



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

Issued on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2015

### **First National Forum on Human Right to Water Implementation in Ghana**

The First Water Citizens National Forum on the implementation of the human right to water in Ghana was held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The Forum offered civil society and some Government Agencies including the Ghana Water Company Limited the opportunity to dialogue on the status of the implementation of the human right to water at the national and international levels.

Ghana is among countries yet to categorically and explicitly recognize the human right to water and to back its commitment with constitutional guarantees. The uncertainty regarding the recognition of the human right to water in Ghana has found expression in circumlocutory policy statements stating water as both a social and an economic good. This has affected extension of the right due to limited and less-urgent policy objectives and actions. The water sector's policy objective of chasing unattainable private sector funding for the financing of water supply and access is an example of policies which have stalled progress in the water sector and severely constrains the achievement of universal access to water for the people of Ghana.

The forum realized an opportunity in processes at the international level that promises to strengthen national level demands such as the ongoing post 2015 agenda discussions and the opportunity for the adoption of a Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights of the UN. In July 2015, a working session of the UN General Assembly will be convened for the approval of the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Ghana has been part of the active group of countries that have participated in a consultation process coordinated by the UNDP for the post-2015 Agenda. There is therefore the need for the Government of Ghana to support and to encourage other countries to offer a higher priority to the human right to water in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given this background, the forum deliberated on two main issues regarding threats, opportunities and recommendations for the implementation of the Human Right to Water in Ghana as well as discussing how to provide higher priority for the human right to water in the Post 2015 Agenda discussions and support for the international optional protocol on the human right to water.



## **FORUM DEMANDS**

### **Constitutionalisation of the human right to water**

Both panelists and participants at the forum noted that the absence of the explicit recognition of the human right to water in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana is an absolute travesty that has to be corrected. The forum called on the President of Ghana to help in rectifying this omission by accepting the recommendations made for the constitutionalisation of the human right to water to the Constitution Review Commission.

### **Sustained increased funding for the water sector**

The forum acknowledged recent increased funding to the water sector, particularly to urban water and called for a sustenance of the trend to support both expansion and operational works. The forum noted that Government can do more to improve the lot of rural water.

### **Reintegration of Rural and Urban Water**

The forum observed that the separation that the water sector reforms occasioned by dividing the sector into urban and rural is seriously injuring access to safe water in rural areas. The separation eroded the the cross subsidies that rich urban areas provided for rural areas. The forum called for an end to the separation and called on the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing to take steps at ensuring decentralization of the water delivery to afford citizens greater participation and control over water.

### **Make water central in Post 2015 Agenda Discussions**

The forum called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration to ensure that the human right to water is prioritized in the Post 2015 Agenda in other to influence increased funding for the implementation of the human right to water globally.

With Ghana as a member of the Board of the Council of Economic, Cultural and Social Rights the forum again called on the Foreign Affairs Ministry to support consideration of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR Covenant on the human right to water and basic sanitation at the Board's meeting which will take place in October 2015 in Geneva.

The forum was organized by ISODEC, COSPE and the Water Citizens Network with support from the European Union.

Signed

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