



**54<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council**

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on water and sanitation**

**14 September 2023**

*Delivered by Mr Mateo Cisneros Zapata*

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Thank you Mr President,

We welcome the annual report of the SR on Water and Sanitation and commend his recommendations, in particular that States must monitor companies and hold them accountable for the degradation of aquatic ecosystems (...) and must force them to comply with their obligation to repair and compensate for damages through legislation.

This report is relevant to Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), such as Solomon Islands, where around 1 out of 4 persons live in poverty.<sup>1</sup> The oceanic, coastal, and freshwater fisheries provide critical revenue for the country, provide jobs and support livelihoods in (coastal) communities across the country. They also significantly contribute to ensuring food security, good nutrition, and healthy diets in remote areas. These fisheries depend on healthy ecosystems and habitats but climate change, pressures from population growth and a lack of proper management can put these vital resources at risk.<sup>2</sup>

We are concerned about the negative impact of on-going logging activities in Solomon Islands on access to water and on the aquatic ecosystem in the country. Several streams around the forests in Guadalcanal Islands have dried up due to the intensive logging. Oil spills from machinery have also degraded several streams and caused skin irritations as well as poisoning the fish and shellfish. The ecosystem in the coastal areas close to logging operations are also affected due to heavy sediment brought downstream from logging areas.

This context underscores the link between the human right to water, alongside other human rights, and the sustainability and health of aquatic ecosystems. We urge the Solomon Islands to implement the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle UPR recommendation relevant to this issue<sup>3</sup>, and to incorporate the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur in their national policies.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the poverty rate of Solomon Islands in 2022 is 23.1%. See <https://www.adb.org/countries/solomon-islands/poverty>

<sup>2</sup> See the press release of the World Bank on 22 July 2022, "Strengthening Solomon Islands' Fisheries for a More Sustainable Future", available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/13/strengthening-solomon-islands-fisheries-for-a-more-sustainable-future>

<sup>3</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle of the UPR in 2021, Solomon Islands received the recommendation, "That all forest exploitation projects include prior and informed consultation of the concerned local and indigenous communities, as well as a report on the environmental and human rights impact, specifically in the area of the rights to water and sanitation," from Spain.