

Oppose neoliberal plunder of water resources

Contributed by Administrator
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Neoliberal economic globalization has been increasingly redefining the traditional concept of water as a common resource. Behind the guise of conservation, the policy direction in a growing number of countries worldwide, with tremendous pressure from international creditors led by the World Bank and multilateral bodies like the World Water Council (WWC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), is to apply free market principles on how to manage and utilize water.

For the poor consumers, small farmers and fisher folk, indigenous people, and other marginalized sectors, this has meant widespread displacement and marginalization in terms of access and use because priority is given to the so-called "high value users" of water including the transnational corporations (TNCs), big local businesses and landlords, and other affluent sectors of society.

Putting water in the ambit of the WTO is particularly alarming since the multilateral trade body, in spite of being slowed down in recent years by a combination of growing anti-globalization worldwide people's movement and increasing solidarity among poor member-countries, is still the most lethal weapon for the neoliberal attack on the people's most fundamental human rights including the access and use of water.

The "police powers" of the WTO to ensure the implementation of the deals that the rich countries often ram down the throat of the poor countries and the sweeping scope of these agreements put the issue of people's access and use of water in serious jeopardy.

Contrary to the common notion, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the WTO does not only threaten to hasten the corporate and foreign takeover of public water utilities in many countries. The core principles of the WTO of wholesale market access and unhampered operation of market forces threaten to distort existing local and national practices and policies on how water resources must be managed and utilized to ensure its equitable allocation.

Further, in the context of poor neo-colonial countries like the Philippines, the liberalization and privatization of control over water resources is also an affront to the national patrimony. It worsens the decades-old imperialist plunder of the neo-colonies such as the wanton foreign exploitation and exportation of indigenous water resources.

Filipino water warriors, under the Philippine Water for the People Network, thus join our fellow water activists from around the world in the WTO Hong Kong meet, to voice our strongest opposition to any attempt that would further undermine the poor's access and use of water in the name of free market and corporate profits.

We also challenge the governments of poor countries to defy all existing WTO agreements that would compromise the people's access and use of water whether for household or livelihood purposes.

Water is not a commodity. Like the air we breathe, water is a condition for people to live. Thus, every attempt to treat water just like any other tradable good in the name of corporate profit must be met with strong opposition.

WTO out of water!

Stop privatization and corporatization of water!

People's control not corporate control!