



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2022)0346

Access to water as a human right – the external dimension

European Parliament resolution of 5 October 2022 on access to water as a human right – the external dimension (2021/2187(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010, which recognises the human right to clean drinking water and sanitation,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 68/157 of 18 December 2013 entitled ‘The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation’,
- having regard to UN Human Rights Council Resolution 45/8 of 6 October 2020 entitled ‘The human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation’,
- having regard to UN Human Rights Council Resolution 48/13 of 8 October 2021 entitled ‘The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment’,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016 entitled ‘International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028’,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 75/212 of 21 December 2020 on the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Sustainable Development’, 2018-2028 (UN 2023 Water Conference),
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the General Comments of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
- having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights, as proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017,
- having regard to General Comment No 15 (2002) of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to water,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989 (No 169),
- having regard to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), initially negotiated as a regional instrument and opened up in 2016 for accession to all UN Member States,
- having regard to the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention),
- having regard to the 1999 UNECE-WHO Protocol to the Water Convention on Water and Health, which provides a framework to translate the human rights to water and sanitation into practice,
- having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 6 on safe drinking water and sanitation, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
- having regard to the UN report of 19 March 2019 on the development of the world's water resources entitled 'Leaving no one behind',
- having regard to the 2020 and 2021 'State of Food and Agriculture' reports published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization,
- having regard to the report of 16 July 2021 by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation on risks and impacts of the commodification and financialisation of water on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, and to his report of 21 July 2020 on human rights and the privatisation of water and sanitation services,
- having regard to the UN World Water Development Report 2021: Valuing Water,
- having regard to the EU Human Rights Guidelines of 17 June 2019 on Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation,
- having regard to Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy¹ (Water Framework Directive),
- having regard to Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources²,

¹ OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1.

² OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1.

- having regard to Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration¹,
 - having regard to Directive (EU) 2020/2184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on the quality of water intended for human consumption²,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 19 March 2014 on the European Citizens’ Initiative ‘Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!’ (COM(2014)0177),
 - having regard to Directive 2008/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on the protection of the environment through criminal law³,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 November 2018 on water diplomacy, of 17 June 2019 on the EU Human Rights Guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation and of 19 November 2021 on water in the EU’s external action,
 - having regard to the European Citizens’ Initiative ‘Right2Water’ and its resolution of 8 September 2015 on the follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative Right2Water⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2021 on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on corporate due diligence and corporate accountability⁶,
 - having regard to existing successful methods of cross-border cooperation such as exchanges of views between water and wastewater utilities in the Nordic countries dating back to the 1980s, the 1970 formation of a joint Nordic Association for Hydrology, the annual Nordic Water Advisers Meeting, the Nordic water forums and extensive Nordic cooperation regarding water management issues,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Development,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0231/2022),
- A. whereas Resolution 64/292 of the UN General Assembly recognises ‘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’; whereas the absence of water is incompatible with life and both rights are interdependent and essential for a dignified life; whereas there can be no sustainable and universal access to clean water without functioning

¹ OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 19.

² OJ L 435, 23.12.2020, p. 1.

³ OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 28.

⁴ OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 99.

⁵ OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 25.

⁶ OJ C 474, 24.11.2021, p. 11.

sanitation chains; whereas water and waterways also have a strong cultural, spiritual and religious dimension stemming from their fundamental role in society's life;

