

## People's Health Movement joins the global campaign for a Right to Water Treaty



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(Cuenca, Ecuador) The People's Health Movement, a coalition of grassroots organizations dedicated to health for all, today joined a new initiative to secure the right to water in a UN treaty. Anil Naidoo from the Blue Planet Project in Canada represents the Friends of the Right to Water and is in Ecuador to join the PHM. "The Right to Health and the Right to Water are indivisible. It makes a lot of sense for the Friends of the Right to Water and the People's Health Movement to work together on this fundamental health and human rights campaign".

Water is sacred and essential for life. Damage to our water sources means sickness and death for our communities. Whether it is contaminated by gold mining, oil drilling, pesticides, deforestation or other industrial activity, water contamination is a fundamental violation of our rights. This UN Treaty would hold states and non-state parties accountable for violations.

Our common right to water is also violated by the corporations that are stealing our water and selling it back to us. When the water of Cochabamba, Bolivia was taken over by Bechtel Corporation, prices rose dramatically. When Coca Cola built a bottling plant in Plachimada, India, robbing groundwater to make their cola, local farmers suffered severe health impacts. With stories like these increasing across the globe, a binding Treaty to protect water from exploitation is essential.

Indigenous communities and other land-based peoples are some of the most strongly affected by the infringement on water rights. "We know that our problem is similar to everyone's," says Angel Valencia of the Yaqui Nation of Sonora Mexico. "When our water is stolen and polluted, this is a violation of our rights." A Water Treaty would support the struggle of the Yaqui people and other indigenous peoples worldwide in the preservation of culture, dignity, and health.

A UN Treaty will not give us clean water. But binding international law with built-in enforcement mechanisms can be a powerful tool to support grassroots struggles against the commodification, privatization and contamination of water. By including the demand for a Water Treaty in the Cuenca Declaration, and by creating a working group on the right to water, PHM can use its platform on health to ensure water for all.

This year is the start of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", and communities around the world desperately need access to safe, sufficient, affordable water. The PHM has already drafted a declaration supporting the movement for a right to water (see [www.righttowater.net](http://www.righttowater.net)). At the Second People's Health Assembly, with representation from peoples worldwide, the People's Health Movement has now joined in this unique opportunity to secure the fundamental collective right to water.