



**45th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Water and Sanitation**

15 September 2020

Oral statement delivered by Sandra Epal-Ratjen

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Madam President, Mr. Heller,

Franciscans International wishes to take the opportunity to not only welcome your latest report, Mr. Heller, on the progressive realization of the rights to water and to sanitation; but first and foremost, to acknowledge and welcome the very important work done in the 6 years of your tenure of the mandate.

As to the current report presented to the Council, FI especially appreciates your contribution, Mr. Special Rapporteur, to give practical meaning and interpretation to the standards and provisions enshrined in international law, and in particular article 2.1 of the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, building on the work of its Committee.

We also very much appreciate the first part of the report that sheds light on the concrete differences and added-value of monitoring in a human rights perspective the “horizontal realization” rather than only the “vertical realization” as it is usually done in the SDGs framework. This horizontal approach notably enables to work more efficiently against substantive inequalities in accessing water and sanitation. In that regard, COVID-19 and the heightened hygiene requirements have shown how literally vital it is to ensure adequate access to water and sanitation to all without discrimination and exclusion, as a matter of priority.

Beyond this last report to the Council and among your many significant contributions, FI particularly valued the follow-up that you gave to your country missions, including El Salvador. This follow-up is significant considering that since your visit, there is no proper legislation recognizing and guaranteeing the right and access to water to everyone.

We are also looking forward to your report on privatization, to be presented at the General Assembly in the upcoming weeks. We think that this report will be an important resource to consider the risks and other human rights considerations related to private providers of water. In Guatemala there are two bills (Draft laws 5098 and 5161) aiming to continue privatizing water in the country but without a human right perspective, without consulting the communities and benefiting business and megaprojects.

We thank you very much Mr. Special Rapporteur and look forward to pursuing our collaboration with the mandate in the future.