

**UN independent expert on the human rights to water and sanitation (Dr. Catarina de Albuquerque) mission to the United States**



February 20, 2011

**Dear colleagues –**

**We are happy to write to you about the UN independent expert on the human rights to water and sanitation (Dr. Catarina de Albuquerque) mission to the United States, taking place Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> to Mar 4, 2011. Your organization played a role in bringing the UN IE to the U.S. She will be holding hearings on U.S. foreign assistance aid in the water and sanitation sector, domestic water and sanitation services in the U.S., U.S. human rights obligations, and water resources management as it affects drinking water and sanitation in the U.S. - with regard to access to safe, sufficient, affordable water and sanitation services. Please participate in the mission by passing on information about the hearings to your constituency.**

The IE will visit affected communities and officials in Washington, D.C., Maryland, Massachusetts, and California. Dra. Catarina de Albuquerque will travel with Ms. Yoonie Kim, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Ms. Lucinda O'Hanlon is the staff for the IE, and is coordinating the mission for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Public hearings will be held in Washington, DC, MA, and CA. Affected community representatives from communities in Alabama, California, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and other states will present testimony about the human right to water in person. Non recognized tribes in CA, who's lands were flooded by Lake Shasta, will also give testimony, and the IE will visit their lands in Redding, CA. The IE will visit communities in the Central Valley in CA, on Cape Cod, in Boston, Edmonston, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. She will also visit homeless encampments and farm worker housing. Many more groups will submit written testimony. The IE will also meet with officials at the federal, state and municipal levels, civil society NGOs, academics, and others to hear information about access to services, and in particular, about discrimination in the water and sanitation sector. The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. Congress will hold a hearing on U.S. foreign policy and assistance and the human right to water during the mission in Washington, DC.

The IE will receive testimony from affected communities, their representatives, and civil society in the three jurisdictions she will visit. However, the hearings will only last for 2 hours, so we are encouraged to submit information to the IE in writing, keeping in mind the focus of the mission on non discrimination. This information could include the principle challenges you perceive in ensuring safe access to drinking water and sanitation, proposals of issues or situations requiring special attention by the IE, examples of good practices, and recommendations of how to improve a challenging situation.

Written submissions to the IE:

Written submissions to the IE on the topic of the mission can be made to:

[iewater@ohchr.org](mailto:iewater@ohchr.org) (encouraged) or addressed to

Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

ESCR Section

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In person testimony to the IE:

The IE will receive testimony from affected communities, their representatives, and civil society in the three jurisdictions she will visit. However, they will only last for 2 hours each, so we strongly encourage you to submit information to the independent expert in writing in advance, keeping in mind the focus of the mission. This information could include the principle challenges you perceive in ensuring safe access to drinking water and sanitation, proposals of issues or situations requiring special attention by the Independent Expert, and recommendations of how to improve the situation. For security, the representative must RSVP to attend the hearings.

Washington D.C.:

Public testimony will be taken at the United Nations Information Center, located at 1775 K Street, Washington, D.C.

- **22 February at 16:00 (4PM)**, affected communities, civil society organizations working on WASH / foreign assistance policy and environmental issues.
- **23 February at 16:00 (4PM)**, affected communities and human rights civil society organizations working on economic, social and cultural rights as well as issues related to non-discrimination.
- **24 February at 16:00 (4PM)**, professional associations and academics working on water and sanitation services and human rights.

**RSVP name of your representative, name of organization, local contact information, and topic of testimony to: [iewater@ohchr.org](mailto:iewater@ohchr.org).**

Massachusetts:

- **25 February at 15:00 (3:00 PM)**, Church on the Hill, 140 Bowdoin Street, Beacon Hill, <http://www.churchonthehillboston.org/map.html>, affected communities and civil

society organizations working on the human right to water and sanitation, drinking water quality, and green infrastructure / water.

- **26 February at 12:30-2:30** Public Testimony, Auditorium, Alchemy Farm Neighborhood Association, 237 HATCHVILLE RD, East Falmouth, affected communities and civil society organizations .

**RSVP name of your representative, name of organization, local contact information, and topic of testimony to: at [iewater@ohchr.org](mailto:iewater@ohchr.org), with cc: Patricia Jones, UUSC, at [pjones@uusc.org](mailto:pjones@uusc.org). We will update RSVP's with location of testimony.**

#### California

- **28 February at 17:00 (5 PM)**, Capitol Complex, room TBD, affected communities and civil society organizations, tribes, environmental organizations

**RSVP name of your representative, name of organization, local contact information, and topic of testimony to: [iewater@ohchr.org](mailto:iewater@ohchr.org), cc: Debbie Davis, Environmental Justice Coalition on Water, at [deborah.s.davis@gmail.com](mailto:deborah.s.davis@gmail.com). We will update RSVP's with location of testimony.**

#### Washington, D.C.

- **3 March at 10:00-11:30 AM**, hearing, Tom Lantos Commission for Human Rights, US Congress, **Rayburn House Office Building Room 2118** (not public testimony, but public welcome – arrive in time to get through security).
- **4 March at 12:00 noon**, Press conference, United Nations Information Center, located at 1775 K Street, Washington, D.C.

**RSVP name of reporter, name of publication, local contact information, to: Yoonie Kim, at [iewater@ohchr.org](mailto:iewater@ohchr.org).**

Thank you!

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