

OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON 'Right to Water: Human Rights Perspective'

25th Regular Session of the OIC-IPHRC

Jeddah, 17th July 2025: The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), during its 25th Regular Session, held a thematic debate on the subject of '*Right to Water: Human Rights Perspective*'. OIC Secretary General, OIC-IPHRC Chairperson, Commission Members and Executive Director of the IPHRC Secretariat attended the inaugural event. Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology OIC General Secretariat; United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation; Secretary General National Human Rights Committee of State of Qatar; Chairman of the Arab Charter Committee League of Arab States; Manager Agriculture, Water Resource & Rural Development, Islamic Development Bank; Director Department of Research and Studies, International Islamic Fiqh Academy; Consultant at the Department of Project Management Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF); Expert Islamic World Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) and Senior Researcher, Economic and Social Research Department, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), participated as expert panelists. OIC Member and Observer States and their National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) actively participated and contributed to the discussions.

The debate discussed the following: (a) fostering deeper understanding of the rights to water and sanitation by exploring its foundations in both Islamic teachings and international human rights frameworks; (b) analyzing ongoing international, regional, and OIC initiatives and normative frameworks related to the rights to water and sanitation; (c) emphasizing access to safe, sufficient and affordable water as a fundamental human right under international human rights law and its interdependence with other rights including right to life and health and sustainable development; (d) identifying key challenges such as water scarcity, inequitable distribution, contamination, impact of climate change, transboundary water disputes, water related challenges particularly in conflict-affected areas, territories under occupation and newly liberated territories; (e) reviewing strategies to address inequities and barriers to access and service delivery of water and sanitation within OIC Member States and beyond. Focused on persons in vulnerable and marginalized situations, including women, children, the elderly, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), people living in conflict-affected areas and those under occupation; (f) integrating the role of technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), and innovations for conservation of water and improvement of delivery systems and water governance; (g) promoting collaboration between OIC Member States, international organizations, civil society organizations, and specialized institutions to advance the rights to water and sanitation; (g) reviewing best practices in various Member States, including role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) in realizing the right to water, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

Based on extensive discussions conducted by the Commission, guided by the principles of integrity ethical standards, values, and codes of conduct established by the Islam to guide Muslim action in all areas of life, the Commission:

1. **Defined** that the “*right to water entitles everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use*” and the “*right to sanitation entitles everyone to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, and socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity*”¹.
2. **Upheld** that human rights in Islam represent a cohesive blend of *rights* and *responsibilities*, with humankind, as Vicegerent of Allah, entrusted with duties toward the Creator and other human beings. Islam provides a comprehensive ethical framework for addressing contemporary challenges related to water scarcity, equitable access, and sustainability. These teachings uphold the rights to water and sanitation as a Divine trust and collective responsibility. The Islamic perspective emphasizes water’s equitable distribution, responsible use, and protection as a shared resource valuable for entire humanity reinforcing both moral and legal obligations;
3. **Highlighted** that Islamic teachings and historical precedents prescribe water as a public good to benefit all without discrimination or exploitation. Further underscored that access to water must remain free from monopolization in accordance with Islamic principles of justice, compassion, and sustainability. Islam prohibits against wastefulness, even in abundance, which in alignment with the modern concept of sustainable development ensuring the preservation of water resources for future generations. Islamic traditions prioritize the needs of the persons in vulnerable situations, including the poor, travelers, women especially pregnant women, children and those in distress, highlighting access to water as a matter of human dignity as religious, moral and legal obligation;
4. **Affirmed** that access to water is indispensable for the realization of other fundamental human rights which are explicitly and implicitly recognized in key international instruments including *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, International Labour Organization Convention No. 161 and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Accordingly, the rights to water and sanitation, as affirmed under international human rights law, is both a moral imperative and a legally binding obligation upon State Parties, which require a commitment to equity, sustainability, international cooperation for advancing global peace, stability, development and social justice;
5. **Recalled** that Sustainable Development Goals emphasize the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Further recalled the adoption of *UN General Assembly Resolution 77/334 (2023)*², which mandated the development of the first UN System-

¹ <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/human-rights-water-and-sanitation>

² <https://docs.un.org/en/a/res/77/334>

wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation³. This Strategy adopts a multi-sectoral and climate-resilient approach, recognizing the interlinkages between water scarcity, hygiene, sanitation, public health, and environmental sustainability, while promoting the use of innovative technologies and adaptive management practices. Also, *UN General Assembly Resolution 71/222* of 21 December 2016⁴, which proclaimed the International Decade for Action "*Water for Sustainable Development*" (2018–2028), as a global call for enhanced cooperation and investment in water infrastructure, conservation, and equitable access;