- B. whereas Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on access to essential services includes an explicit reference to the right of citizens to water and sanitation;
- C. whereas the denial of the human right to water has repercussions on enjoyment of the right to life and health, considering that contaminated water, the inadequate management of wastewater and poor sanitation are linked to the transmission of serious diseases and even death; whereas water and sanitation services are one of the cornerstones of public health; whereas diarrhoeal diseases are the fourth cause of death among children under five and a leading cause of chronic malnutrition; whereas access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene is indispensable for ensuring global resilience against pandemics and other infectious diseases, and to combat the emerging threat of antimicrobial resistance;
- D. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the most vulnerable people the hardest and has once again highlighted the need for clean and sufficient water and sanitation globally; whereas availability and access to water supply, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH), including for vulnerable or marginalised people, is fundamental to fighting COVID-19;
- E. whereas 80-90 % of wastewater in developing countries is discharged directly into rivers, lakes and seas, causing water-borne diseases and severely damaging the environment; whereas the lives of millions of impoverished persons depend on the good status of water sources, not only for the supply of drinking water but also for the production of food through agriculture, livestock rearing and fishing;
- F. whereas the lack of respect for, protection of and compliance with the human right to water and sanitation often hinder the right to education; whereas children, and in many cases girls, have to walk an average distance of six kilometres every day to fetch water, which prevents them from attending school; whereas the opportunity costs of collecting water are high and have far-reaching effects as they shorten considerably the time available for other important activities;
- G. whereas many children stop going to school because of illnesses related to unsafe water or poor hygiene practices; whereas one in three children does not have appropriate access to water and sanitation in schools; whereas the UN's 2021 Sustainable Development Goals Report shows that globally, more than a fifth of primary schools lacked access to basic drinking water or single-sex toilets and more than a third lacked basic handwashing facilities; whereas many girls are also forced to drop out of school when they are unable to access gender-appropriate toilets and manage their menstruation in a dignified manner;
- H. whereas children with disabilities also suffer difficulties in accessing education due to the lack of adapted toilets and sanitation facilities; whereas UNESCO reports that more than 90 % of all children with disabilities do not attend school, and girls with disabilities are far more likely to drop out of school than boys with disabilities; whereas drinking water is imperative for concentration during learning;

- I. whereas the disadvantages faced by many women and girls, people with certain disabilities and elderly people with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene manifest themselves in multiple ways that impact on their overall health, well-being and dignity, reproductive health, education, nutrition, security, and economic and political participation; whereas mainly mothers of children with disabilities are forced out of work life to manage their children's toileting activities and in order to take care of their children's home-schooling when schools lack accessible toilets;
- J. whereas in many countries of the Global South, women and girls are traditionally responsible for domestic water supply and these responsibilities make them more vulnerable to disease and violence; whereas women and girls are more at risk of being victims of attacks, sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and other threats to their security when they are collecting water for the household, when they visit sanitation facilities outside their homes;
- K. whereas, as indicated in the EU Human Rights Guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation, the human right to water and sanitation encompasses the dimensions of availability, accessibility, acceptability, quality and affordability and the principles of the human rights-based approach (non-discrimination, accountability, transparency, participation, etc.);
- L. whereas the sixth UN SDG is to ensure that the entire world has universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation by 2030; whereas despite progress, this goal remains severely off-track and under-financed, according to the latest status report by UN-Water, and significant challenges remain both to its achievement and in addressing great inequalities between and within countries in access to basic water and sanitation services;
- M. whereas the UN's 2021 Sustainable Development Goals Report shows that, in 2020, 2 billion people still lacked safely managed drinking water, 3,6 billion lacked safely managed sanitation, and 2,3 billion lacked basic hygiene provisions, and that 129 countries were not yet on track to having sustainably managed water resources for 2030; whereas access to water creates conditions propitious for economic development and these conditions will allow vulnerable people to gain financial independence;
- N. whereas achieving a universal safely managed water supply and sanitation would yield net benefits of between USD 37 billion and USD 86 billion per year between 2021 and 2040;
- O. whereas water is a limited resource; whereas per capita freshwater availability has drastically fallen over the past two decades; whereas an unbalanced distribution of population growth and depopulation of rural areas, agricultural intensification, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as certain unlawful and polluting practices in water use, are posing ever-greater water access problems in many regions and will cause even more access problems in the future;
- P. whereas much of the net growth in global population up to 2050 will occur in the cities of developing countries, thus increasing urban demands for water and food; whereas according to the UN World Water Development Report 2019, by 2050 we could be using 20-30 % more water than we do today, and whereas according to the World Bank, urban water demand is projected to increase by 50-70 % over the three next decades;

