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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by "ECO-FAWN" (Environment Conservation Organization - Foundation for Afforestation Wild Animals and Nature), a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Water and Sanitation: From a Social Necessity to Mandatory Provision for Every Household in Cities, Towns, and Rural Domain - A Leap towards a Healthier Future in New India

India, home to over 1.4 billion people has made significant strides in recent years ensuring access to clean water and adequate sanitation, demonstrating a strong commitment to improving these critical aspects of public health and infrastructure. The journey towards universal access to clean water and proper sanitation is ongoing, but the positive developments in recent years provide a foundation for continued progress, which are in line with the vital SDG's of the United Nations and culminate with the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation entitled “Human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation HRC res 51/19”

1. The “Swachh Bharat” Mission: A National Movement

One of the most notable initiatives in India's efforts to improve sanitation is the “Swachh Bharat” Mission (SBM), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014. The mission aimed to make India open defecation free (ODF) by October 2019, coinciding with the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. This ambitious program focused on building millions of toilets across rural and urban areas, promoting behavior change, and ensuring sustainable sanitation practices.

Human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation HRC res 51/19”, this massive improvement in sanitation has positively impacted public health, reducing the incidence of waterborne diseases like diarrhea and cholera. Access to proper sanitation has also enhanced the dignity and safety of women and girls, as they no longer need to defecate in the open. Furthermore, the focus on behavioral change, alongside infrastructure development, has led to a cultural shift in how sanitation is perceived in Indian society.

2. The “Jal Jeevan” Mission: Ensuring Access to Clean Water

Following the success of SBM, the Indian government launched the “Jal Jeevan” Mission (JJM) in 2019, with the objective of providing safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all rural households in the country. The mission emphasizes decentralized, community-managed water systems, promoting local participation in the management and maintenance of water resources.

As of 2023, JJM has made substantial progress. Over 11 crore rural households, or approximately 57% of the total, have been provided with tap water connections. This is a significant improvement from just 17% in 2019. The mission has also focused on ensuring water quality by setting up testing labs across the country and empowering local communities to monitor water safety.

3. Urban Water and Sanitation Initiatives

In urban areas, India has been working to improve water supply and sanitation through various initiatives to realize the objects of Human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation HRC res 51/19”, including the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and the Smart Cities Mission. These programs aim to enhance the infrastructure and management of water resources in cities, ensuring that urban residents have access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities.

Under AMRUT, over 2,000 cities have been targeted for improved water supply, sewerage, and septage management. The program has also emphasized the reuse of treated wastewater, promoting sustainability in water management practices. Similarly, the Smart Cities Mission has incorporated water and sanitation as key components of urban planning, ensuring that smart infrastructure includes sustainable water management solutions.

4. Technological Innovations and Sustainable Practices

India's push towards improving water and sanitation has been supported by technological innovations and the adoption of sustainable practices. The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping water resources, mobile applications for monitoring sanitation infrastructure, and the promotion of water-efficient technologies in agriculture are examples of how technology is being leveraged to address these challenges.

The government has also been promoting the use of decentralized wastewater treatment systems and rainwater harvesting, particularly in water-scarce regions. These practices not only address immediate water and sanitation needs but also contribute to long-term sustainability by conserving resources and reducing dependency on centralized systems.

5. Public-Private Partnerships and Community Involvement

The success of water and sanitation initiatives in India can also be attributed to the involvement of the private sector and communities. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have played a crucial role in expanding infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, where private companies have been involved in constructing and managing water supply and sanitation facilities.

Community involvement has been a cornerstone of rural water and sanitation programs. Initiatives like the “Jal Jeevan” Mission have empowered local communities to take ownership of water resources, ensuring that they are actively involved in the management and maintenance of water supply systems. This approach has not only improved the sustainability of these programs but also ensured that they are tailored to the specific needs of each community.

6. Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite these positive strides, challenges remain. Water scarcity, particularly in arid regions, continues to be a significant issue, exacerbated by climate change and population growth. Ensuring the sustainability of water and sanitation infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, requires ongoing investment and community engagement. Moreover, while the Swachh Bharat Mission succeeded in building toilets, the focus now shifts to ensuring their use and maintenance, along with addressing gaps in urban sanitation.

The road ahead involves scaling up successful initiatives, fostering innovation, and addressing emerging challenges. The focus on integrated water resource management, which considers the entire water cycle from source to disposal, will be crucial in ensuring that progress in water and sanitation is sustainable and inclusive.

7. Conclusion

India's journey towards improving water and sanitation has been marked by significant achievements. The “Swachh Bharat” Mission and “Jal Jeevan” Mission are testaments to what can be achieved with strong political will, community involvement, and innovative approaches. While challenges remain, the positive strides made in recent years provide a solid foundation for continued progress towards ensuring that every Indian has access to clean water and proper sanitation. As the country moves forward, the lessons learned and the momentum gained will be critical in achieving the goal of universal access to water and sanitation, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable future for all within the concept of Human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation HRC res 51/19”

GRAMIN KSHETRA NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

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