6. **Further recalled** that the OIC has consistently emphasized the critical importance of water security through various resolutions, declarations, and policy decisions adopted by the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) and OIC Water Ministers. Over the past decade, guided by the mandates of the Water Ministers, the OIC has formulated a common *Water Vision*⁵ to guide Member States to strengthen water security through cooperation in key areas. Furthermore, the *OIC-2025 Programme of Action*⁶ underscored the need for enhanced infrastructure and modern technologies to optimize water resource utilization. Also, IPHRC in adopting the *Cairo Declaration of the OIC on Human Rights*⁷, reaffirmed the right to highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which obligates States to provide for a decent standard of living. This includes guaranteeing access to essential needs such as food, water, sanitation, housing, education, and healthcare. Collectively, these initiatives reflect the OIC's commitment to upholding the human rights to water and sanitation, aligning Islamic principles with international development and human rights obligations;
7. **Highlighted** key elements of the rights to water and sanitation which include (a) availability, ensuring that each person has sufficient and continuous water supply for personal and domestic needs such as drinking, sanitation, cooking, and hygiene in accordance with WHO recommendation of 50–100 liters per person per day⁸; (b) quality and safety are essential, requiring water to be free from harmful micro-organisms, chemicals, and radiological hazards; (c) acceptability refers to water being of appropriate color, taste, and odor, and facilities being culturally sensitive and respectful of privacy; (d) physical accessibility means that water services must be within or near a user's home, school, workplace, or health facility, ideally located within 1,000 meters and with a collection time of no more than 30 minutes⁹; (e) affordability is crucial; water and sanitation services must be economically accessible, suggesting that household water costs should not exceed 3 percent of income¹⁰;
8. **Upheld** that, based on international human rights law, the States bear **threefold obligations** to respect, protect and fulfil the right to water: (i) **Respect**: urges States to prohibit actions that interfere with individuals' access to safe and sufficient water. This includes avoiding policies or practices that hinder the availability, accessibility, or quality of water resources, such as unjustified diversions, excessive abstraction, or harmful pollution; (ii) **Protect**: States are required to prevent third parties, such as private corporations or individuals, from infringing

³ <https://www.unwater.org/publications/united-nations-system-wide-strategy-water-and-sanitation>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/documents/ares71222-international-decade-action-wa-23198>

⁵ <https://oicwater.sesric.org/oic-water-vision.php>

⁶ https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=302&p_ref=106&lan=en

⁷ <https://www.oic-iphrc.org/home/post/4>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/water>

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FactSheet35en.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/water>

upon the right to water. This includes safeguarding against water contamination through industrial waste or agricultural runoff, privatization measures that restrict affordability or accessibility without adequate safeguards, and exploitative practices that disproportionately affect persons in vulnerable or marginalized situations; (iii) **Fulfill**: States must take proactive measures to ensure equitable access to water for all. This involves: (a) enacting and enforcing legislation to guarantee the right to water as a public good; (b) developing infrastructure, such as wells, pipelines, and sanitation facilities, particularly in underserved areas; (c) building institutional capacity and allocating resources for sustainable water management and emergency response;

9. **Underscored** that water should serve as a catalyst for cooperation, especially among riparians sharing transboundary basins, as rivers have historically united people across cultural, linguistic, and religious divides. The approach to treat water solely as a national resource fuels competition and conflict, undermining climate resilience. An urgent shift to an ecosystem-based, basin-level management approach is needed to promote shared responsibility and sustainability. Without embracing the principles of international water cooperation, the risks of conflict, climate-related disasters, and human rights violations, particularly for persons in vulnerable situations, will grow, triggering mass displacement and regional instability. The water issues must not be weaponized to the detriment of the civilian population;
10. **Highlighted** that many OIC Member States face acute water-related challenges due to factors such as arid and semi-arid climates, rapid population growth, urbanization, agricultural demands, poor water management practices, and increasing impacts of climate change, including droughts, water logging and declining groundwater levels. These challenges are compounded by limited infrastructure, weak institutional capacities, transboundary water disputes and socio-economic disparities, which hinder the equitable and sustainable distribution of water resources. Despite efforts at national and regional levels, significant gaps remain in ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate sanitation, particularly in rural and underserved communities and newly liberated territories;
11. **Emphasized** the need to: (a) employ cost effective technological means to restore the health and sustainability of water resources which include rivers, aquifers, and aquatic ecosystems; (b) promote democratic water governance, understanding it as a common good and not a commodity; (c) make water and aquatic ecosystems a catalyst for peace and collaboration among peoples; (d) raise awareness and prevent water-crimes in productive activities that ruin lives and poison millions of people with toxic waste that must be banned and avoided at all costs;
12. **Highlighted** that water transition, in usage techniques, must promote both environmental and social resilience to address risks from extreme events like droughts and floods. This includes restoring the health and functionality of aquatic ecosystems, especially wetlands, riparian zones, and aquifers, which serve as vital water reserves. At the same time, social resilience should be strengthened by upholding human rights, particularly for the most vulnerable, and by promoting precautionary hydrological, territorial, and urban and rural planning;