- Q. whereas 125 out of 154 developing countries have included freshwater resources and terrestrial and wetland ecosystems as the highest priority areas in their national climate adaptation plans, in line with SDG 13;
- R. whereas global warming is a major cause of water scarcity; whereas the ongoing climate crisis, with increasing droughts, floods and torrential rains, is exacerbating inequalities in distribution of water; whereas about 90 % of all natural disasters are water-related and water accounts for 70 % of all deaths linked to natural disasters; whereas according to the World Meteorological Organization's Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water Extremes (1970 – 2019), out of the top 10 disasters during this period, the hazards that led to the largest human losses during the period have been droughts, storms and floods; whereas, according to the OECD, nearly 20 % of the world's population will be at risk from floods in 2050;
- S. whereas water stress, defined by the UN as the point at which the demand for water is higher than the quantity available or when its use is restricted by its low quality, could in some cases be a driver of induced displacement and migration; whereas, according to the UN's water development reports, five of the world's eleven regions, accounting for two thirds of the global population, are currently experiencing water stress; whereas, according to the UN's 2020 Sustainable Development Goals Report, water scarcity could displace some 700 million people by 2030;
- T. whereas deforestation, land grabbing and natural resource overexploitation and extraction activities, including by organised crime groups, have a considerable impact on the water level of rivers and lakes, alter the water cycle, and contribute towards the drying-up of rivers and lakes as well as the pollution of the exploited areas;
- U. whereas freshwater ecosystems, while covering less than 1 % of the earth's surface, harbour more than 10 % of all species and delicate biodiversity; whereas around 70 % of the world's fresh water is used for agriculture, while the remainder is divided between industrial use (19 %), mainly in the food, textile, energy, industrial, chemical, pharmaceutical, and mining sectors, and domestic use (11 %), including human consumption;
- V. whereas healthy ecosystems enable the improvement of water quantity and quality, while increasing resilience to climate change;
- W. whereas agriculture is the largest consumer of the world's freshwater resources; whereas one third of arable land worldwide is used to feed livestock; whereas the FAO's 2020 report entitled 'The State of Food and Agriculture – Overcoming water challenges in agriculture' suggests that food productivity and rural incomes can be significantly enhanced through investments in new irrigation systems or the adaptation and modernisation of existing ones, and that this should be combined with improved water management practices including improved agricultural practices; whereas land grabbing has negative implications for water availability and quality, dispossesses local communities of water sources and violates their human right to safe drinking water;
- X. whereas the energy sector is currently responsible for 10 % of global water extraction and its water consumption is expected to rise by almost 60 % by 2040;

