



22 March 2012

## Implementing the Right to Water in the green economy *World Water Day 22 March 2012*

Water Justice activists, including PSI unions, have successfully pushed the human right to water and sanitation (RTW) onto the global agenda. The UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 of 2010 has set the standard for government obligations in ensuring universal access. Many national campaigns insist that governments adopt RTW and implement universal access to water and sanitation. Unions are working with a broad range of allies at global, regional, national and local levels.

Despite this progress, a number of countries and lobby groups are pushing a market-focused agenda.

- The triennial World Water Forum in Marseille in March 2012 continued its market orientation, supported by development banks and national donors, and targeting Rio+20.
- The Earth Summit (Rio+20) in June 2012 may strengthen corporate domination under the Green Economy, with mechanisms such as trading in ecosystem services.<sup>1</sup>
- The lack of political will in climate negotiations leaves space for market-based 'solutions'
- The WTO will seek to expand trade in services to include water and sanitation under the environmental services heading, as will bilateral and regional trade agreements.

The water justice movement is pushing back – thanks to our organising over the years, we are able to mobilise. Workers and trade unions recognise their obligations to support social justice in the sector, and we will do our best to ensure universal access to safe water and sanitation, recognising worker rights.

Among our commitments :

- PSI will work with ITUC, NGOs and others preparing the Rio+20 Summit to ensure that water and sanitation and other core public services are well defended and that our affiliates understand the false promises under the Green Economy paradigm.<sup>2</sup>
- PSI will support national work to implement the right to water, including public-public and public- community partnerships, public finance and taxation, and labour-management cooperation.
- PSI will support the increasing use of referenda (as in Italy, Uruguay, Colombia, etc.) as a tool to force elected officials to respect the will of the people and to counter the growing corporate lobby in our sectors and in our public institutions. As an example, EPSU members will launch a European Citizens Initiative to collect one million signatures starting April 2012.<sup>3</sup>
- PSI will work to block free trade in public services under WTO. We will continue to resist bilateral trade negotiations which are not in the WTO system, but present similar threats.

<sup>1</sup> The Green Economy concept remains unclear and controversial. Many see corporate attempts to impose market dynamics through valuing, payment and trading of ecosystem services, including in water. Governments should ensure social and environmental sustainability, including with Decent Work and Just Transition towards green jobs, enforceable environmental protections, and more participation in decision-making. PSI supports adoption of the Social Protection Floor and the Financial Transactions Tax proposals. <http://www.ituc-csi.org/rio-20.html>

<sup>2</sup> This week, at UN negotiations in New York, Denmark (as chair of the EU), the UK, Canada and New Zealand are trying to remove the RTW from the Earth Summit. Water Justice activists are mobilising against this, and G77 countries are supportive.

<sup>3</sup> EPSU ECI advocates that water and sanitation be excluded from EU Internal Market rules; EU cease liberalisation of wat/san services, and governments ensure real universal access. <http://www.right2water.eu/>

- PSI will continue to support to our Korean affiliates in their battle for recognition of their basic rights. We oppose the allocation of the 7<sup>th</sup> Water Forum to the government of Korea, which suppresses worker rights, silences civil society and pushes a market orientation for the Green Economy.
- We will join the water justice movement in demanding that the UN convene a global summit on the right to water. The commercial water forum is not an appropriate venue for ministerial negotiations or policy setting. The UN must shed the growing corporate lobby from within its corridors and offices.