Hello all,

After what has been a prolonged period of absence for some members of the “friends list” to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation, I would like to touch base with you and renew my commitment to maintaining meaningful contact. As much time has passed, there is naturally a lot that could be shared. I will attempt to be selective and keep to key subjects that could be of your particular interest.

1. **Recognition of separate human rights to water & sanitation**

Firstly, the attentive among you may have recognized the change in my title. The [General Assembly](http://bit.ly/2drEiWH) recognized the human rights to water and sanitation late last year in Resolution A/RES/70/169. More recently, the Human Rights Council also recognized the distinct rights [in a new resolution](http://bit.ly/2dPyVeY), meaning that my title has also changed accordingly to reflect the separate rights. This is news to celebrate as I, [like others](http://bit.ly/2drFlpu), believe in the legal foundation and benefit of recognizing water and sanitation as two distinct but integrated rights.

1. **Annual Reports**

Secondly, I have published several reports in connection with the mandate this year. For the Human Rights Council, I have elaborated [a report discussing gender equality in the human rights to water and sanitation](http://bit.ly/2drD7GJ). I presented this report to the Council last month and I was happy to see that it was broadly well received.

For the General Assembly, I have completed [the first of a two-part report](http://bit.ly/2cLLvwv) (the second part is still in development and will be published next year) on development cooperation in the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation. I will be presenting this report later this month of October at the General Assembly in New York.

I have performed one country mission so far this year. From 11 – 18 May 2016, I was assessing the situation on the human rights to water and sanitation in El Salvador. The [full report](http://bit.ly/2dPsbxU) for that trip is available online, as well as the reports for the two trips that I performed last year to [Botswana](http://bit.ly/2dPtn4c) and [Tajikistan](http://bit.ly/2dPsPeM). I am also booked to carry out a new mission to Portugal this December along with Special Rapporteur Leilani Farha (Right to housing).

1. **Recent events**

Moving on to relevant events, I recently participated in a webinar organized by the Rural Water Supply Network in which I discussed, “[Participation: The key to gender equality in the human rights to water and sanitation?](http://bit.ly/2drBgBH)”. It was a great interactive opportunity for WASH experts and the broader public to become familiar with aspects of my report on gender equality. I was accompanied by two other speakers in two one-hour sessions, one in English and another in Spanish. Videos of both sessions will soon be available on [RWSN’s video channel](http://bit.ly/2eh1an2).

1. **Communications & press releases**

This year I have taken a position on many cases of potential human rights violations, often with or in support of other Special Rapporteurs. Below is a brief summary of cases in which I have either made direct contact with a State regarding potential human rights violations or have issued a press release addressing situations of concern.

Communications to States ([complete triannual reports are available here](http://bit.ly/2drOu15); where there is no link to a response, one has not been provided)