- Y. whereas certain abusive and in many cases illegal extractive industries have a considerable impact on surface and groundwater resources, pollution and the destruction of glaciers, forests, wetlands, rivers and other water sources vital for human consumption;
- Z. whereas the textile industry counts among the sectors that consume the most water in the world, and whereas apparel and textiles are produced in some of the world's most water-scarce regions; whereas this industry is ranked as the second-most polluting in the world and a large part of that pollution ends up in bodies of water; whereas the Commission plans to adopt, in the first quarter of 2022, the 'EU strategy for sustainable textiles', which sets out to help the EU to move towards a circular economy in which textile products are designed to last longer and be reusable, repairable, recyclable and energy efficient;
- AA. whereas the growing demand for water is causing water resources to be overexploited and water's scarcity has made it a disputed resource; whereas, according to the UN, conflicts over water are expected in some 300 areas across the world by 2025;
- AB. whereas the preservation of water resources is under attack and damages to the quality of water have been made a criminal offence in many countries; whereas in recent years, environmental and water rights defenders have been subjected to an ever-increasing number of attacks including killings, kidnappings, torture, gender-based violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, smear campaigns, criminalisation, judicial harassment, forced eviction and displacement, and whereas there is an urgent need to support them proactively and protect their life and safety; whereas several finalists for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought are under attack for their role in defending water and common goods; whereas the defenders of the waters of the Guapinol river were imprisoned for more than two years before their release; whereas Lolita Chávez has been in exile for four years for her defence of the territory against the activities of hydroelectricity companies in Iximulew (Guatemala); whereas Berta Cáceres was assassinated in 2016 for her defence of the Blanco and Gualcarque rivers, and those who ordered the crime have still not been convicted;
- AC. whereas, according to Global Witness, more than a third of the land and environmental defenders murdered worldwide between 2015 and 2019 belonged to indigenous communities, whose land and water management skills are crucial in combating the climate crisis and biodiversity loss;
- AD. whereas denying access to water and destroying water infrastructure have been used as an essential tactic by occupying powers to annex occupied territories and displace people from their lands;
- AE. whereas the EU Water Framework Directive recognises that 'water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such';
- AF. whereas since 6 December 2020, water has been traded on the Wall Street commodities futures market; whereas, in the words of Pedro Arrojo, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, 'water has a set of vital values for our society that the market logic does not recognise and therefore, cannot manage adequately, let alone in a financial space so prone to speculation'; whereas, according to

various UN experts, the application of a speculative approach to the management of goods that are essential for individuals' lives and dignity infringes the human rights of people in situations of poverty, worsens gender inequality and increases the vulnerability of marginalised communities;

- AG. whereas governments have a duty to guarantee minimum essential levels of water and sanitation for all; whereas the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of 16 July 2021 stresses that water should be considered as a public good and should be managed under an approach grounded on human rights, guaranteeing the right to water and sanitation and the sustainability of aquatic ecosystems; whereas water supply and sanitation are services of general interest, and revenues from the water management cycle should cover any related expenses and improvement costs, provided that the public interest is safeguarded;
- AH. whereas, as recognised by the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil these rights and third parties should strictly refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of the rights to water and sanitation;
- AI. whereas workers who work in the sanitation chain face many risks, including health risks resulting from precarious working conditions; whereas they are often informal workers who are not protected by labour laws; whereas the enjoyment of the rights to water and sanitation should not come at the expense of the safety, dignity and well-being of sanitation workers;
1. Reaffirms the right to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right, both rights being complementary; underlines that access to clean drinking water is indispensable to a healthy and dignified life and is essential for the development of human dignity; highlights the fact that the right to water is a fundamental precondition for the enjoyment of other rights, and as such must be guided by a logic grounded in the public interest, and common public and global goods;
 2. Underlines that the adequate access to WASH facilities and the right to health and life are mutually dependent and are an essential prerequisite for public health and human development; underlines the need for clean water in the context of pandemics and calls for corresponding action and strategies and policies on the part of the Commission, the Member States and third countries so that adequate protection can be offered to everyone;
 3. Underlines that enshrining the right to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right was a crucial milestone on the road to greater social and environmental justice; affirms that progress could be improved by affording the sector higher political priority and ensuring better implementation and monitoring of policies, more efficient funding and accountability and public participation, especially among the most marginalised in society, in particular in developing countries; emphasises that assistance for providing safe drinking water and sanitation should be given high priority in the allocation of EU funds and in assistance programming;
 4. Recalls the responsibility of states to promote and safeguard all human rights, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and which must be promoted and applied in a fair, equitable and non-discriminatory manner; reiterates, therefore, that

states must ensure universal, proper and affordable access to sufficient, quality and safe drinking water and improved access to water for sanitation and hygiene purposes; recalls that the right to water means that water supply services must be accessible for all;

