction, but not fast enough. The WASH sector applauds the appointment of Chris Holmes as Global Water Coordinator at USAID as a significant step forward.
- 3) Increase the effectiveness of WASH assistance, e.g.:
  - a. Provide increased oversight
  - b. Promote monitoring and evaluation over longer periods of time
  - c. Promote more interagency coordination
  - d. Encourage the U.S. Department of State and USAID to develop a true strategy to fully implement the Water for the Poor Act
- 4) Improve the targeting of WASH assistance by directing as many resources as possible to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America where the need for first-time access to WASH is most severe and where assistance could be particularly transformative. These actions will likely:
  - catalyze more support from foundations, corporations, and civic organizations like Rotary International and the Lions Club International Foundation
  - inspire more support from faith-based groups around the United States
  - encourage powerful grassroots organizations like charity: water and ONE to do even more for safe water

Our goal today is to inspire the U.S. to do more. This is a genuine leadership opportunity for the U.S. to seize. It is a grave but solvable challenge which can save millions of lives, unite Americans, and improve the image of the U.S. abroad. These are unsure times on Capitol Hill and beyond. But none of us are worried about our children dying from easily preventable waterborne disease today. Water-related death and disease have traditionally been unavoidable; let us together make them unacceptable.

Thank you to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and its co-Chairs Congressman McGovern and Congressman Wolf, and to the UUSC for the opportunity. The entire WASH sector is grateful for your support and interest and we look forward to working with you.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much. And I thank all of you for being here. As I mentioned earlier, I focus an awful lot of attention on the issue of food security. Having access to water is obviously an essential part of that. But I like to say that hunger is a political condition. It's not like we can't grow the food, or can't find the food, or don't have the infrastructure or don't have the resources to make sure that every single person on this planet has their right to food.

It's just that we don't have the political will. And this falls under that category. Ultimately, if we don't move forward with our goals, it is because of a lack of political will, not because we can't figure out how to solve this. This is solvable. And I think that all of you have kind of provided some inspiration here that should compel us to move forward.

Let me just ask a few questions here to Reverend Schulz and Reverend McCullough. Those of us in Congress of both parties, we get criticized all the time because people think we are spending too much money on foreign aid. Obviously, that's not the case; we know what the statistic is. But people always ask "Why are you spending money over there when you could spend money here? Why are we building schools someplace else? We should be building more schools here in the United States."

And so keeping with that line, why should U.S. taxpayers invest in water projects internationally, when we heard earlier and are going to hear tomorrow about some of the deficiencies of U.S. water infrastructure here in the United States?

I think, as we advocate for these programs, that's kind of a predictable question we are going to get. We have a water infrastructure in the United States that is in deep need of repair. And I'm from Massachusetts. We have water infrastructure that's older than a lot of other states in this country, and that's in deep need of repair at costs of tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars.

So what do you say to people who ask that question?

Rev. SCHULZ. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think we described over and over today how interdependent the United States is, interconnected. And its interests are interconnected with those of the rest of the world. We also need to recognize that this right is one that is to be progressively realized, and it is not a simple matter of the government handing out all the solutions or underwriting all the solutions.

There certainly is a role for the private sector here. I cited to you four major corporations, international corporations, that have recognized their obligations in this respect. So I think that to juxtapose the domestic against the international is a false dichotomy.

It's not necessary. We recognize that we can make a significant difference internationally with a relatively modest amount of money. And we certainly recognize that we also have obligations to see that our needs are met here at home, the needs of the most marginalized are met here at home. That is not solely a question of government's responsibility. It is government's responsibility to see that it happens, but there are a wide variety of creative ways to make that possible.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Reverend McCullough?

Rev. McCULLOUGH. First of all, I'm feeling as though I've got to establish my Massachusetts credentials as well. Having been born in Massachusetts, and served churches in Boston and Taunton, Weymouth and Willbraham, and having been able to pronounce appropriately and correctly Worcester all of my life --

Cochairman McGOVERN. You're one of the few people that can.

Rev. McCULLOUGH. I think I'm good with you.

Cochairman McGOVERN. When people call my office, sometimes I'll answer the phone and if they're critical -- you know, I won't identify myself. I'll just say "Can I take down your name, and I'll let the congressman know where you're from?"

