



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

Advisory Committee

Sixth session

17 – 21 January 2011

Item 2 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda

**Requests addressed to the Advisory Committee**

**stemming from Human Rights Council resolutions:**

**Reports currently under consideration by the**

**Advisory Committee: right to food**

**Joint written statement\* submitted by the International Alliance of Women (IAW), the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (OSMTH), the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC), the Worldwide Organization for Women (WOW), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 January 2011]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## Managing Resources to give Peace and Humankind a chance

We support the Millennium Development Goals as stated by the General Assembly, and witness the non-unlimited resources of this single home planet of Human kind.

We fully support the Human Rights Declaration.

We also fully support the UN Convention on International watercourses.

We also witness the following factors:

- A rise in population numbers
- A developing economy, source of growing expectations from the populations in non-developed countries as well as in developing countries. These expectations concern not only consumer goods, but also an increase in consumption of animal proteins, water and energy.
- Climate and environmental issues have a significant impact on the availability of some of these resources.
- A very significant land price “explosion” since 2008 all over the world (sometimes having more than doubled in the last 9 months)

These factors already have impacted, and in the future might impact even more the relations between communities and states, as securing access to resources for one’s community and/or one’s nation will become more and more crucial, therefore stability and Peace in many regions of the world may well be at risk.

### The main issues

1. **A growing population of more than 6.8 billion, soon to be 9 billion by 2050, who all deserve a decent and safe life. Earth’s population rises roughly by 83 million each year;**

This growing population in itself is creating a greater stress on the available resources, in all 3 basic categories (water, food energy).

2. **The stress on water.**

#### *2.1 limited resources:*

The overall world’s fresh water supplies (roughly 3% of earth’s waters represent 9.25 million trillion gallons, of which 2/3 are in frozen mode (permafrost, glaciers, permanent snow and ice sheets). Only 30.1% (2.78 million trillion gallons) are “ground waters” readily available underground and reserves replenished by surface seepage. Another 0.3% is contained in rivers, plants, animals, atmosphere, lakes and wetlands.

Water is the first requirement (with breathable air) for life support. Our own body is composed of some 80% of water.

Home water pipes cover only 45% of the world’s population

#### *2.2 rising consumption*

Consumption of water is rising and the average American uses at home some 100 gallons each day, while millions elsewhere have less than 5 gallons a day for all purposes.

When their country develops, and hopefully the standard of living of the population increases, the demand for water will likely explode.

Water is not only useful for washing and drinking. It is also critical to grow cattle (1857 gallons<sup>1</sup> per pound of beef-, or 756 gallons per pound of pork- to include water used to grow cattle feeding, cleaning the wastes, and water they drink). Meat demand and consumption is likely to rise exponentially with the betterment of the standard of living of the population in developing countries. Already, we see a change in habits in China, in Brazil and many other countries.

Mass consumption goods demand is also likely to grow fast. Most of these goods require much more water (called “virtual water”) than their own weight: A pair of blue jeans requires 2900 gallons of water<sup>1</sup> to produce, one cotton t-shirt, 766 gallons, one hamburger, 634 gallons, one cup of coffee: 37 gallons!

### **3. The stress on energy and food**

At the same time the population grows and the level of life improves, energy demand rises; and food shifts occur.

From the basic needs, with very low energy consumption in rural undeveloped countries for self-feeding and self-washing, to the very high levels required in the most developed countries (factories, transportation, public and private -including cars, lighting, washers of all kinds, television and medias, leisure activities,).

At the same time, the shift in food expectations explodes, and from local self based food producing to mass food producing (transformation/conservation) and growing of cattle, together with transportation of food –vegetables or meat- require the use of more and more energy. All these issues have very important economic impacts.

Food security (Including - but not limited to - traceability throughout the production/distribution chain) is not only a public health issue, it may also well become – at it already has become - a worldwide and a national security issue.

### **4. The Political and Diplomatic sides- what should be considered?**

While in some nations, access to water, and to clean water, might not yet seem to be a major issue, in some other nations and parts of the world, no betterment of life can be achieved for the population if a secured access to clean water is not provided.

At present, some countries with limited water resources rely on cattle (and corn/wheat) imports to feed their populations, therefore, although saving their local resources, put a greater stress on the water resources of their “providers” (1857 gallons per pound of beef), on top of which must be added the energy consumption to transport the food from its area of production to the area of consumption.

In the not far future, water, land, food and energy will be the under roots of potential conflicts between nations.

Therefore, it is our view that it should be one of the top priorities of all responsible governments, leaders of opinion and decision makers to seriously consider the ways of peacefully addressing these issues on an international consensual basis in order to:

- (a) Secure access to clean water to all human kind

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<sup>1</sup> Reference: 1: Arjen HOEKSTRA and All, UNESCO

(b) Find ways to better use the accessible water supplies and optimize the consumption of water by industry

(c) Develop where and when possible all clean and renewable sources of energy

(d) Reconcile economic, environmental and health issues as partners. A better environment favors a healthier world, bringing healthier consumers who in turn will eventually have more economic power. Environment-friendly energies and industries should be considered.

(e) Secure bilateral and multi-national agreements to better share water, land and energy resources, on an equitable basis, all these in the interest of our Human brotherhood and of our children.

(f) Achieve a better congruence at national levels between energy policy and food policy.

In this process, Civil Society stakeholders, (including NGO's) are assets not to be overlooked.

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