5. Recalls that states that ratify a human rights treaty undertake to protect, respect and fulfil the commitments adopted in the international, national, regional and local framework for the protection of these rights; takes the view in this regard that the international community's recognition of the right to water and sanitation must encompass protection and enforceability arrangements and, therefore, calls on the EU to promote protection mechanisms at international, regional and national level to ensure that upholding the right to water and sanitation is not optional for states but rather an enforceable right; calls on the EU and Member States to lead by example and to ratify the relevant conventions such as the Protocol on Water and Health and the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes;
6. Urges the EU and its Member States to promote the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and their normative development in multilateral and regional forums, including by supporting the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation; stresses the importance of his work and that of his predecessors as well as the works under other UN human rights mechanisms related to the human rights to water and sanitation;
7. Underscores the importance of the EU Human Rights Guidelines on Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation and urges the EU institutions and the Member States, to implement them in and towards third countries and in multilateral forums; stresses the importance of training EU staff in this regard; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to regularly report to Parliament and its relevant (sub)committees on how they have applied these guidelines, providing specific examples of their activities and their impact;
8. Calls on EU delegations and Member States' missions, as pointed out by the EU guidelines, to raise issues related to the rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as the situation of human rights defenders and NGOs promoting these rights, in their bilateral dialogues with partner countries, notably in the framework of human rights and sectoral dialogues;
9. Stresses that progressing towards the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as laid out in Resolution 48/13 of the UN Human Rights Council on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, is an enabling condition to reach safe drinking water and sanitation for all; in this regard welcomes the normative developments at international level in relation to environmental crimes, including ecocide;
10. Encourages developing countries to join and to strive for the full implementation of the two UN global water conventions, namely the UN Water Convention and the UN Watercourses Convention, as important tools to support water diplomacy, peace and conflict prevention through transboundary water cooperation;

11. Maintains that the full exercise of the right to water depends on the preservation of biodiversity and the climate, and therefore demands that water management should respond primarily to environmental – being a basic need for plants, animals and humans – and social interests including labour integration and increasing the incomes and safety conditions of people in poverty;
12. Stresses that improved water supply and sanitation, and better management of water resources, can boost countries' sustainable economic growth and can contribute greatly to poverty reduction;
13. Underlines the need for anticipatory actions in the field of access to water and sanitation, and the need to have reliable and comparable indicators to measure progress or regression in access to water and sanitation;
14. Stresses that certain development models that favour vast projects and large-scale business activities undermine the availability and quality of water in all countries, increase competition for water and exacerbate other water-related conflicts; insists on the importance, in this context, of investment in sustainable drinking water solutions such as the restoring of aquatic ecosystems to a healthy state, the recycling of wastewater, the desalination of seawater in coastal areas, and improvements to sewage systems, irrigation and agricultural practices;
15. Underlines that the inefficient management of water resources and pollution caused by abusive industrial activities negatively affect the exercise of the human rights to water and sanitation;
16. Calls on the Commission to discourage practices that are a threat to the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation and to make those practices subject to environmental and human-rights impact assessments;
17. Recognises the important work undertaken by environmental rights defenders, and the need to support them proactively and protect their life and safety, in particular those safeguarding the right to water, and roundly condemns the crimes such as the killings, abductions, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, smear campaigns, criminalisation, judicial harassment, forced evictions and displacements carried out by numerous state and non-state perpetrators, including governments and multinational corporations;
18. Calls for the EU to support the crucial work done by environmental rights defenders and civil society organisations; urges the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to live up to the commitment undertaken in the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and to monitor and raise individual cases of environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs), notably of the winners and finalists of the Sakharov Prize, who are being attacked for their roles in defending water and common goods;
19. Stresses that the safety and freedom of EHRDs to operate without violence and intimidation should be promoted; expects EU delegations to prioritise their support for EHRDs and to respond systematically and in a robust manner to any threats or attacks against them or their relatives and to report back to Parliament on actions taken on such cases; calls for the EU and its Member States to increase protection and prevention mechanisms for EHRDs; reiterates its call for a coordinated EU-wide scheme for

issuing short-term visas for the temporary relocation of human rights defenders, notably those working to promote and protect environmental rights or indigenous rights, who are particularly under attack;

