

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION

1. At the end of its last session, the UN Human Rights Council affirmed for the first time that the human right to water and sanitation is legally binding.

The Council stated that the right to water and sanitation is derived from the right to adequate standard of living, which is recognised in several international treaties. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) to which 160 States are party, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has reached nearly universal ratification.

This is the first UN Human Rights Council resolution to affirm the right to water and sanitation. This resolution reiterates the recognition by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that the right to water – like the rights to food and adequate housing - emanates from the right to an adequate standard of living contained in Article 11 (1) of ICESCR. In addition, the resolution affirms that the right to sanitation is also derived from the right to an adequate standard of living.

In July 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that “recognised the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights” (A/RES/64/292 of 28 July 2010). The Human Rights Council resolution refers to the General Assembly resolution and takes a further step by specifying that the right to water and sanitation is legally binding. In total, 178 countries from all regions of the world have now recognised the right to water and sanitation at least once in an international resolution or declaration.

For more information on this, please see:

- **[Amnesty International’s public statement and briefing note \(in English, French, Spanish and Arabic\) on the resolution:](#)**

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/IO40/018/2010/en?refresh>. A shorter blog (available only in English) on the resolution is available at:

<http://livewire.amnesty.org/2010/10/12/a-historic-step-as-un-affirms-the-right-to-water-and-sanitation-as-legally-binding/>

- A statement by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/RightToWaterAndSanitation.aspx>

- The resolution is available in all UN languages at:

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/15/L.14

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