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**Spiritual and Ethical Values of Water : A faith perspective**

**A webinar organised to commemorate the World Water Day 2021**

**Monday, 22 March 2021, Time : 15.00- 16.30 (CET)**

**Zoom Platform of WCC**

 **Concept Note and Programme**

On March 22 all over the world people observe World Water Day. This year’s theme is Valuing Water. Water means different things to different people. Unfortunately, in today’s market driven trend, the economic value of water supersedes the spiritual and ethical values of water. As church and faith-based organisations, it is our moral imperative to ensure that water for life gets the priority over water for profit.

Recently water was listed on the wall streets for the future water market as a tradable commodity, like oil and gold. Those who has the money can buy the water and control the access and tariff. This can jeopardise the human right to water from the poor, marginalised and vulnerable communities, including the smallholding farmers.

To explore this issue deeper WCC-EWN is organizing a joint event with the office of the UN Special

Rapporteur for Human Right to Water and Sanitation, Prof. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo.

Various faith representatives will share, what does water mean to them according to their religion? Several pressing questions related to water for life, including the following will be dealt with:

1. How can we attribute price to a priceless resource, such as water? The spiritual and ethical arguments to prevent such a move.
2. How can we prioritise water usage that sustains life over commercial use of water for profit.
3. How can faith based organisations help protect water from speculative future markets

A joint statement by faith communities on water for life with its spiritual and ethical significance will be issued along with the office of the UN Special Rapporteur, as an outcome of the event.

 Please register for the event here: <https://forms.gle/h3bGtfN1QqLf8ABPA>

**Monday, 22 March 2021, Time : 15.00- 16.30 (CET)**

**Draft Programme**

* **Welcome and Intro :** Moderator, Mr Dinesh Suna, Coordinator, WCC-EWN (5 mins )
* **Keynote address. :** Prof. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, UN Special Rapporteur for Human

Right to Water and Sanitation. *(pre-recorded)* (7 mins)

* **Valuing Water: A faith perspective**
	+ Christian Perspective:
		- Bishop Arnold Temple, Chair of WCC-EWN and President , AACC

( 7 mins)

* + - Rev Dr Rachel Mash,  environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. ( 7 mins)
	+ Hindu Perspective:
		- Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati, Secretary General, GIWA ( 7 mins)
		- Kiran Bali, Chair, United Religions Initiative (URI) ( 7 mins)
	+ Muslim Perspective:
		- Dr Husna Ahmad, CEO, Global One, UK ( 7 mins)
	+ Jewish Perspective:
		- Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, The Netherlands ( 7 mins)
* **Comments and Questions from participants** (25 mins)
* **Joint action:** An interfaith statement on Valuing water (10 mins)
* **Closing Remarks :** Moderator Dinesh Suna (5 mins)

*Zoom Link will be sent to registered participants*

Please register for the event here: <https://forms.gle/h3bGtfN1QqLf8ABPA>

**Brief Bios of the speakers**

**Prof. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo** is the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. He was appointed by the Human Rights Council in September 2020 and started his mandate on 1 November 2020. Previously, from 2016 to 2019, Arrojo-Agudo served as an elected member (MP) of the Spanish Parliament during its eleventh and twelfth legislature, during which he was part of the International Cooperation Committee working on human rights. Arrojo-Agudo recipient of the [Goldman Environmental Prize](https://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/pedro-arrojo-agudo/) for his contributions to conservation of water ecosystems and his involvement in water conflicts that affect human rights of communities in vulnerable situations. He has published his work in more than 100 scientific articles and in 70 books.

Arrojo-Agudo speaks English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.

**Bishop Arnold Temple**, Chair of World Council of Churches Ecumenical Water Network and the President of All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). He is the Bishop Emeritus of the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone. He is a member of the WCC Central Committee, highest decision making body of WCC. He has spoken at several global water platforms, including the World Water Week on the Faith and Water segments.

**Rev Dr Rachel Mash,**  environmental Coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, which covers SA, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola Namibia and Mozambique. She lives in Cape Town. From an environmental desk the work has grown to a movement known as "Green Anglicans". She also is a member of the steering committee of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network and the steering committee for the Season of Creation partnership.

**Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati,** is a renowned female spiritual leader in India. She is Secretary-General of Global Interfaith WASH Alliance. Additionally, she serves as Vice-Chair of the United Nations’ Advisory Council on Religion, and on the Steering Committees of the international Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) and the World Bank’s Moral Imperative To End Extreme Poverty. Sadhviji lives at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh, India.

**Kiran Bali is the Chair of the URI Global Council of Trustees, UK.** She is a spokesperson in areas of interfaith understanding, environmental justice, women’s empowerment, and peacebuilding . Kiran was honored by HM Queen Elizabeth II with the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire accolade in 2008 and has received a number of international awards for her achievements. Tackling cli-mate change through advocacy and empowering grassroots communities with knowledge, she launched the Hindu declaration on climate change in India

**Dr Husna Ahmad**  is the CEO of Global One 2015 which is a faith-based INGO focussed on women. With a PhD in Environmental Law from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, She is currently a Board member of BOND, Faith In Water, and Palmers Green Mosque (the MCEC). She is a member of the UN Task Force Faith based Advisory Council. She sits on the international advisory board of the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion and Belief (CiFORB). She is the Secretary General of the World Muslim Leadership Forum and Coordinator for the Alliance of NGOs and CSOs for South-South Cooperation.

**Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp,** a Jewish leader, was born in The Netherlands in the middle of the second world war, and survived as a hidden child through the help of a righteous couple. he has been a human rights advocate, lecturer, writer, environmental activist and civil society champion. he has been a founding member of green Cross International, an Earth Charter Commissioner, and a founding member of GIWA, the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance. He is also a member of the International Advisory Committee of EcoPeace Middle East.

**Dinesh Suna** is the Coordinator of the Ecumenical Water Network of World Council of Churches (WCC), Geneva since 2012. WCC is a global fellowship of 350 Protestant and Orthodox churches in 110 countries representing over half a billion Christians. The Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) started in 2006 is a platform of Christian churches and organizations committed to increasing access to safe drinking water and a dignified sanitation worldwide.  EWN primarily engaged in advocacy for water justice within a human rights framework.  Currently he is one of the Co-leads of the PaRD (Partnership of Religions and Sustainable Development) workstream on “Environment, Water and Climate Action”.