

## **The Path we are travelling is Unsustainable: The World Needs an Alternate Path**

***(A Report on WSF and WWF in Brazil)***

A nine member team led by Dr Rajendra Sing, known as Waterman of India went to Brazil to attend the World Social Forum held during March 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> at Salvador and World Water Forum during March 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> at Brasilia. The other members of the team includes Mr.Kishor Dharia, Mr.Sudhir Rathod, Dr.Snehal Donde, Mr.Pramod Deshmukh, Mr.Aniket Lohiya, Mr Deepak Parvatiyar, Mr.Moulik Sisodia, Mr.Sudarsan Das, Mr Anil Patil, Mr Narendra Chug, Ramesh Sharma etc. World Social Forum (WSF) and World Water Forum (WWF) are considered to be the biggest civil society events in the world in the recent past.



### **World Social Forum at Salvador**

The collapse of bi-polar world order after the collapse of communist regime in East Europe and emergence of uni-polar world order created a space to challenge the world order, specially the globalized market hegemony. WSF emerged out of that space in last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a motto, “Another World is Possible”. The WSF prefers to define itself as an open space-plural,diverse,non-partisan-that stimulates the decentralized reflections, proposal building, experience sharing and alliances among movements and organizations engaged in concrete actions towards more solidarity, democratic and fair world –a permanent space and process to

build alternative to the neo-liberal world economic order'. The process got started in 2001 from Brazil at Port Alegre and since then WSF has become the largest event of civil society organizations of the world in uniting like minded people for an alternate world. In 2004 WSF was organized in Mumbai, India in which the President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela had attended and said, "We owe a huge debt to our future generation in the form of a better world...that world is definitely possible. Through efforts like the one you are engaged in now, this world will be a reality". This statement of Nelson Mandela made the world community sit and take note of WSF. After that many WSF sessions were held in different parts of the world and this time Brazil hosted WSF for 8<sup>th</sup> time at Salvador in which the Indian Delegation led by Dr Rajendra Singh made an effective presence. The event was organized in the Bahia Central University, Salvador and was attended by more than 16000 people from various parts of the globe. There were many sessions during the WSF and Indian delegation took part in few of them, most prominent among them was the session on , "Networking among movements for alternate ideas and thinking" which was organized by University of sustainability of China. Dr Rajendra Singh, Mr Sudarsan Das, Mr Aniket Lohiya, Mr Narendra Chug etc participated and emphasized on connecting movements around rivers in different parts of India with rest part of the Globe. Mr Rajendra Singh spoke about the community's search and activities around rejuvenating the rivers of Rajasthan and stressed upon the need for the world to recognize it for greater interest of the earth in protecting the environment in general and water and rivers in particular. He emphasized on the need for creating a world forum called World River Forum. In the said session other representatives from Japan, Nepal, France, Brazil etc also spoke apart from China, the hosting country. Mr Sudarsan Das, Convenor, Mahanadi Bachao Andolan while emphasising the need of connecting movements on environments around the world spoke about the people's struggle in Odisha ,India to protect river Mahanadi from the clutches of industrial houses.

The WSF at Bahia Salvador had many seminars, workshops, plenary sessions, cultural activities and conferences in the University campus as well as around the city. The academic community and the indigenous community across the globe joined in the 5 days programmes and had serious deliberations about alternative ideas and thinking to the present order and happenings of the world.

The dreams of humanity today are confronted with fundamentalism of wars and xenophobia and systems of domination with the new ways of striking liberties and democracies. The WSF at Salvador networked with local movements across the world called upon the world community to forge challenges to this systems. Many parliamentarians and heads of the countries of Latin America and South Africa also took part in the WSF besides civil society members.

The WSF 2018 made some declarations such as 1) **On democracy in danger in Brasil-** in which the attack on democracy in the region, with even coups in Latin

America, in Honduras, Paraguay and recently also in Brazil was challenged 2) **On the Mercosur-EU FTA**- where the agreement to explore the natural resources between the EU and Mercosur which will severely affect the small and marginal farmers and the ecosystems and bio-diversity around the Amazon area was opposed 3) **On access to water as a public good**- where the commoditization of water was rejected and the demand for equitable access to water as a free good was reiterated. 4) **Against war and militarization**-where concerned over wasting immense resources in the recent global tide of militarization and raising military budget of countries world wide was challenged.

