

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to be writing to you once more on my recent and upcoming activities before the year comes to a close.

I would like to highlight the following topics in this newsletter:

- Ø **World Toilet Day**
- Ø **Country visit to India (October-November)**
- Ø **Call for input – visit to Mongolia**
- Ø **Open letter to UN-Habitat, GWOPA members and donors**
- Ø **UN General Assembly – report on development cooperation**
- Ø **Human Rights Council – report on service regulation and country missions**
- Ø **Open letter to WHO/UNICEF**
- Ø **The mandate in the news**

World Toilet Day

World Toilet Day took place on 19 November, mere days after the end of my recent visit to India. As UN-Water recently [highlighted](#) in connection with World Toilet Day, “perfect sanitation” was one of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi. In my own [public statement](#) that I published for the occasion, I emphasize that sanitation is a human right still not enjoyed by too many individuals. With only 12 years left until the deadline of the world Sustainable Development Goals, we have to put human rights on the agenda if wish to accomplish SDG 6.2 to provide access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation.

The human right to sanitation entitles everyone, without discrimination, to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity.

Léo Heller, UN
Special Rapporteur

World Toilet Day
19 Nov 2017

Photo: Recently built toilet in
Daulatpur (Uttar Pradesh, India).
Photographer: Colin Brown



A resident showing his recently built toilet (Daulatpur village, Uttar Pradesh, India).

Country visit to India

My official visit to India, which I undertook at the invitation of the Government from 27 October to 10 November 2017, was highly interesting. Throughout that period, I visited and interacted with communities in Delhi, Sarai Kale Khan (homeless shelter and flyover), Lal Bagh (non-notified slum), Mansarovar Park, Savda Ghevra resettlement site, Mundka Ward; in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh: Daulatpur village, Naubasta Kala village (Chinhat ward), Sarthara village, Vinaykpuram (slum) and small Jugauli (notified); in Kolkata, West Bengal, Tangra Dhapa and North Tangra; and in Imphal, Manipur, Nungbrang and Leirongthel Villages (downstream villages located near the Thoubal Multipurpose Project).

I am very grateful to the support of all civil society organisations for their support before and during the official visit, as well as the individuals and families who took time out to meet with me and share their experiences.

My full statement is available [here](#) and the shorter press release can be read [here](#).



Meeting with locals in Daulatpur (Uttar Pradesh), an “open defecation free” village.

Call for input – visit to Mongolia

My next country visit will be to Mongolia from 9 to 20 April 2018. Find the official call for input [here](#) to receive instructions on how to submit relevant information!

UN General Assembly – report on development cooperation & complementary materials

My second report (A/72/127) on development cooperation and the realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation is [available online](#). I presented the report at the 72nd session of the General Assembly on 23 October 2017. You can consult my [full statement](#) to the General Assembly and watch the [live recording](#) of the statement on the provided links.

The preparation of this thematic report included six in-depth case studies on the funders: [France](#), [Japan](#), [UNICEF](#), the [European Union](#), the [Inter-American Development Bank](#) and the [World Bank Group](#). However, the extent of the research is not fully reflected in the report due to the maximum permitted length. Thus, in the interest of providing further insight into the results of those case studies, I have prepared a brief on each of the funders which has been reviewed by the respective funders and incorporates their comments. Access the briefs [here](#) on my webpage.

Human Rights Council – reports on service regulation and country missions

On 11 and 12 September 2017, I presented my [report on service regulation and the human rights to water and sanitation](#) (A/HRC/36/45) at the 36th session of the Human Rights Council, as well as reports on my country visits to [Portugal](#) (5-13 December 2016) and [Mexico](#) (2-12 May 2017). You can consult my [full statement](#) to Human Rights Council and watch the live recording of the statement on the provided links (part [1](#) & [2](#)).

Continuing the series of leaflets on key issues for the human rights to water and sanitation, the newest leaflet explores the main messages of my recent report on **service regulation**. It is available for print distribution in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#) (PDF) and in mobile-friendly format at my page on Medium.com ([English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#)).

During the Human Rights Council in Geneva, I organized and participated in several activities:

- Consultations
 - 12 Sep. Brainstorming roundtable on the human rights to water and sanitation in humanitarian assistance ([discussion questions](#))
 - 12 Sep. Dialogue with civil society, OHCHR Palais Wilson ([invitation](#))
 - 13 Sep. Brainstorming roundtable on accountability and the human rights to water and sanitation ([discussion questions](#))
- Side events
 - Side-event on “The Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation”, organized by the Permanent Missions of the Holy See, Malta and the Caritas in Veritate Foundation ([press release](#), publication on [‘Water and Human Rights’](#))

In the same period, I also participated in events in Italy and Spain:

- 15 Sep. World Water Development Report 2019, Inception Meeting (Perugia, Italy)
- 18 Sep. International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals: Actors and Implementation, Parallel Session 6: SDG6 – Clean Water and Sanitation ([programme](#)) (Barcelona, Spain)
- 18 Sep. Foro de la Economía del Agua ([programme](#)) (Barcelona, Spain)
- 18 Sep. Dialogue with civil society ([more info](#)) (Barcelona, Spain)

To highlight one of those events (“Foro de la Economía del Agua”, Barcelona, 18 Sep. 2017), in [this video](#) I respond to a question on the concerns that can exist for different service provision models—public or private—in the water and sanitation sector.

