Dear friends and colleagues,

This 4th newsletter of 2018 on the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation brings news of my recent and upcoming activities:

1. Presentation at the 39th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2018
2. Activities parallel to the HRC39
3. Consultations on impact of mega-projects on the human rights to water and sanitation
4. Presentation at the 73rd session of the General Assembly
5. Official visits to Malaysia (14-27 November 2018) and Lesotho (4 – 15 February 2019)
6. Communications and press releases

1. **Presentation at the 39th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2018**

The 39th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council was held from 10 to 28 September 2018. On 10 September, I presented the following reports to the Council:

- Thematic report on forcibly displaced persons ([A/HRC/39/55](#))
- Introduction of my follow-up analysis of official country visits found in the Annex of [A/HRC/39/55](#) (see also the webpage on follow-up analysis)
- Country visit report to India ([A/HRC/39/55/Add.1](#) and an unofficial translation in Hindi)
  The Government of India submitted its comments to my report ([A/HRC/39/55/Add.3](#)) and the civil society has also responded.
- Country visit report to Mongolia ([A/HRC/39/55/Add.2](#) and an unofficial translation in Mongolian) See also compilation of social media interactions during the visit.

My full statement to the Human Rights Council can be consulted [here](#) and the live recording of the statement can be viewed through the provided links (parts 1 & 2).

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2. Activities parallel to the HRC39

During the 39th session of the Human Rights Council, I organized and participated in several activities:

**Side event on youth and human rights to water and sanitation**

On 11 September 2018, I organized a side event (see [invitation](#)) to present the winning submission of the Youth Challenge (Asniya Mohamad from the Philippines, her video [submission](#)) together with a selection of other submissions to discuss the role of youth in promoting and raising awareness about the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation ([video recording of event](#)). This side-event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Spain and the Permanent Mission of Germany the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Franciscans International.

**Side event on menstruation to access to WASH for people on the move**

On 14 September 2018, I participated as keynote speaker in the side-event “Realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation – Tackling stigma and discrimination: From menstruation to access to WASH for people on the move”, organized by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), the Permanent Mission of Germany, the Permanent Mission of Spain, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) ([programme](#)).

**Side event on civil participation**

On 14 September 2018, together with the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Mr. Saad Alfarargi, I participated as speaker in the side-event “Local solutions to global challenges: The role of civic participation in advancing human rights and development”, organized by the Permanent Mission of Mongolia and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ([video recording of event](#), [programme](#)).
Consultations with States

In the context of the project to follow-up on official country visits that I have initiated, I also met with several States during my stay in Geneva to have discussions in this regard. I wish to thank those States for their cooperation in helping to advance this project. Updated information on the country visit follow-up project—currently focusing on Botswana, El Salvador, Mexico, Tajikistan and Portugal—can be consulted here.

Brainstorming Roundtables on 2019 thematic reports

I convened two brainstorming roundtables to have a preliminary discussion on the possible scope and content of my thematic reports for 2019:

- 11 September 2019 - On the impact of mega-projects on the human rights to water and sanitation (concept note: English | Spanish)
- 12 September 2019 - On the human rights to water and sanitation in spheres of life beyond the household (concept note)

I extend my sincere thanks to those who took part in the brainstorming roundtables for providing their expertise and perspectives to the development of this thematic report.

3. Consultations on impact of mega-projects on the human rights to water and sanitation

As part of the preparation of my upcoming report, from 17 to 21 September, I held online bilateral consultations for those who could not attend the brainstorming consultation in Geneva on 11 September. I also wish to extend my thanks to those who have participated in consultations on this theme via Skype.

Further, I plan to convene three regional consultations: in the Asia-Pacific Region (12 November 2018, Malaysia), Latin America and the Caribbean Region (January 2019, Mexico) and the African Region (February 2019, South Africa).

4. Presentation at the 73rd session of the General Assembly

I presented my report on the principle of accountability in the context of the realization of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation (A/HRC/73/162) at the 73rd session of the General Assembly on 19 October 2018. You can consult my full statement to the General Assembly here and watch the live recording of the statement here.
As a way of explaining the principle of accountability and its complexity in relation to the human rights to water and sanitation, in my statement to the General Assembly, I referred to the parable of the blind men and the elephant. In particular, I used a three-dimensional framework to describe and explain the concept of accountability in the water and sanitation sector aligned with human rights: (i) roles, responsibility and performance standards; (ii) providing explanations and justification; (iii) and enforcement mechanisms for compliance.

Additionally, key takeaways from the report have been summarized in a short series of infographics.
5. Official visits to Malaysia (14-27 November 2018) and Lesotho (4 – 15 February 2019)

From 14 to 27 November 2018, at the invitation of the Government, I will undertake an official visit to Malaysia. I will focus on gathering information to examine the legal, policy and institutional framework that provide an enabling environment for all population in Malaysia to have sufficient, hygienic and safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses and sanitation, without discrimination. In September 2019, I will present my findings and recommendations on my visit to Malaysia in a report to the UN Human Rights Council.

My next country visit will be to Lesotho from 4 to 15 February 2019. I encourage all interested stakeholders to submit general inputs and specific proposals with regard to:

- Issues of concern related to the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, including but not limited to availability, accessibility, quality and safety, affordability and acceptability of water for drinking and domestic usage and sanitation
- Potential areas to visit such as towns or communities during the visit to Lesotho.
- Relevant organisations and individuals to meet during the visit to Lesotho.

Please submit the responses to srwatsan@ohchr.org

6. Communications and press release

The following communications and press releases were made public in recent months:

Mexico (4 July 2018) – Regarding the sentencing of six human rights defenders, who worked actively in defense of the right to water of the indigenous community of San Pedro Tlanixco (State of Mexico), for the alleged homicide of a Spanish businessman in 2003. This case was allegedly carried out without due process guarantees, and the 50-year prison sentence for the crimes committed was allegedly adopted to criminalize persons involved in defending the human right to water.

Please see a video on this case prepared by OHCHR Mexico Office.

Bahrain (31 July 2018) – Regarding reports of alleged disconnection of water supply in Jau Prison and Dry Dock Detention Center.

In addition, I joined several UN experts in the press release: “UN experts urge prompt ratification of landmark Latin America and Caribbean environment treaty” (13 September 2018).

Kindest regards,
Léo Heller
UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation
Follow the mandate! 🌐🐦∥

The [website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](https://www.ohchr.org) remains the number one place to discover the mandate’s past and upcoming activities.