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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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***International Grassroots Activists Join Forces to Create an  
Alternative to the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum***

*Hundreds of organizations promote community water events  
to defend water as a human right*

A massive outcry in defense of water for people and the planet is brewing. As official governmental bodies, influential world players such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and some of the largest global water and energy corporations prepare for the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City, grassroots organizations are creating an alternative space to hear the voices of people who have been shut-out of the “official” Forum.

Between March 14<sup>th</sup> and March 22<sup>nd</sup>, thousands of people will join open forums, seminars, workshops, protests and cultural events to defend the fundamental human right to clean, affordable water. These events call for water to be recognized as part of the global commons and call for new visions of community and public management of water.

According to Anil Naidoo from the Council of Canadians, "Planning these alternative events has really been a democratic process. Groups from all parts of society, from all parts of the globe, have pooled their energy and resources – many diverse perspectives have not only been included in the events but just as importantly, in the process." The Council of Canadians has been a leader in the international effort to organize alternative events.

Rallies in Defense of Water have been organized by and for indigenous and *campesino* organizations, community groups, human rights groups, academics, trade unions, students, grassroots organizations, women’s groups, public health advocates, and social movements from within Mexico. The events highlight the voices of those who face a dire global water crisis daily - a lack of adequate sanitation, rising water rates, and displacement from dams. However, many of these communities have successfully built an alternative vision that puts health and human rights before profits, and they have built local, community-based institutions to defend this vision.

Unfortunately, few of these institutions, groups and visions are represented inside the Fourth World Water Forum. International groups have been shocked by the lack of cooperation on behalf of the Fourth World Water Forum and the Mexican government to incorporate alternative viewpoints in the program and activities of the official planning.

The Fourth World Water Forum is dominated by corporate interests, North American and European governments, agencies and international financial institutions. Despite rhetoric of participation and inclusion, the registration fee of \$240-\$600 US dollars excludes public participation at the Forum. International activists have faced a lack of support from both conference convenors and the Mexican government in obtaining visas, effectively excluding activists from attendance.

In contrast, private corporations and groups such as the World Water Council have played a strong role in the conference planning. The Council is a private think tank headed by the CEO of a subsidiary of the transnational water giant Suez. Conference convenors have continued to promote privatization, despite numerous examples of private sector failures over the past year, from Argentina to Bolivia, and community opposition to private sector involvement.

“Over the last 10 years, the privatisation of water has been a disaster for the world’s poor – causing rate hikes, poor service, and water cutoffs. The movers and shakers within the Fourth World Water Forum need to hear from those civil society groups around the world who have been struggling against the corporate control of water resources,” says Tamsyn East from the World Development Movement, which has been fighting European governments who promote privatization around the world.

Because of these failures, international grassroots activists present at the alternative events have a deep and growing revulsion to any attempts to place control over water in the hands of transnational corporations, governments and international organizations. Activists have seen the failure of these global water players to secure the fundamental human right of safe, clean, affordable water for all.

Rallies in Defense of Water condemn the Fourth World Water Forum for promoting water as a negotiable commodity to be bought and sold on the international marketplace. The alternative events condemn the exclusionary nature of the official Forum. In response and offering a truly democratic alternative, international grassroots activists are bringing together people from across the world to defend water as a common good and a public trust for all people and for the planet.

The Mexican movement, *Asamblea Nacional en Defensa del Agua y la Tierra y en contra de su privatización* has spearheaded the organizing efforts in Mexico City. "The Fourth World Water Forum says its theme is "local actions," but they have not even helped local groups right here in Mexico, the host country, participate. There is an urgent need to create alternative spaces for groups to express their struggles and solutions," says Brenda Rodríguez, the spokeswoman of *Coalición de Organizaciones por el Derecho de Agua*, which is a founder and active member of the Asamblea.

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## Grassroots Events Planned:

For a complete listing go to: [www.comda.org.mx](http://www.comda.org.mx)

Popular Workshop in Defense of Community Management of Water, March 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>

Hotel Lepanto -Guerrero #90, Colonia Buenavista

Contact: Ramon Rodriguez, [tallerdefensaagua@hotmail.com](mailto:tallerdefensaagua@hotmail.com)

Symposium Reclaiming Public Water, March 15

Unidad de Congresos de Centro Medico

Av. Cuauhtemoc No. 330, Colonia Doctores

Contact: Olivier Hoedeman, [olivier@corporateurope.org](mailto:olivier@corporateurope.org)

Speak-out on SUEZ, March 15th

Extemplo de Corpus Christi - Juárez #44, Colonia Centro

Contact: Sara Grusky, [sgrusky@fwwatch.org](mailto:sgrusky@fwwatch.org)

Grand Mobilization in Defense of Water, March 16

March begins at Monumento el Ángel de la Independencia

"Cultural and Inter-religious Meeting in Defense of Water", March 18th, 6 to 9 pm

Plaza Río de Janeiro (Durango y Orizaba), Colonia Roma Norte

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International Forum in Defense of Water, March 17-19

Sindicato de Telefonistas

Manuel Villalongin 50, Colonia Cuauhtemoc

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Apart from these events:

The Latin American Water Tribunal is holding a public hearing, March 13-20

Extemplo de Corpus Christi - Juárez #44, Colonia Centro

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Asia-Pacific Research Network • Bread for the World, Germany • Canadian Union of Public Employees • Centro para la Defensa del Consumidor, El Salvador • Coalición de Organizaciones por el Derecho de Agua • Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida de Uruguay • Corporate Accountability International • Corporate Europe Observatory • Council of Canadians • Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, U.S.A. • Food and Water Watch, U.S.A. • Heinrich Boell Foundation, Germany • International Initiative on Corruption and Governance, and IBON Foundation, Inc. • Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, U.S.A. • People's Health Movement, International • Play Apart, Italy • Public Services International, France • Reality of Aid, Phillipines • Red VIDA (Vigilancia Interamericano para la Defensa y el Derecho al Agua) • REDES-Amigos de la Tierra Uruguay • Water for the People Network-Philippines • Water for the People Network-Asia •