

## Statement on Water

By

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

World Water Day,

March 22, 2015

For fifteen years, we raised the awareness of religious and civil leaders, as well as of theologians and politicians, on the plight of our planet's waters. While our concern and compassion for the natural environment commands protection and preservation of all aspects of God's creation – land, water, air, and every living creature: human, animal and plant – we find it appropriate on the occasion of World Water Day to address the issue of the human right to water and sanitation.

As we have repeatedly affirmed, we endorse and are committed to the various declarations of human rights and other international agreements, that environmental resources are God's gift to the world and cannot be either considered or exploited as private property. Moreover, their sustainability and stewardship demand a proportionate legal and canonical obligation, which cannot be undermined or ignored. Any abuse of our earth's resources – and, above all, of water as the source and symbol of life and renewal – contradicts our sacred and social obligation to other people, and especially those who live in poverty and on the margins of society.

Water is a fundamental human right, which must be accessible to all people regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or any other aspect of discrimination. It is unfortunate that the global community overlooks these basic principles; and it is tragic that the global community perhaps chooses to disregard these basic truths. How can we – as rational and responsible people – allow over a quarter of the world's population not to have access to safe drinking water, while almost half of the world's population faces the indignity of inadequate sanitation? Development at the cost of even a single human life is never development but rather regression. Greed under the disguise of growth insults the image of God in our fellow human beings.

We passionately urge all people of good will to be conscious of their consumption and the needs of other people. Find ways of protecting water – rivers, lakes, and oceans – so that communities and industries no longer pollute without being held accountable. We implore large corporations and businesses to seek alternative means of production, which do not pollute or harm our planet's resources for the sake of mere profit. And we pray for world peace, particularly in the Middle East, where water is employed as a weapon of persecution and destruction.