



PSI World Water Day statement – 22 March 2014

Human Right to Water must be backed by strong government policies

As the United Nations celebrates World Water Day on 22 March, we must be aware of and continue to challenge the fundamental tensions polarising people and planet. Social inequality is growing, climate change is accelerating, and governments are not taking leadership for democratic change. Many governments continue to ignore the most basic rights of people, including the Human Right to Water and Sanitation.

PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli was in Chile earlier this month attending the inauguration ceremony of President Michelle Bachelet. Pavanelli urged the new government to take Chile's water back into public hands and to do this before the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement is finalised; once approved, this new treaty will block any signatory government from remunicipalising public services such as water.

In Lima, Peru this week, Pavanelli will participate in the national campaign of affiliate union FENTAP to oppose yet another misguided water privatisation policy. She says: "Trade unions in public services support the struggle for the well-being of people and planet before profits. Profit maximisation and market dynamics are at the heart of many of the tensions that we face. The power of the corporate lobby undermines our democracies, blocking key decisions which are urgently needed.

"PSI supports our national unions as they resist continued privatisation and strive to implement the Human Right to Water and Sanitation. We encourage them, in these difficult times, to broaden outreach with civil society groups, and to develop the political muscle needed to keep our elected officials responsive to the needs of the people.

"The continued fixation of governments on privatisation shows the strong influence of the corporate lobby and their ideological allies. I commend the courage and determination of the members and leaders of FENTAP, who – like many PSI affiliates – have mobilised from local bases to create a national movement to defend public water against privatisation and industrial pollution."

Pavanelli also praises the unions and civil society groups which have joined forces in the European Citizens' Initiative to protect public water services in the European Union.

"The almost two million signatures gathered should be a wake-up call to the European Commission that there are limits to how much can be handed over to the corporate sector. If the Commissioners choose to ignore this message, it will be at their own peril, but also a risk for the grand project of Europe. The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and PSI and our civil society allies will not stand idle while our rights are sold down the road," she says.

Workers, trade unions and civil society organisations around the world are joining forces to counter the corporate takeover of public services including water, health and energy. This is why PSI is promoting tax justice to fund quality public services, and resisting unfair trade and investment deals that impose privatisation and hurt workers' and environmental protection rights. And World Water Day is about the most fundamental human right: the right to life.