The Indian delegates who took part in the WSF 2018 took a resolution on 17th March, on the concluding day of the WSF to set up a World River Forum to connect WSF processes in addressing the crisis mounting on rivers across the globe for the better understanding of rivers as well as protecting life, livelihood and entire ecosystems including bio-diversity around these rivers. The resolution appealed the world community and civil society organizations, attending the WSF to join hands in setting up the World River Forum as a platform for comprehensive dialogues in considering river rights as integral part of human rights and forge unity among community driven processes and community led movements around river and related issues across the globe. The resolution stated that transboundary river conflicts and forced migration related to water are posing great threat to human society and peace and hence called upon the civil society involved in WSF process to come forward in mitigating this crisis which is getting unmanageable due to the factors like climate change among others.

### **World Water Forum 2018**

Water for Sharing-with this punch line and the theme, the World Water Forum had its 8<sup>th</sup> edition at Brasilia, the capital of Brazil from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. Considered to be the biggest event in the world related to water, the event was really seen to believe. With huge participation of delegates from all the continents of the world including country heads, international Governments, academia, corporate houses, civil society, R&D institutions, parliamentarians and common citizens, the 6 days event created another chapter in the history of WWF which was organised by World Water Council.

The formation of World Water Council (WWC) was first proposed in 1992 at the UN's International Conference on Environment and Development in Dublin and at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. In continuation of this resolution, the World Water Council was formed in 1996 with its Head Office in Marseille, France.

Over the past 20 years, the World Water Council has become a unique platform of international hydro-diplomacy where the water community and policy decision

makers from all the regions of the world come together to discuss solutions for water security of the world.

The WWC holds the largest water event in the world every 3 years called the World Water Forum (WWF) and the last one was hosted in Brasilia, Brazil in March this year in which more than 120,000 people from 172 countries participated. The inauguration of the forum this year was attended by 12 heads of state and 134 parliamentarians from 20 nations participated in the parliamentary conference in the forum. The conference of judges was attended by 83 judges of Supreme Court from 57 countries.

56 Ministers and 14 Deputy Ministers were present in the ministerial conference and international bodies such as UN and its agencies, European Union, World Bank, OECD, International Development Bank and many others participated in high level discussions on water.

The Indian government participation in the Council and at the Forum has been negligible with only 3% of the members of the World Water Council are from India.

There were 95 sessions besides many side events numbering more than 200 on 32 topics and 9 broad themes on water, formed the proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> WWF besides Citizen's Village and Expo where hundreds of activities and exhibitions found places. The major themes of WWF include 1. **Climate** (Water Security and Climate Change) 2. **People** (Water, sanitation and health) 3. **Development** (Water for sustainable production) 4. **Urban** (Integrated urban water and waste management) 5. **Ecosystems** (Water quality, ecosystem livelihood and biodiversity) 6. **Finance** (Financing for water security) and other cross cutting themes include 7. **Sharing** (Sustainability through stakeholders involvement) 8. **Capacity** (Education, capacity building and technology exchange) and 9. **Governance** (Water Governance for 2030 development agenda). The key issues emerged out of the sessions, side events, group meetings etc were nature based solutions, human rights, participation, innovations, water security, green and grey infrastructures, data, ICT and monitoring, investment, integration, partnerships, coordination etc on which series of recommendations were made and a declaration on the basis of the above was made on the concluding session of the 6 day's event. The WWF was concluded with concrete action plans for the 9<sup>th</sup> WWF at Senegal, SA in 2021.

The Indian delegates made their effective presence in the WWSF in the form of networking, organizing side event on, "River, water and migration", interacting with delegates from different countries including field visit to places of importance related to water conservation and management. The side event organized by Indian

delegates led by Dr Rajendra Singh with support from World Water Council was attended by many delegates from different countries including India. Chaired by Dr Singh and attended by Honorary President, Governors of WWC from Hungeri, US, India etc the side event thrust upon the need of rejuvenating the river ecosystems and processes & movements around them and to meet up the challenges of water crisis and related issues around it. Dr Rajendra Singh stressed upon setting up of a World River Forum to have dialogues, deliberations and formulating action points in protecting the ecosystems around the rivers across the globe and forge unity and net works among the movements, activities and processes in different countries in this regard. The Indian delegates who spoke on the occasion include Mr Ramesh Sharma, Narendra Chug, MrSudarsan Das etc.