20. Calls on states to respect the right to social protest and the right to peaceful assembly, in particular in the context of opposition to projects that compromise the enjoyment of the human rights to drinking water and sanitation; calls on officials of EU Delegations and Member States' embassies in this context, and as indicated by the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, to visit human rights defenders in custody or under house arrest and attend their trials as observers;
21. Recalls that indigenous people play an important role for the sustainable management of natural resources and the conservation of biodiversity; asks the EU and its Member States to recognise and protect indigenous people's rights to customary ownership and control of their lands and natural resources as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and ILO Convention No 169, and to comply with the principle of free, prior and informed consent; requests that the Member States which have not yet done so ratify ILO Convention No 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples; expresses particular concern at the significant impact of certain mega-projects, including infrastructure projects, extractive industries projects and energy production projects, on the human rights to water and sanitation, notably for indigenous peoples; insists on the importance of ensuring that genuine and comprehensive human rights impact assessments are carried out and that the affected population and civil society groups are consulted in good faith and that, when relevant, indigenous people have provided their free, prior and informed consent in relation to any mega-project; calls on state and non-state actors to avoid actions that jeopardise the rights of indigenous people, descendants of Africans and rural communities to the land, water, ecosystems and biodiversity and calls on the competent authorities to give them legal recognition of their titles, tenancies, rights and responsibilities; insists on the importance of holding open, inclusive and participative consultations in relation to major public decisions as regards water management;
22. Calls on the Commission to check carefully that the infrastructure and energy projects financed through the various development cooperation and external policy instruments, including the European Investment Bank, uphold and neither jeopardise human rights including the human right to water and sanitation, and the SDGs, nor contribute to the expulsion of indigenous peoples from their lands and territories;
23. Stresses the need for an increased focus on sustainable and resilient water and sanitation infrastructure to support communities through the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures and by making use of all of the necessary water risk mapping tools and early warning systems; calls on the Commission to support the Resilient Water Accelerator;
24. Condemns the fact that gender inequalities still exist in terms of exercising the human rights to drinking water and sanitation, and that the lack thereof leads to gender discrimination; also notes with concern that these have a devastating effect on women's rights, in particular as a result of the specific needs of women and girls with regard to menstrual hygiene and health, making it difficult for women and girls to lead safe and healthy lives; highlights that affordable access to water and adequate sanitation and hygiene (WASH facilities) is an essential prerequisite for public health and human

development, including the right to education for girls, and insists that the WASH sector in developing countries should be given high priority in EU development policy;

25. Calls for women and girls to be protected from physical threats and assaults, including sexual violence, when collecting household water and when accessing sanitation facilities outside their homes; calls for measures to be taken to reduce the time spent by women and girls in collecting household water, with the aim of addressing the adverse impact of deficient water and sanitation services on girls' access to education;
26. Stresses that the EU and its Member States must, in close cooperation with the UN and the international community, work closely with recipients of foreign aid in order to eradicate global water poverty, while ensuring adequate sanitation for all; calls on all states to fulfil their commitments under CEDAW and in particular Article 14 thereof, which requires of states parties to ensure women from rural areas have the right to enjoy adequate living conditions, inter alia in relation to sanitation and water supply;
27. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to apply a transformative and intersectional gender-sensitive approach to water resource management and water supply sanitation programmes, and to include policies accompanied by concrete action plans and adequate funding in accordance with the EU external funding instruments and the Gender Action Plan (GAP III), the EU's agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in external action for 2021-2025; calls for leadership by women to be promoted and for their full, effective and equal participation in planning, decision-making and applying decisions on water and sanitation management;
28. Stresses that access to safe drinking water is one of the major current problems, especially since nearly 60 % of aquifer resources cross political territorial borders; recalls that, in its conclusions of 2018, the Council condemned the use of water as a weapon of war and considered that 'in this context, destroying water infrastructures, polluting water or diverting watercourses in order to limit or prevent access to water could constitute violations of international law'; reminds that the intentional deprivation of water leading to the extermination of civilians is a crime against humanity according to Statute of the International Criminal Court and that it may also be considered a war crime, as any attack against or destruction of drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works is banned under the 1949 Geneva Conventions;
29. Is gravely concerned that violations of the right to water and sanitation in occupied territories aim to displace people from their lands and is worried about the denial of access to adequate water supply, resources and infrastructure; recalls that all peoples, including peoples under occupation, enjoy the sovereign right to control their natural wealth; calls on occupying powers to take immediate measures to guarantee access to and fair distribution of water to those living in occupied territories and, in particular, in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution 73/255 of 20 December 2018, to guarantee that those living in occupied territories have control over their water resources, including the management, extraction and distribution of water;
30. Calls for the EU to establish a political strategy to facilitate solutions in these areas and encourage the countries situated in the most important areas of conflict related to water to sign the Water Convention;

