

SE08A: Water for life – Bridging the gap between the right to water and food

Organized by: Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation (Independent Expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council); Special Rapporteur on the right to food (Independent Expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council); End Water Poverty; ONGAWA Engineering for Human Development; WCC Ecumenical Water Network

Summary of the side event

On 22 October 2024, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, organized an official hybrid side event during the 52nd Plenary Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS52). Together with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Member State representatives from Spain and Slovenia, Civil Society, Indigenous Peoples, and others, the panelists explored ways to bridge the gap between the right to water and the right to food. This dialogue was informed by insights from Mr. Arrojo-Agudo's recent report, "Water and Food Nexus: A Human Rights Perspective."

The 75-minute event opened with a keynote address from his H.E. Mr. Gabriel Ferrero De Loma-Osorio, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Food Security at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation in Spain. Mr. Ferrero initiated the discussion on the fundamental human rights to food and water. The event featured a dialogue between the two UN Special Rapporteurs linked to the interconnections between the right to food and the right to water as well as their manifestation of the urgency of addressing the water-food nexus in the context of the water crisis.

A presentation by the FAO Right to Food Lead also highlighted the synergies between water and food systems and explored potential coordination opportunities across these sectors amidst power struggles, exacerbated by political conflicts and corporate interests.

Civil society representatives also contributed their insights, sharing knowledge and experiences linked to water-food nexus and food systems resilience amidst the water crisis. Key voices included the Co-coordinator of the Youth Working Group of the Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism, the Western Europe Focal Point for the Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism, the Alternate of End Water Poverty Steering Committee Representative for South Asia, and the Coordinator of the Ecumenical Water Network at the World Council of Churches. The event concluded with remarks from Dr. Blaža Nahtigal, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the FAO and WFP, who emphasized the need for policy reforms to prioritize water use for human consumption. The discussions reinforced the urgent need for integrated approaches to water and food security, aiming to influence future policy directions and promote resilience in the face of the water crisis.