The events were organized in huge scale with elaborate arrangements of logistic, dazzling podiums, technology equipped conference halls, sophisticated application of ICT and of course beautifully arranged refreshments, thanks to initiative of WWC and support of Brazilian Govt in which the corporate houses dealing with water played a major role.

### **Alternate World Water Forum**

As an interesting development, Brasila witnessed an alternate World Water Forum events parallel to the World Water Forum in between 14<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> March which challenged the official WWF in terms of it's too much corporate driven phenomena. The alternate forum was orgnised at City Park Stadium, Brasilia with participation of thousands of delegates across major continents of the globe where the motto of WWF in terms of commercialization of water was severely challenged. The University of Brasilia also took active part in organizing seminars, symposiums, thematic discussions in it's campus for the alternate water forum. The alternate forum opposed the self styled World Water Forum, organised by big corporations that aim to boost water modification and rejected corporate control over the natural heritage that is water. Access to water is a fundamental right, AWWF said and called upon the civil societies, citizens, environmental and humanitarian organizations, movements etc of the globe to oppose any move of market ownership over such fundamental human rights such as water. The AWWF had series of thematic discussions, including plenary sessions where it was urged upon to forge unified struggle against the big corporations' attempt to turn water to a commodity, privatising water reservoirs and water sources, trying to turn the rights over water into an unreachable resource to many populations that, make the humanity suffer from social exclusion, poverty and are involved in all kinds of wars. The organizers of AWWF calls the WFF as illegitimate as it is a business fair to promote the market to transnational companies focusing on water and sanitation sectors. The AWWF declared, "Water is a right and not a commodity" and "it is a public good that must be shared with all humanity and living beings".



Two delegates from India such as Mr Moulik Sisodia and Mr Sudarsan Das took part in this AWWF. In one of the sessions on connecting people's movements around water of the globe, Mr Sudarsan Das took part and narrated how Mahandi, a life line of the people of 30 millions of the people of the state of Odisha, India is going to be under the clutches of corporate houses, denying the rights of the people over the water of the river as multiple river valley projects being funded by them, diverting the flow of the river for industrial purposes.

The cultural programmes at AWWF was worth seeing in which the fight of local indigenous people in protecting rivers and water bodies against the clutches of corporate houses like Nestle, Coca Cola etc was very effectively depicted.

### **Field Visits**

The Indian delegates during their stay at Brazil visited many places like Brasilia's water bodies, ecological heritages, Salvador's monuments, Rio's natural heritage and monuments etc. The visit to these places were very much enriching experiences.



The Indian delegates in series of group meetings have come up with broad road map of translating the learning and experiences from Brazil in to actions in Indian situations and a meeting of the delegates and other interested groups has been fixed on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of April at Jodhpur, Rajsthan to be hosted by Pritiv Raj Singh, the Governor of WWF from India.

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## *Annexure I*

### ***Call for Action at 8<sup>th</sup> WWF was as follow-***

*We strongly encourage all stakeholders to apply the following 5 recommendations which resulted from what we have learned and built together over time globally:*

- 1. Promote sensitive integrated water practices, taking into account basic human rights and services and gender approaches, putting sanitation and access to quality water at the top of the water agenda;*
- 2. Bring forward legislation that enables fair, efficient and sustainable use of water resources, promote integrated urban water practices and energy efficiency, making use of technology when possible;*
- 3. Strengthen and increase decentralized funding and innovative finance mechanisms for water and sanitation projects;*
- 4. Promote urban water resilience through planning out risk and climate change adaptation and mitigation and protection of sensitive areas;*
- 5. Strengthen the capacity of local governments and citizens in water sensitive governance.*

*In order to strengthen the implementation of water -related policy, programmes and initiatives at the local and regional levels, we will seek to develop and implement plans and goals for acting on these recommendations and consequently contributing to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. We expect to promote a broad engagement with this Call for Action and to have it revisited and its progress evaluated at the Political Process for Local and Regional Authorities at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Senegal.*

*This Call for Action has been agreed upon in Brasilia on 21 March 2018.*

## **Annex II**

### **8th WWF's Call on Sustainable Development-**

*We, multi-stakeholder participants attending the 8th World Water Forum “sharing water”, considering the convergence of all the statements produced during the Forum, call for an urgent mobilization of all parties to ensure a sustainable future for our World and commit ourselves to face and tackle the increasing water challenges.*

