

## Press Release

### **Taxing the common citizens for drinking water will be a gross violation of the human rights**

**October 20, Colombo, Sri Lanka.** We are shocked to hear that Sri Lankans who dig traditional or tube wells to obtain water for drinking, agriculture will have to obtain an annual permit from the Water Resources Board (WRB) at fees ranging from Rs.7,500 to Rs.15,000.

This is nothing other than the implementation of water resource management policy for commodification and privatization of drinking water which was approved by then Cabinet in March 2000 and the draft policy release on 25th July 2002 under the guise of the Asian Development Bank, which was shelved due to the heavy public protest.

The uncontrolled water drawing for commercial and industrial purposes are threat to the environment and future generations. There is no disagreement of regulating ground water resources to prevent overdrawing and pollution. However, the proposed regulations will deny right to water for the people and especially to the poor and marginalized communities.

Water is a recognized human right, which the Government of Sri Lanka supported and endorsed at the United Nations. On 28 July 2010, through [Resolution 64/292](#), the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights.

**Therefore taxing the common citizens for drinking water will be a gross violation of the human rights of the citizens of Sri Lanka.**

Instead of bringing market based solutions such as taxing to prevent over utilization, destruction of water catchments, water resources or dumping of chemicals, fertilizer, insecticides/pesticides, solid or soluble waste, sewage, government should enforce the existing pollution control regulations, environmental impacts assessment mechanisms, environmental protection licenses and the current provision on the Irrigation act and other similar regulations.

We commend the interest of Mr. Bandula Munasinghe, Chairman of the Water Resources Board to protect water resources of the country for future generations as it has become one of the highly endangered natural resources due to its haphazard use and environment pollution.

However, we emphasize that water is not a commodity but a common good and request Mr. Munasingha to stop commodification of water under this proposed amendments. The proposed regulation seems a sugar coated poison when the commodification attempt wrapped with the protection of water.

We therefore demand that water for drinking, livelihood and ecology should be mandated as a right and no such charges should be levied. Further, we state that annual permission are anarchically designed mechanisms to curtail the right of common people and harass them.

Therefore we urge Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva and the Cabinet of Ministers to stop approving this regulation, which will violate the water as a human right of the people in Sri Lanka.

**We demand that any regulatory mechanisms should be democratically set up and no such pricing**

**should be done without sufficient public dialogues.**

**Signed**

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