

The Belem Water Charter

29.01.2009

The Northern Region 2 (Pará and Amapá) of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), and the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC) have drawn up this charter on Monday, 26 January, in Belem at the close of the Ecumenical Water Forum.

In the text, the bodies reported the concern of ecclesial movements in "defence of water as a fundamental right of life."

The charter also refers to a number of proposals for joint action by individuals, groups and congregations. These include the proposal to form "ecumenical water networks, in which social movements work to promote the right to water and sanitation for all and in which all the Christian communities and popular social movements give an account their experiences and practices to protect water, through CONIC and the CNBB, to the independent Rapporteur of the UN."

BELÉM CHARTER

"The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Gen 1.2 RSV)

Challenged by the World Social Forum to build "another possible world", the Christian churches are aware of their responsibility for the formation of new ecclesial and social actors that will help in its construction.

This is why we met in Belém-PA, at the Ecumenical Water Forum, on January 26, 2009.

As church organizations and social movements committed to the defence of water as a fundamental right of life, we wish to share with all people, groups and communities our proposed joint action:

That there is effective engagement of all communities in the knowledge, dissemination and support to the Ecumenical Declaration on Water;

That ecumenical water networks are formed in all communities with the aim of promoting the basic education about the protection of water;

That internationally, Christian churches and social movements are engaged in promoting the right to water and sanitation for all;

We support the joint and participatory management of transboundary water resources:

Express our concern about the construction of the hydroelectric complex of Rio Madeira at Porto Velho-RO, in its consequences for the environment and coastal populations;

That Brazilian legislation in relation to water is changed so that it ceases to be treated as mining under the supervision of DNPM (National Department of Mineral Production) and is treated as special water resource.

That all the Christian communities and popular social movements give and account of their experiences and practices to protect water, through Conic and CNBB, to the independent UN Rapporteur for Water, as a way of helping to create an international convention of the human right to water;

We congratulate the Bolivian people who adopted in Part 4, Title 2, Chapter 5 of its Constitution, the protection of water as a fundamental right of life;

We call all countries in the world to also incorporate in their legislation the right to water as a universal right and a public good.

Expressing solidarity with all creation that is groaning, awaiting redemption and manifestation of God's children, we signed this letter in the hopes that it will find an echo in all hearts that love life.

Belém January 26, 2009.

CONIC/CNBB

(Provisional translation from Portuguese)