* [9 May 2016 – Spain](http://bit.ly/2drRhHD) – Alleged violations of the human rights to housing, water and sanitation, health, education and food of members of the Romani community. According to the information received, since 2005, approximately 435 people live in precarious and insalubrious conditions in an informal settlement known as “El Gallinero” in Madrid.
  + See the [government’s response here](http://bit.ly/2dPsPeJ).
* [5 April 2016 – Flint (United States)](http://bit.ly/2drQF55) - Alleged violations of the human rights of residents of Flint, Michigan, in the context of lead contamination of its water, including the rights to adequate housing, water and sanitation, and non-discrimination.
* [2 March 2016 – Flint (United States)](http://bit.ly/2drQmHd) - Alleged high levels of lead found in water consumed by residents of Flint, Michigan; and allegations that Flint is not an isolated incident but that disproportionate health risks are faced by communities and/or people of lower socio-economic standing due to toxics, pollution and other hazardous substances and wastes in the United States of America.
  + See the [government’s response here](http://bit.ly/2dPstot).
* [12 December 2015 – India](http://bit.ly/2drSkYk) - Alleged blockage at the Nepal-India border of vessels carrying essential goods resulting in a lack of basic supplies and services, including food, fuel, water and sanitation, and medical supplies and services available to the people of Nepal.
  + See the [government’s response here](http://bit.ly/2dxB5ov).
* 7 December 2015 – Brazil – Letters (separate) to [Samarco Mining S.A](http://bit.ly/2drS9fB), [Vale S.A](http://bit.ly/2drRFpA) & [BHP Billiton Ltd](http://bit.ly/2drQG8O) on alleged detrimental human rights impacts caused by the collapse of an ore tailing waste dam in Bento Rodrigues, a district of Mariana municipality in Minas Gerais state, Brazil, belonging to Samarco Mining S.A., a joint venture between Vale S.A. and BHP Billiton Brazil Ltd.
  + See attached the responses from [Samarco](http://bit.ly/2dxyY45), [Vale](http://bit.ly/2dxAcfw) and [BHP Billiton](http://bit.ly/2dxAuDa).
* [25 November 2015 – Guatemala](http://bit.ly/2drR3QK) – Alleged violations of several human rights of at least 12,000 people living in 14 communities in the department of El Petén, Guatemala, due to contamination of the La Pasión River. Also, allegations of restrictions on the work of human rights defenders denouncing this situation.
  + See the [government’s response here](http://bit.ly/2dxBebi).
* [24 November 2015 – Brazil](http://bit.ly/2drQ0Al) - Alleged detrimental human rights impact caused by the collapse of an ore tailing waste dam in Bento Rodrigues, a sub-district of Mariana municipality in Minas Gerais state belonging to Samarco Mining S.A., a joint venture between Vale S.A. and BHP Billiton Brazil Ltda.
* [23 October 2015 – Haiti/United Nations](http://bit.ly/2drQcQ1) - Letter sent in follow-up to the allegation letter transmitted to the United Nations Secretary General on 25 September 2014 concerning the cholera outbreak in Haiti in 2010. The letter expresses concern about the inability of the victims of the cholera outbreak to vindicate their rights and to obtain access to a remedy for the harms suffered to date.
  + See [response from the UN here](http://bit.ly/2dxzZc6).
* [25 September 2015 – Cork (Ireland)](http://bit.ly/2drQxlY) - Alleged increase of homelessness and lack of access of those who are homeless to emergency shelters and to safe drinking water and sanitation in the city of Cork.
  + See the [government’s response here](http://bit.ly/2dPtz3u).
* [14 August 2015 – Mexico](http://bit.ly/2drSYoD) – Alleged impacts on the human rights of approximately 5 indigenous communities of the Yaqui peoples, located along the Yaqui River, caused by the Independencia Aqueduct.
* [20 July 2015 – Argentina](http://bit.ly/2drSgYy) – Alleged violation of the human rights to water, sanitation and food. According to the information received, the residents of western La Pampa still lack an adequate access to water.
  + See the [government’s response here](http://bit.ly/2dPwFEI).
* [14 July 2015 – Brazil](http://bit.ly/2drRzyp) - Alleged imminent eviction of approximately 20,000 persons residing in three urban informal settlements in the State of Minas Gerais.
* [24 July 2015 – Brazil](http://bit.ly/2drTmmY) - Allegations concerning the inadequate response to the contamination and poisoning of the environment and citizens in Piquiá de Baixo, Açailândia, Maranhão State, Amazon Region, in follow-up to the Government’s response to the previous communication of 5 November 2014.
* [29 July 2015 – Syria](http://bit.ly/2drRM4F) - Alleged disconnection of piped water supply in the city of Aleppo, Syria, for almost a month, resulting in a lack of adequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation at homes, hospitals and health facilities.

Press releases (these are merely a selection – [all press releases can be accessed here](http://bit.ly/2drFYPB))

* 23 September 2016 – [North Dakota (United States) – “Indigenous peoples must be consulted prior to oil pipeline construction”](http://bit.ly/2drF31F)
* 19 August 2016 – [UN experts urge Turkey to adhere to its human rights obligations even in time of declared emergency](http://bit.ly/2drG8Xs)
* 17 August 2016 – [Ten years on, the survivors of illegal toxic waste dumping in Côte d’Ivoire remain in the dark](http://bit.ly/2drGLjN)
* 20 July 2016 – [Argentina: UN experts request a definitive solution for those affected by the Atuel River conflict](http://bit.ly/2drGGN8)
* 7 May 2016 – [Brazilian mine disaster – UN experts call for a timely resolution after the settlement suspension](http://bit.ly/2drGI7t)
* 6 June 2016 – [Ireland: UN experts raise alarm over growing number of homeless people in Cork with no access to water](http://bit.ly/2drGZHF)
* 18 May 2016 – [El Salvador: UN expert calls on government to protect the most disadvantaged regarding access to water and sanitation](http://bit.ly/2drFUQ9)
* 3 May 2016 – Flint (United States): [“Not just about water, but human rights” – UN experts remind ahead of President Obama’s visit](http://bit.ly/2drOZZ8)
* 11 March 2016 – [Zika virus: “Improved water and sanitation services are the best answer” – UN experts note](http://bit.ly/2drPtyv)
* 18 December 2016 – [Right to sanitation, a distinct human right – Over 2.5 billion people lack access to sanitation](http://bit.ly/2drEiWH)

1. **Shareable media**

I have started the production of a series of leaflets covering diverse subjects related to the human rights to water and sanitation. The intention of these foldable leaflets is to make them adequate for wide distribution. For this reason I am making efforts to make them available in a variety of languages. The first in this series, available in PDF format in [English](http://bit.ly/2dK2C0U), [French](http://bit.ly/2dK2cYu) & [Spanish](http://bit.ly/2dK3jr3), covers the subject of eliminating inequalities in access to water and sanitation as a part of the SDGs. Subsequent leaflets are being prepared on the themes of some of my reports (e.g. gender equality, levels and types of services).

I am very interested in knowing if you have suggestions for other themes or types of shareable material!

In closing, let me remind you that my [main page on the OHCHR website](http://bit.ly/2dK5gE0) is regularly kept up to date with my current and activities. I also encourage you to follow my [Facebook page](http://bit.ly/2drYMym) and [Twitter account](http://bit.ly/2dK5M4U) (@SRWatSan).

Thank you all and do not hesitate to get in touch,

My sincerest regards,

Léo Heller