



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Ettore Balestrero  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations  
and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the  
**54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council - Agenda Item 3, Interactive Dialogue with the  
Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**  
*Geneva, 14 September 2023*

Mister President.

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, and shares the concern that an estimated 2 billion people worldwide do not have regular access to drinking water. Even more unsettling is the fact that the majority of these people lack access to water and sanitation due to human causes, including toxic mining practices, unsustainable irrigation and the overexploitation of aquifers.

Indeed, *“access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.”*<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, all too frequently, water management is not based on ensuring respect for this right for all, but rather guided by the economic interests of a few.

Mister President,

Only through the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, in a spirit of international solidarity, will the international community be able to ensure the availability, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of drinkable water and sanitation facilities for all. As Pope Francis has said, *“[o]ur right to water gives rise to an inseparable duty. We are obliged to proclaim this essential human right and to defend it – as we have done – but we also need to work concretely to bring about political and juridical commitments in this regard. Every state is called to implement, also through juridical instruments, the Resolutions approved by the United Nations General Assembly since 2010 concerning the human right to a secure supply of drinking water. Similarly, non-state actors are required to assume their own responsibilities with respect to this right.”*<sup>2</sup>

Thank you, Mister President.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, n. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Fourth Workshop Organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Entitled “The Human Right to Water: An interdisciplinary focus and contributions on the central role of public policies in water and sanitation management”*, 24 February 2017.