13. **Reaffirmed** the interdependence and indivisibility of the right to water with other fundamental human rights, including the right to life, right to health, right to adequate housing, and right to food. Water is essential for drinking, hygiene, food production, and maintaining healthy and safe living conditions and its absence severely undermines the enjoyment of these interconnected rights. Ensuring access to sufficient, safe, and affordable water is thus crucial for advancing human dignity, protecting public health, and promoting sustainable livelihoods, especially for those in fragile and conflict-affected settings;
14. **Recognized** the disproportionate impact of water scarcity for persons in vulnerable situations, particularly women, children, refugees and IDPs, who often bear the brunt of water-related hardships due to displacement, poverty, and lack of infrastructure. Limited access to safe water exacerbates health risks, increases exposure to violence and exploitation, especially for women and girls collecting water from distant or insecure sources, and impedes the ability of children, especially girls, to attend school consistently, thus deepening cycles of inequality and marginalization;
15. **Identified** that pollution, overuse, and mismanagement of water resources pose serious threats to the availability and quality of freshwater globally, with dire implications for human health, food security, environmental sustainability, social cohesion and justice. Further underscored that industrial discharge, agricultural runoff, improper waste disposal and unsustainable extraction practices degrade vital water sources disrupt ecosystems, and disproportionately impact persons in vulnerable situations. Accordingly, emphasized the urgent need for comprehensive water governance frameworks that promote responsible consumption, pollution control, wastewater treatment, and integrated water resource management to safeguard this essential resource for current and future generations;
16. **Further identified** that communities living in conflict zones and those under occupation often face the systemic denial of access to water where infrastructure is deliberately targeted or withheld as a means of control, punishment, or oppression, thereby violating their basic human dignity and international legal protections. Emphasized that such practices contravene international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions, which obligate all parties to conflict to ensure access to essential resources, including water, for civilian population. The safeguarding of the right to water in conflict-affected areas and occupied territories is not only a humanitarian imperative but also essential for the protection of fundamental human rights, prevention of further instability, and promotion of peace and security;
17. **Reaffirmed** the inalienable rights to water and sanitation of the Palestinian people, particularly those enduring inhumane and genocidal humanitarian blockade in the Gaza Strip, where deliberate restrictions on access to safe and sufficient water have resulted in severe public health crises, environmental degradation, and grave human suffering. Further condemned the use of water as a weapon of war and collective punishment, in clear violation of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the targeting of civilian infrastructure and denial of essential services to the occupied population. Also, underscored that access to clean water is fundamental to the right to life, health, and dignity, and that the international community must act decisively to ensure immediate lifting of all illegal blockades and restoration of water and sanitation infrastructure in Gaza Strip;