And when they say "Well, I live in his district," I say "What city or town?" And when they say "wore-chester" I know that I have an impostor on the line. So I appreciate your correct pronunciation.

Rev. McCULLOUGH. Thank you for the question. And it's a very important question. We deal with it all the time, again, as an organization that serves both internationally as well as nationally. And there's always the dichotomy of choice that so many people feel every day.

The reality is that, as Americans, we are part of a larger global community. And we discover, I think, more and more every day, the ways in which our lives are, in fact, intertwined. The mobility of Americans to travel to many places around the world, as you described yourself in your own opening commentary about the many and varied places in which you have traveled -- we find that Americans do, in fact, travel and live and work in the midst of a wide variety of settings.

And not always in the context of tourism, and not always in the situations of high employment. There are many Americans who choose to live in other places around the world sacrificially. That certainly is part of the character of the life of the churches that I represent, many of which, again, deploy persons serving in mission service and as development experts.

And so there really is, I think, a very effective integration of Americans in the midst of global society. And I think we have to push ourselves to understand that, and to wrestle with what that means.

So I think that the argument can be made for why we do, in fact, need to increase our commitment in foreign aid, and in understanding. We need to increase, I think, our sense of understanding that God has created us, not to be islands unto ourselves, but intentionally created us to be in relationship with one another, and to be transformative in those relationships.

And so what we've been discussing today really are merely patterns and methodologies, ways and means for helping to improve the quality of our lives as human beings upon this planet, and really helping all of our nations, including the United States, to fulfill the vision and the dreams that are held most effectively by its people.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I thank you both for the answer. And the reason why I asked the question is because I think it always needs to be asked, and that people like you, who are incredibly eloquent, I like to hear you answer it.

Now, with the advances in technology, who knows who's going to see this. But it's a question that's on a lot of people's minds, and I really do appreciate the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and Church World Service on these and so many other humanitarian issues.

I mean, I rely very heavily on the materials that you send, and also some of the people that you have working on important projects all throughout the world. So I appreciate that very much.

Dr. Bliss, let me raise another issue here. You know, some of the challenges with regard to making sure that people have water as a right involve this whole issue of climate change. And there are serious challenges that are happening now and are going to happen in the future as a result of climate change.

And they go beyond just making sure somebody can dig a well, or that somebody has access to clean water right at this particular moment. They are long-term challenges. Where there was water, there's no longer water. Where there was snow on mountaintops, there is no snow on mountaintops.

I remember seeing in Kenya -- I was driving to visit a school feeding program, and someone pointed out to me, "There's Mount Kilimanjaro." And I kept thinking of The Snows of Kilimanjaro. Where are the snows? And there's only a little bit of snow left. And they were explaining to me what that meant for the valleys in terms of lack of water and all that kind of stuff.

But are the current issues of making sure that people have access to water right now overshadowing the greater challenges that we need to be also dealing with, with regard to climate change? Or are we dealing with both of them?

Dr. BLISS. Thank you. I think in considering current and projected scenarios related to climate change, the important issue to consider is to incorporate understandings of how climate change will affect water supplies for domestic use, for energy production, and for agriculture, into current scenarios and into long-range planning, using data that is available now and projections into the future.

We know that projections suggest that there will be greater flood cycles, greater cycles of drought, so that water that is currently available in one place may not be a reliable source into the future.

To the extent that national governments and local governments can begin a process, at this point, of identifying their areas of vulnerability, both in rural areas and in urban areas, and developing toolkits that will enable them to understand what the projected areas of scarcity will be, what that may imply for agriculture, what that may imply for migration if people are going to be in a position of having to move, then those public entities will be in a better position to work with civil society and with the private sector to anticipate some of the potential challenges, and put resources in place, and develop planning scenarios now to avoid greater problems in the future.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you. Mr. Oldfield, thank you very much for your testimony. Even though you are not Matt Damon, I thought that it was still very compelling, and I appreciate your work.

This is a question I probably should have asked Dr. Salzberg when he was here, but you touched on it a little bit and I want to put it to you. The GAO concluded that countries deemed, quote, "high priority," by the State Department and USAID are not necessarily among those that are in the greatest need for water and sanitation assistance.