31. Is gravely concerned about the lack of access to water and sanitation in refugee camps; underlines that countries are obliged to safeguard the right to sanitary facilities and water for refugees;
32. Underlines that while water can at times act as a conflict indicator, it can also have a positive role in promoting peace and cooperation; supports the EU's diplomatic engagement on transboundary water cooperation as a tool for peace, security and stability, and emphasises the importance of integrated water resource management and the need for greater complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace actions in order to address urgent needs and to intervene earlier to address root causes and prevent the onset of humanitarian water and sanitation crises;
33. Stresses that companies worldwide must ensure that their activities do not encroach on or abuse the enjoyment of the human right of access to safe drinking water in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the declarations, pacts and treaties of the United Nations that have included this right; calls, furthermore, for countries to aim at achieving the goals set under SDG 6 and to adopt legislation to ensure that companies do not hinder equal access to an adequate supply of water; urges the EU and its Member States to constructively participate in the work of the UN Intergovernmental Working Group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, with a view to establishing an international binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other companies in international human rights law;
34. Calls on the EU delegations and Member States' missions in non-EU countries to be particularly vigilant in relation to companies, including those based in the EU, that could deny or undermine the enjoyment of the rights to water and sanitation; underlines that victims of such violations need to have access to effective judicial or other appropriate remedies as well as grievance mechanisms;
35. Emphasises that European companies, when operating in non-EU countries, must comply with the same legal obligations in respect of corporate reinforcement and due diligence that apply to their operations in the EU; highlights the importance of preventing, addressing and mitigating any adverse impacts on the human rights to water and adequate sanitation within mandatory diligence frameworks; calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider and study how to provide more information and ensure transparency for consumers on the sustainability impact of products on water resources, including in terms of water footprint;
36. Highlights the fact that, as several UN experts have stated, water is too often treated as a commodity without further social and cultural considerations, in breach of basic human rights, which contributes to increasing environmental degradation and exacerbating the vulnerability of the poorest and most marginalised in society, flying in the face of the SDGs; recalls that water supply and sanitation are services of general interest and not commodities – they are neither a luxury nor a consumer product and therefore must not be traded as such; underlines the finite nature of water and calls on the Commission and the Member States to take preventive action to combat global water scarcity and to support non-EU countries in measures to combat water scarcity;
37. Calls on states to take legal measures preventing water from being subject to financial speculation on futures markets and to promote an appropriate governance framework

for water and sanitation services under a approach primarily grounded in human rights and common good considerations; calls on the EU and national governments to promote and support independent water regulatory bodies that can help enforce human rights standards;