18. **Upheld** that integration of human rights into water diplomacy is essential for promoting equitable access to water and preventing its weaponization during conflicts. The human rights framework, provided in international human rights and humanitarian law, strengthens States responsibilities towards the delivery and usage of water resources and specifies the appropriate tools and mechanisms which may encompass legislation, comprehensive plans and strategies. The access to safe and sufficient water as a fundamental human right provides a moral and legal framework that obligates States to prioritize the needs of people over political or vested strategic interests. Invited Parties to adopt a human rights-based approach on access to safe drinking water and sanitation to strengthen transparency, accountability and cooperation at all levels. It would help to reduce the risk of water being used as a tool of coercion or punishment in times of conflict. By aligning water diplomacy with international human rights law, States can establish mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution to ensure the protection of civilians during crises, and creating more resilient and inclusive water governance systems that promote lasting peace, justice, and sustainability;
19. **Affirmed** that the right to water encompasses not only access to safe, sufficient, and affordable water but also the obligation to adopt effective measures to ensure its sustainable availability, particularly in the face of increasing demand, climate change, and population growth. Therefore, recognized the transformative potential of AI and innovative practices, such as smart irrigation systems, satellite-based water monitoring, AI-driven water management and desalination technologies in enhancing water conservation, improving efficiency, reducing wastage, and supporting early warning systems for drought and floods. Accordingly, urged OIC Member States to invest in and promote research, development, and deployment of such innovations through international cooperation, public-private partnerships and knowledge exchange to secure the right to water for all, in line with Islamic principles and international human rights standards;
20. **Underscored** that the rights to water and sanitation is indirectly linked to the broader goals of the right to development, including poverty reduction, social equity, and improved quality of life. Hence, emphasized that sustainable water management policies must prioritize equitable access for all segments of society, especially the marginalized and vulnerable, as a cornerstone of socioeconomic growth and inclusive development in OIC Member States. The integrated water resource management approaches be adopted that balance human needs, environmental sustainability, and economic progress to realize both the right to water and the right to development;
21. **Commended** the visionary leadership, exemplary governance, and management of the Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for their unwavering commitment to ensuring the efficient, safe, and uninterrupted provision of reliable water supply to millions of pilgrims visiting the Holy sites throughout the year, particularly during the annual Hajj season. Also, recognized the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's sustained efforts and significant investments in advanced water infrastructure, desalination technology, and integrated water resource management, which serve as a model of excellence in delivering

essential services under complex logistical and environmental conditions, thereby upholding the dignity, health, and spiritual wellbeing of all pilgrims;

22. **Appreciated** adoption of OIC Water Vision 2012 emphasizing cooperation in knowledge sharing, capacity building, technology transfer, and governance reforms to safeguard the human right to water. The OIC Science and Technology Summits and the STI Agenda 2026 have prioritized targets such as water efficiency, wastewater recycling, and robust monitoring. Also, reaffirmed commitment to engaging globally, including at the World Water Forum and UN Climate Conferences and with Member States including Tajikistan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Arab Republic of Egypt, State of Qatar, State of Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Türkiye and Azerbaijan who are hosting key events to advance water security;
23. **Emphasized** that realization of the rights to water and sanitation necessitates robust global cooperation which is vital to bridge the gaps in infrastructure, expertise, and financial resources, especially in developing countries. It includes enhanced international support through capacity building, technology transfer, and adequate funding mechanisms for designing and implementing sustainable water management systems, safeguarding public health, and fulfilling their human rights obligations;
24. **Encouraged** international specialized agencies, funds, programs, and regional organizations within their respective mandates and resources, to scale up the use of scientific sources, affordable technology, research, and development and strengthened partnerships to enhance the ability of developing countries to address major structural impediments to access to water management technologies and achieve SDGs. Also, urged all OIC organs to take an active role, within their respective mandates and resources, in forging closer links with national and multilateral science advisory bodies and professional bodies in the OIC Member States to promote research in field of water management and optimally leverage science, technology, and innovation for the realization of the right to water;
25. **Underlined** that the right to water is intrinsically linked to food security and sustainable agriculture as water is a critical input for food production, livestock, and irrigation. Without sufficient water, agricultural productivity declines, leading to food shortages, increased prices, and heightened vulnerability, particularly in regions already facing climate stress and poverty. Ensuring the right to water, therefore, directly contributes to achieving food security, eradicating hunger, and promoting rural development. Integrated water resource management that prioritizes equitable distribution and sustainable use is essential to safeguarding both the right to water and the right to food;
26. **Highlighted** the pivotal role of private sector and businesses in realizing the rights to water and sanitation by contributing innovation, investment, and efficiency in service delivery to act as socially responsible stakeholders. Their engagement can support governments in expanding infrastructure, improving water quality, and developing sustainable technologies for water conservation and sanitation. Through responsible business practices, including corporate water stewardship, ethical pricing models and public-private partnerships, businesses can help ensure that water services are accessible, affordable, and safe for all, especially persons in vulnerable situations. Moreover, private entities are encouraged to align with international human rights

standards, ensuring their operations do not compromise the availability or quality of water, instead promote environmental sustainability as part of their corporate social responsibility;

