



## Essential Human Rights Mentioned, but Not Elaborated, in United Nations' Proposed Sustainable Development Goals

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***Civil society welcomes human rights language in OWG outcome, while continuing to call for a rights-based approach towards development justice.***

The [Mining Working Group at the UN](#) congratulates the members and co-chairs of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the completion of their work and their adoption by consensus of an [outcome](#) that includes seventeen proposed goals and an introductory chapeau. In particular, **we celebrate the mention of the human right to water** in paragraph 7 of the chapeau, as an essential entry point for further work on ensuring a rights-based approach to development. With [the Blue Planet Project and more than 300 civil society partners](#), we advocated long and hard for those two small words – “and water” – to be added to the text, and we applaud this achievement on the part of the governments that championed this language: Palau, Nauru, Papua New Guinea; Italy and Spain; Bolivia, Argentina, and Ecuador; and Uruguay.

The recognition of the human right to water and sanitation – one of the most important and contested issues in both the international human rights framework and the global development discourse – represents a victory for these governments, for our advocacy, and, most importantly, for the communities whose priorities and concerns should be at the forefront of all development planning and agenda-setting. But the OWG fell short of guaranteeing the human right to water and sanitation for each and every person. **Human rights language is not mentioned or reflected in proposed goal 6** (“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”); this goal fails to establish a hierarchy of water use that prioritizes human and ecosystem well-being, and lacks guarantees for participation, non-discrimination, and accountability.

The disconnect between the human rights language in the OWG chapeau and its limited, easily interpretable goals which could allow for commodification, privatization, or the shepherding in of corporate interests is concerning to say the least. By excluding the human right to water and sanitation and other human rights from its targets, the SDGs – which set the stage for the next 15 years of development planning at national and international levels – **undermine the agency of those that most directly suffer the negative consequences of growth-driven development**. A rights-based approach is required to ensure the SDGs address structural root causes of poverty and inequality, in acknowledgment that poverty is a function of violations of human rights and is perpetuated by the extractive, market-led paradigm of development. By continuing to promote development-as-usual, the OWG – and the UN that stands behind it – have ignored the calls from Cajamarca to Papua New Guinea to Detroit for the protection of watersheds, the guarantee of safe drinking water, and the

dignity and rights of affected communities. Instead of centering on people – in fulfillment of its mandate to protect human rights – the United Nations has allowed their concerns to be left aside.

As partners and representatives of organizations on the ground in 27 mining countries, the Mining Working Group holds as our fundamental concern the relationship of the global development agenda to the rights, realities, and requirements of all people in every region of the world. Analyzing the OWG outcome, we ask: **How will this agenda guarantee a truly transformative shift towards development justice?** From our standpoint, much work remains to be done throughout the post-2015 process to center on **people's human rights**, including to affordable, acceptable, available, and quality water and sanitation.

The Mining Working Group, along with our allies amongst people's movements, women's organizations, and major groups, will continue to put forward a [rights-based approach to natural resource management and sustainable development](#), particularly at the national level and in fundamental conversations about implementation and indicators to measure the new agenda. We will keep working with our champions among Member States and keep dialoguing with those that disagree, and we will strengthen our relationships with the UN Secretariat – key members of which are well aware of our concerns, given that our [petition to the Secretary-General](#) has received over 1100 signatures so far. We will remind our constituencies of the incredible potential of the United Nations as the only legitimate global norm-setting body, and will continue to work towards a global agenda that – through fulfillment of international obligations and guidance by multilateral agreement – prioritizes and guarantees all human rights for all.

*The Mining Working Group at the UN (MWG) is a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that, in partnership with our members and affected local communities, advocates at and through the United Nations for human and environmental rights as related to extractive industries. For more information, please see the websites of the [Mining Working Group](#) and the [Blue Planet Project](#).*

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