38. Recalls that, as the EU Water Framework Directive recognises, water is not a mere commodity but a public good that is vital to human life and dignity; notes that water services are services of general interest and of special nature that fall, therefore, primarily within the public interest; recalls the importance for EU external policies and instruments such as trade and investment agreements and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, as well as the activities of European companies, of upholding the human right to drinking water and sanitation in the countries concerned;
39. Underlines that water is a common public good and that an adequate, continuous and high-quality supply of water must be guaranteed; calls on states and donors to strengthen their promotion of the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all, including through investments that enhance access to water and sanitation services and maintain existing infrastructures and the provision and use of services; considers that investing in the reinforcement of capacities and the governance of water systems, as well as in their operation and maintenance, is vital in order to create robust and sustainable water and sanitation services;
40. Calls on the EU to support third countries in their actions to guarantee universal and non-discriminatory access to water and sanitary facilities and to guarantee a minimum subsistence level of water supplies to households experiencing economic or social vulnerability;
41. Calls for the EU also to invest in the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems (including forests, floodplains, wetlands, etc.), which often provide more cost-effective and sustainable water management solutions than conventional infrastructure remedies in terms of water storage, water treatment, erosion control, and moderate and extreme weather events;
42. Urges states to adopt the model for the provision of water and sanitation that is best suited and to engage in a transparent and robust process to improve the effective enjoyment of the human rights to water and sanitation in their societies; calls on governments to increase public investments in sustainable water-related infrastructure and to safeguard water as an essential public good;
43. Points out the need to reconcile water usage with the application of emerging technologies for conservation, the reduction of water pollution and the recycling of wastewater in order to improve the way water is provided, treated and disposed of;
44. Calls for the EU to support sustainable water management in the agricultural sector, which mobilises over 70 % of water resources, through investing in sustainable irrigation and water storage systems, through optimising and reducing the use of fresh water in agriculture along the whole supply chain, through reducing food waste and through fostering agro-ecology by restoring the wetlands, as well as through reducing, where possible, the use of pesticides and fertilisers that pose a risk of water pollution, especially to groundwater;

45. Recalls that access to water is also an energy-use challenge both in terms of production and extraction; stresses, in this context, the importance of fostering better energy management, as well as reuse solutions for treated wastewater, in order to limit fresh water consumption by means of wastewater treatment;
46. Calls on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to disincentivise the imposition of conditions requiring governments to privatise water and sanitation services when providing grants, loans and technical assistance;
47. Calls on the Commission to ensure adequate financial support for capacity-development actions in the water domain, cooperating with existing international platforms and institutions; supports the Global Water Solidarity Platform launched by the UN Development Programme in order to engage local authorities in finding solutions to water challenges; welcomes the UN 2023 Water Conference as an opportunity to develop cross-sectoral approaches in order to achieve water-related targets and goals and to get SDG 6 back on track;
48. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to encourage non-EU countries to grant stakeholders including civil society organisations and indigenous and local communities working to address breaches of the rights to water and sanitation, adequate resources and access to relevant information and to give them the ability to participate meaningfully in water-related decision-making processes, when appropriate, with a view to ensuring their engagement for informed and outcome-oriented contributions to water policy design and implementation; believes that in realising the human right to drinking water, it is vitally important to promote and strengthen networks of human rights experts, civil society organisations and community representatives at all levels and in that sense, calls on governments to design mechanisms for an inclusive system of water governance;
49. Calls for the EU to help third countries in respecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of workers in the wastewater treatment industry, including their rights to dignity, safety and health and the right to organise themselves;
50. Underlines that people living in poverty, in particular women and girls, minorities and people with physical and/or mental disabilities, are hit hardest by a lack of access to safe and clean water and sanitation; stresses that inequalities in access to water and sanitation are often attributable to systemic inequalities or exclusion; calls on governments to monitor inequalities in access to water and sanitation and to take decisive actions such as to encourage investment in sanitation and supply systems, including public systems, promoting efficiency and the conservation of water, as a scarce resource; calls on them moreover to guarantee the absence of discrimination in access to water and sanitation services, as public goods, ensuring the provision thereof for all, in particular by affording priority to access for women, girls and vulnerable groups with a view to remedying systemic exclusion and discrimination; encourages the authorities to review their legislative, political and practical frameworks in the area of water through the lens of human rights principles and standards in order to help guide actions aimed at tackling obstacles to progress;
51. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.