27. **Further highlighted** the role of media, academia, and research organizations in creating awareness and mitigating challenges related to the rights to water and sanitation. Media serves as a powerful tool to inform and educate the public, amplify voices of affected communities and hold those responsible accountable by highlighting issues such as water scarcity, contamination, and inequitable access. Academia and research institutions contribute by generating evidence-based knowledge, innovating sustainable technologies, and informing policy through interdisciplinary studies on water governance, climate impact, and public health. Together, these sectors could foster informed public discourse, shape inclusive policy development, and support capacity-building efforts essential for achieving universal access to safe water and sanitation;
28. **Emphasized** the importance of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the promotion and protection of the rights to water and sanitation through independent accountability mechanism for government and private sector. They could monitor compliance with human rights standards, investigate violations, and provide remedies to affected individuals and communities. NHRIs also engage in advocacy and capacity-building to raise awareness about water and sanitation rights among stakeholders, including persons in vulnerable situations. NHRIs can act as a bridge between the public and policymakers by integrating community voices into national strategies, laws, and programs. Through public consultations, policy reviews, and engagement with civil society, NHRIs help ensure that water governance is inclusive, rights-based, and responsive to the needs of all segments of society;
29. **Called upon** the United Nations including relevant Special Procedures, international human rights community and development organizations to:
 - i. intensify efforts to promote and protect the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, especially to persons in vulnerable situations those living under occupation and in newly liberated territories;
 - ii. urge States Parties to uphold, respect, and fully implement their obligations under existing bilateral and multilateral treaties related to the right to water, including equitable and reasonable use, no significant harm, and duty to cooperate;
 - iii. mainstream the right to water within all human rights mechanisms, including Universal Periodic Reviews, treaty body reporting, and thematic mandates, highlighting its interdependence with rights to health, life, food, and development;
 - iv. encourage development agencies and international financial institutions to prioritize water security in their programming by ensuring adequate technical and financial support to developing countries for water infrastructure, sustainable management, and climate-resilient water systems;
 - v. address global water inequalities through equitable sharing of knowledge, best practices, and transfer of appropriate technologies, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 6;
 - vi. strengthen global monitoring and accountability frameworks to track progress on the rights to water and sanitation, ensuring that commitments made under international human rights and development instruments are translated into concrete outcomes on the ground;

- vii. urge Member States to adopt and implement legal and constitutional safeguards to protect the rights to water and sanitation and ensure accountability in case of violations;
- viii. urge international donors and humanitarian organizations to enhance their focus on providing assistance to improve the provision of water and sanitation facilities in conflict affected areas and those under occupation. To this end, urged to enhance the funding and technical capacities of the UNRWA;
- ix. bring an end to illegal and inhumane humanitarian blockade of the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip imposed by the Israeli occupation regime;

30. **Further called** upon the OIC Member States to undertake coordinated and accelerated actions in accordance with the commitments made in the international human rights treaties, revised OIC Charter, OIC 2nd Ten Year Plan of Action, SDGs, and Water Vision to:

- i. incorporate human rights-based approach to water and sanitation where States are duty-bearers of providing water and sanitation services to people who are rights-holders;
- ii. enact and effectively implement national laws and policies that guarantee equitable, non-discriminatory and affordable access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for all;
- iii. integrate water rights into constitutional and legal frameworks and prohibit any form of exclusion or exploitation in water provision and pricing, ensuring special protection for marginalized segments especially women and girls, elderly, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons and those affected by natural disasters or conflicts;
- iv. incorporate the right to water and sanitation into their national human rights action plans and sustainable development strategies;
- v. strengthen cooperation among Member States through mutually agreed joint initiatives on water resources and addressing transboundary water related issues;
- vi. facilitate exchange of best practices, technologies, and institutional experiences, and establish regional centers of excellence for capacity-building in water governance and sanitation services;
- vii. mobilize public and private resources to invest in development of sustainable water and sanitation infrastructure, especially in rural and underserved areas;
- viii. encourage innovative financing models and public-private partnerships to ensure reliable, cost-effective, and climate-resilient water service delivery;
- ix. support research and development of water-saving technologies, rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, and reuse solutions adapted to local environmental and socioeconomic conditions;
- x. promote digital tools for monitoring, forecasting, and managing water demand, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions vulnerable to climate change impacts;
- xi. launch national awareness campaigns rooted in Islamic principles that promote water conservation, hygiene and ethical use of water as a divine trust;
- xii. involve scholars and jurists, media, and academic institutions in educating communities about responsible water use and sanitation practices;
- xiii. establish independent regulatory bodies at national level or assign responsibilities to NHRIs for monitoring the implementation of the rights to water and sanitation;
- xiv. invest in data collection systems to track water quality, coverage, affordability, and equity, and use this data to inform evidence-based policymaking and periodic reviews;

- xv. foster strategic partnerships with international and regional organizations, including WHO, UN-Water, UN Environment Programme and development banks, to leverage technical assistance, capacity-building, and funding opportunities;



