



## **Water, workers and our communities: Cooperating for the common good *World Water Day 22 March 2013***

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2013 the “International Year of Water Cooperation”, following its endorsement of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in 2010. Public Services International affiliates around the world are committed to advancing this right in this international year of cooperation, and beyond.

PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli says, “Implementing this human right is the cornerstone of our work in the public water and sanitation sector. PSI member unions are mobilising to strengthen our democracies, to build stronger connections with community groups, to hold our officials accountable and to ensure universal access to quality public services for clean water and sanitation.

“We call for greater cooperation among the many actors involved. We point to the two main groups that are so often overlooked: the community and public service workers and their trade unions. Without their involvement, improvements in the delivery of water and sanitation services are difficult to achieve and typically not sustainable. Workers in the sector need to be supported through better tools and training, and stronger health and safety protections. They need decent jobs, as defined by the International Labour Organization’s Decent Work agenda.”

Pavanelli was recently invited by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to present the views of workers and trade unions in a high-level meeting on water and disasters at the UN headquarters in New York City. She told the forum on 6 March that: “I ask for a more systematic inclusion of workers and trade unions in UN and national and local programmes. We stand for decent work; it is a prerequisite for the post-2015 agenda for the Millennium Development Goals. We must recognise that the best way out of poverty is a decent job. And quality public services, accessible to all, are the basic building blocks of all prosperous societies.”

With climate change causing more extreme weather events, PSI affiliate members will be called on more frequently to put themselves in danger in order to save lives and property. Workers and trade unions insist that their rights be respected, and that they be involved in decision-making around disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

Pavanelli adds, “We must be able to work with community groups, to train with them, to plan with them, and to save lives together. Communities need a better say in the policies and programmes which affect their lives. As we have seen in a number of national referenda, and also in the European Citizens’ Initiative sponsored by PSI’s European arm EPSU, an overwhelming majority of people want well-run quality public water and sanitation services, accessible to all. The privateers should leave the sector.

“Most governments can afford to implement the right to water and sanitation. The problem is that they choose not to. This choice demonstrates a flaw in the democratic processes, as people’s main priority is clearly access to safe water and sanitation.”

Please see Rosa Pavanelli’s full speech to the UN at [http://www.world-psi.org/en/speechPavanelli\\_UNwater-disasters](http://www.world-psi.org/en/speechPavanelli_UNwater-disasters)

See the ECI campaign site at [www.right2water.eu/](http://www.right2water.eu/).