*We consider that current water policies will not be sufficient to reach the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We request the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the United Nations (HLPF, July 2018) to give a determined push to cooperative alliances, water reforms and financial innovations.*

*Global water challenges are increasing. Action towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets related to water must be implemented without delay and achieved in due course: there is not much time left until the first review of Goal 6 on water in July 2018 by the HLPF.*

*We call for the strengthening of the United Nations’ support of its Member States and for the development at the highest level of a political dialogue and regular UN meetings on water. This should be supported by the reinforcement of multi-actor platforms including scientists, public and private practitioners, national partnerships, civil society, donors and decision makers.*

*International cooperation based on the United Nations Decade should be promoted and actively coordinated with major treaties<sup>3</sup>.*

*The SDG 6 targets cannot be achieved with current policies. We, together, must commit to the implementation of good practices (many of them have been presented during the 8th World Water Forum) as well as a drastic improvement of water governance.*

*We particularly raise the attention to some major conditions of success:*

- 1. Governments should announce national commitments to increase their ambition towards achieving SDG 6 and other SDG’s targets related to water, leaving no one behind and starting by the most vulnerable, including forcibly displaced populations, and to give a dedicated support to fragile states; Sufficient financial innovative tools and instruments at all levels need to be developed to ensure effective progress towards SDG 6 targets;*
- 2. Peace, stability and prevention of conflicts should be ensured through wise water diplomacy arrangements and alliances, as well as transboundary water cooperation based on win-win solutions embedded into international treaties;*
- 3. Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures need to be budgeted and implemented at all relevant scales, with the support of international community assistance if necessary;*
- 4. Monitoring and information need to progress and be better used. Current*



*indicators do not suffice to monitor the targets set by countries in the SDGs and new sub-indicators needs to be brought forward; finalization by the UN Statistical Commission of the methodology of Tier III indicators relative to Water is needed;*

- 5. Knowledge, science (including human sciences), technology and innovation at large including the one from traditional knowledge should guide policy makers and contribute to reinforce the capacity of local governments and citizens; Legal and economic security have to strengthen the public and private sectors responsible for water supply and sanitation services, with a focus on universalization, transparency and tariff moderateness; it should recognize community-based approaches;*
- 6. Business needs to value and mainstream water into its strategies, materiality and decision-making process and share good practices in water management;*
- 7. The value of water has to be understood beyond its economic sense towards its cultural, medicinal, traditional and social heritage. The education system must transmit it to the youngest starting by the most vulnerable;*
- 8. Water issues must no longer be considered in isolation, by focusing on the terrestrial part of water cycle alone (from crest to reef, including groundwater) but have to be strongly related to the oceans and the atmosphere, as a unique cycle. In all institutions and decision-making processes, sectoral approaches must be questioned, and tools must be built to ensure coherence. Integrated efficient water management need to be implemented at the different levels of the watershed. Sustainability of water critically depends on conservation, restoration and proper managements of ecosystems like forests. Nature based solutions, especially to sustain a new city model, aren't optional;*
- 9. Strong, democratic and inclusive collaboration and cooperation involving the society at large is expected.*

*It must gather indigenous peoples' communities and minority groups, private and financial sector, academics and policy makers, parliaments and local authorities, national water partnerships. A specific acknowledgment of women and youth contribution to the sector is mandatory;*

- 10. Humanitarian assistance is not a choice. It should be a commitment for every Nation around the world. It requires global and governmental sufficient funding and support to existing coordination mechanisms (clusters and national coordination platforms), on the response to crises (conflicts, major natural disasters), preparedness measures and rehabilitation transitional strategies.*

**Mr. Sudarshan Das**  
**Convener, Mahanadi Bachao Andolan,**  
**& Managing Trustee, HDF-cDAR**

## **Concluding Statement**

*We affirm that the United Nations and the governments, as well as all societies must consider water as a need to achieve Sustainability. No solution for water issues can be found without progress for Sustainability in many other sectors. Recognizing the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in 2010 and dedicating a specific SDG to water and sanitation in 2015 have been major steps in this direction. However, efforts remain to be accomplished beyond the water sector to develop holistic policies and avoid fragmented approaches.*

## **Self-commitment of the Forum to reduce its own footprint**

*We all considered from the beginning of the Forum's preparation that the Forum itself had to be as respectful as possible of the environment. Many efforts have been made to reduce the footprint of our activities and a report of these efforts will be published.*



# Photo Gallery



