Specifically, they found that the countries designated as high priority for FY2009 excluded four of the ten countries that the UN data show with the greatest need for access to improved water sources, as well as seven of the ten countries that UN data show with the greatest need for access to improved sanitation.

I guess the question is, why does the United States make higher investments in countries with greater access to clean water and sanitation than some of the needier ones?

Mr. OLDFIELD. That is a great question. And I, of course, can't speak on behalf of the decision makers at the Department of State developing the strategy to fully implement the Water for the Poor Act, but you're absolutely right about that recent GAO report.

Many of the 31 countries designated as high priority countries for the Water for the Poor Act do not, in fact, have the greatest need for safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. In fact, the sanitation data from 2009 indicates that the U.S., through the Water for the Poor Act, gives more than eight times as much money per capita to countries where the need for sanitation is less than 25 percent of their population as the United States does to those where the need is more than 25 percent.

So you're right. There is a disparity for any number of geopolitical reasons, and other reasons, I would imagine. The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 focuses, in fact, on what you're suggesting, on where the need is greatest. We would ask Congress to essentially take you up on your offer, to take into account more explicitly the level of need, country by country. A reasonable target, perhaps, would be that 70 percent of WASH -- water, sanitation, and hygiene -- assistance be targeted to the poorest countries.

On an encouraging note, African countries now receive significantly more, probably five times more WASH funding than they did in 2005, thanks to stronger



appropriations language directing those funds to Africa. And we would encourage you to continue to accelerate that trend to the extent you can.

If I might take 30 seconds and tie that targeting question back into your first question about what I agree is a false dichotomy between the U.S. and international spending, the WASH coalition is not up here asking, necessarily, for more money to fully implement the Water for the Poor Act. That more money would not at all be unwelcome, but that's not the whole answer.

We are talking about more effective ways of investing U.S. taxpayer dollars, and better targeting. We are not talking about simply drilling more holes, building more latrines. We are talking about more sustainable programming design for the long run, more capacity-building, more decentralized ownership, and then more focus on those countries of greatest need where, frankly, a million dollars can have a very, very transformative impact.

Not just from a direct services provision of water and sanitation facilities, but on the lives of the community, on their health, on getting more girls in school, on making sure that the children in that community have enough safe drinking water with which to consume their food so they don't waste those calories out the other end.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I appreciate that, and I think that obviously is an important factor. It's not just money. It's making sure we're spending it wisely, and getting the biggest bang for our buck. And I assume that's what the United Nations is going to help us understand through the reports that are going to be issued as to what works, and what are the best practices.

I want to thank everybody for being here. I really appreciate your being part of this hearing on this incredibly important topic, and I would look forward to any follow-up materials that you want to provide us. And again, thank you so much.

[Whereupon, at 11:38 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

# **APPENDIX**

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)  
Hearing Notice**

**Realizing the Right to Safe Water and Sanitation**

**Thursday, March 3, 2011  
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
2118 Rayburn HOB**

Please join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for a hearing on the right to safe water and sanitation. According to the World Health Organization, 884 million people in the world—roughly 1/8 of the global population—do not have access to safe water. Moreover, 2.6 billion people do not have access to adequate sanitation, and 1.8 million children die every year as a result of water-borne diseases.

This hearing will explore the impact of recent UN resolutions declaring the right to safe drinking water and sanitation a universal human right. We will also examine the role of U.S. foreign policy with respect to water issues and prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals; the implementation of the Water for the Poor Law; and global challenges facing vulnerable people around the world regarding access to safe water and sanitation.

**To discuss these issues we welcome the following witnesses:**

**Panel I:**

Dr. Aaron Salzberg, Special Coordinator for Water Resources, U.S. Department of State

**Panel II:**

Catarina de Albuquerque, UN Human Rights Council Independent Expert on the Issue of Human Rights Obligations Related to Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

**Panel III:**

Rev. William Schulz, President and CEO, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Rev. John McCullough, Executive Director and CEO, Church World Service

Dr. Katherine Bliss, Director, Project on Global Water Policy, CSIS

John Oldfield, Managing Director, WASH Advocacy Initiative

If you have any questions, please contact Ari Levin (Rep. McGovern) or Elizabeth Hoffman (Rep. Wolf) at 202-225-8097.

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress  
Co-Chair, TLHRC

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress  
Co-Chair, TLHRC