Open letter to UN-Habitat, GWOPA members and donors

On 8 November 2017, I published an [open letter to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Members of the Global Water Operators’ Partnership Alliance \(GWOPA\) International Steering Committee and donors](#). In the letter, I call on all relevant actors involved in GWOPA to make utmost efforts to maintain the Alliance and to preserve its inspiring spirit. This call came after I received information on ongoing debates to restructure GWOPA in ways that could, among other things, put the continuity of the administrative and financial support currently granted to the initiative at risk. It is essential for GWOPA to maintain its independence and its main principles (i.e. not-

for-profit peer support, focus on fragile providers, and open and transparent alliance) which have contributed to advance the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation.

Open letter to WHO/UNICEF

On 28 July 2017, I published an [open letter to the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme \(JMP\)](#) for WASH, in relation to its publication, titled “Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines”. JMP is the main institution responsible for monitoring the water- and sanitation-related goals of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, and the 2017 Progress Report was the first monitoring report in the SDG era. While it significantly contributes towards providing an overall blueprint of the WASH sector, certain human rights concerns stood out which I chose to evoke in the open letter.

WHO-UNICEF responded on [1 August 2017](#).

The mandate in the news

In the past few months, urgent attention has been required to call on States to protect the human rights to water and sanitation. Some notable cases in which I was involved are listed below:

- [Ukraine](#) – On 10 November 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of [hazardous substances and wastes](#), Baskut Tuncak, and myself addressed new risks of chemical disaster and water safety that are arising after an escalation of conflict near water supply facilities in the east of the country. The rights of almost 1.1 million people’s access to safe drinking water and sanitation on both sides of the contact line are at risk of being affected if hostilities continue to hit water treatment facilities in Eastern Ukraine.
- [Puerto Rico](#) – On 30 October, more than a month after Hurricane Maria rocked several areas in the Caribbean, I joined several UN human rights experts in urging the United States government to provide an effective emergency response to the island. After a natural disaster, and with winter approaching, we emphasized the obligation of all levels of government to protect the residents of the approximately 90 thousand homes that were destroyed, which includes ensuring them access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- [France](#) – On 16 October 2018, I was joined by several Special Rapporteurs in urging the Government of France to devise long-term measures to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in Calais and other areas along the northern French coast. According to reports, approximately 700 migrants in Calais and the greater area of Calais temporarily rely on only 10 portable lavatories and water from 10 taps.

CALAIS, FRANCE

Join our call:

France must provide safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in the “Calais Jungle”

Léo Heller, Felipe Gonzalez Morales & Leilani Farha
UN Human rights experts

Photo: Loan Torondel (L'auberge des migrants)

16.10.2016

- [Yemen](#) - On 16 June 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the human right to health, Dainius Pûras, and myself urged Yemen and the international community to solve Yemen’s water crisis to halt the spiralling cholera outbreak in the country. As of July 1, the World Health Organisation reported that the death toll had surpassed 1,500. I continue to urge all stakeholders to strengthen the initiatives to build and repair infrastructure and to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Earlier this year, we contacted the Government of Yemen to seek clarification about the situation. In April 2017, UN experts [urged an end to the conflict and blockade](#), warning that the deliberate starvation of civilians may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Follow the mandate!



The [website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) remains the number one place to discover the mandate's past and upcoming activities. There you can discover the role of the mandate; all thematic reports submitted by the mandate to the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council; a review of all country visits (now 21 total!); press releases where the mandate has used its voice to speak out against concerning human rights situations around the world; and a wide variety of informational tools and shareable media, available in multiple languages, aimed at educating, spreading awareness, and growing the stock of human rights defenders worldwide.

[Medium.com](#) is also being used by the mandate as a mobile-friendly platform to share select media, such as the variety of leaflets created by the mandate. Most of the material placed on Medium is available in English, French and Spanish!

The mandate is also present on major social media platforms [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) (@SRWatSan), where it actively engages with the global community on issues related to the human rights to water & sanitation.

Best wishes to all, hoping that human rights stay on everyone's agendas throughout the rest of the year.

Léo Heller

UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water & sanitation