

Privatizing Potable Water in Mexico
Posted on March 17, 2015 by Alfonso Antonio

The right to potable water, its use, sanitation and reuse, currently being privatized in Mexico. The new law proposed by CONAGUA restricts studies and research.

On March 4th, legislative committees approved the proposal of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA), by the Lower House of Commons on Tuesday, March 10th. **This proposal, according to experts, scientists and researchers, heads us to the privatization of water services and the possibility of exercising an inflexible control over the resource.**

This despite the fact that last July 28, 2010, through Resolution 64/292, of the United Nations General Assembly, which in summary states: we explicitly recognize the human right to the access to water and its sanitation, reaffirming that clean drinking water and sanitation services of water are essential for the realization of all human rights.

According to researchers who already held a protest on March 5th and assert that the “CONAGUA Act” would inevitably create two problems: first, a ban on studies and research on the water resource if a permit by CONAGUA has not been granted (ie. no research can be concluded unless the outcome conforms to CONAGUA criteria). The second: that the quality of water consumed by Mexicans will be affected by allowing the drinking water to contain all sorts of contaminants (such as arsenic, chloride, lead, manganese, etc.), provided these levels do not exceed the Mexican standards, allowing higher concentrations than the international average.

In another vein, Pedro Moctezuma, researcher at the UAM, points out that the initiative will favor mega-companies with foreign capital, which would manage water systems in terms of guaranteed profits from taxes and fees paid by Mexicans. “Corporations as Veolia, Suez, and United Utilities will profit, which by the global trend of redistributing potable water and its sanitation have already been expelled from 180 cities like Prague, Berlin, Paris, Buenos Aires, and Atlanta. (La ley).” **“It would benefit corporations that speculate using projects with high-energy demands and schemes to profit from bringing water services to consumers. Companies such as Higa in the case of Monterrey VI; from toxic mining to fracking, or breweries operating in desert areas, depriving communities of water,” he described in an interview.**

Moreover, Anaïd Velasco, coordinator of the research area of the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA), has stated that Article 73 of the Constitution does not expressly empower Congress to appoint powers at the federal, state and municipal levels.

Around the human right to water, on March 5th academics released a document in which they analyzed the initiative and, among other things, warned that this law will limit the use of water to 50 liters per person daily, an amount that puts health at risk, since a legal analysis by the Mexican Center of Environmental Law and the World Health Organization states that the optimal access representing the lowest risk to the health of people is at least 100 liters per person. So the bill of CONAGUA, while criminalizing scientific research, legalizes pollution of the resource.

The points in dispute around the new “CONAGUA Law” concentrate on eight general issues, the “decanting” referring to the change from a natural basin to an artificial one or one with no natural connection to the primary water source are among the most important. This represents an immediate alteration to the environment; the creation of electrical energy, the acquisition, use and exploitation of property and equipment, as well as the invitation to the private sector to invest in the resource distribution through remuneration which will eventually be paid by the user.

In an essay written by Sergio Sarmiento for the national newspaper, Reforma, he notes that, in politics, those promoting the law, pretending to privatize the provision of services and channeling of wastewater to its final destination, may result in politicized monopolies of water services by large corporations. The leftists, who accuse them of this objective, seek the monopolización by the State, of which the results are obvious. Although in reality the current monopolización has a real benefit, perhaps the only one: the indigenous communities maintain the resource as part of their property.

The conclusion so far is that the need for new legislation for the water services issues continues. The service to the user, who is the natural owner of water by human rights, is kept completely in the margin of the possible changes to the law, in a context where the supposed representatives of the people, in reality represent only their personal interests or those of their party.

“We forget that the water cycle and the cycle of life is the same thing.” (Jacques Y. Cousteau)

MEXICO WATER PRIVITIZATION : Formalizing the privatization of water would give large companies broader control of the precious resource to set rates and boost their profits, rather than conserve and protect it for the population. To Sign Avaaz

Petition: https://secure.avaaz.org/es/petition/Congreso_de_la_Union_Mexico_Desechen_la_iniciativa_de_Ley_General_de_Aguas_fast_track_1/?cSWrljb

Resource links to articles March 2015:

<http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/14688>

<http://www.bnamericas.com/news/privatization/joint-committee-approves-water-bill-amid-privatization-claims>

<http://www.bnamericas.com/news/waterandwaste/mexicos-house-postpones-vote-on-water-bill-after-pressure-from-civil-organizations1>

http://www.loscabosnews.com.mx/blogs/sandra_rico/

<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/215/46052.html>