

Water Manifest of the Turkish Water Assembly

Water is the foundation of life on which all living things on our planet rely upon. Life has emerged with water. It will cease to exist without water. Water is not a commodity to be traded, but a natural entity that all creatures have the right to access.

The rivers, creeks, lakes and ground waters of Turkey have been plundered at an increasing rate for the past fifty years. Within a short time frame, an area of lake larger than the Marmara Sea has dried up, hundreds of rivers and creeks have been despoiled and ground waters have been over-extracted. As a consequence, innumerable species have disappeared, agricultural land has become barren, our geographical memory has been shattered and natural and historical sites inherited from our ancestors have been drowned.

The main reasons for this annihilation are the dams, hydroelectric power stations, desiccation of natural lakes and inappropriate irrigation practices. However, all life forms on earth including humans, require the integrity of lakes, creeks, rivers and ground waters. In other words, we all need a healthy water cycle in order to survive.

If the current circumstance prevail, our natural ecosystems will be at unprecedented risk. Many plant and animal species in Turkey will simply cease to exist and hundreds of thousands of people will be forced to abandon their homelands.

The development in terms of energy and agriculture that the current water policy has promised cannot even being to compensate for the valuable losses the same policy has caused.

We, as founders of the Turkish Water Assembly and the victims of the current water policy, emphasize the facts below:

- Nature exists on its own and human beings are merely a part of the nature.
- Nature is not an object; it is an invaluable process according to its own archaic rules.
- Nature cannot be turned into a commodity.
- Water is an integral and inseparable part of nature.
- The whereabouts of the water is at its own watershed. Water is not a resource but a natural entity.
- Water makes itself only out of flowing and in nature, not a single drop of water flows in vain.
- Neither privatization of the water nor assigning a seigneur to the water can be accepted.
- Principles such as sustainable development and balance between the use and the protection cannot be employed to justify the over-exploitation of nature.
- It is unacceptable to take nature out of Life by defining it as "environment" since nature is the source of life itself.

Arising from our conscientious responsibility to our own existence, to the planet we live on and to the future generations, we demand that the principles below must be applied to all actions concerning water:

- Nature and access to clean water is an integral part of human rights.
- Water is equally valuable for all life forms including humans. Affairs concerning water can only be met if this is accepted and incorporated into these affairs.
- Water cannot be the subject of daily legal regulations. A definitive water law depending on

- ecological basis is a foundation for providing a just and righteous water requirement.
- Water pirating is a crime. Any media commissioning this activity, regardless of its status, cannot be supported.
 - Ground waters must not be over extracted. They must not be used for surface irrigation in regions of dry climate.
 - Any activities breaking the natural cycle of water within or in between the basins cannot be accepted due to the ecological, economic and sociological damage they cause.
 - Water access rights must be continuous and equal for all parts of society.

We, including the NGOs, lawyers and scientists from all over Turkey, have come together in İkizdere, Rize. Here, due to the conditions described above, we have established the Turkish Water Assembly.

We aim to enable public possession of the water, providing constitutional security for the Nature rights. We are against all hydroelectric power plants, dams, drainage projects that result in water transfer between the basins and irrigation projects until this is realized.

The Turkish Water Assembly is determined to continue its actions until the principles stated above are fully realized. The assembly is aware that the vital energy received from air, earth and water is more essential than the energy produced by humans.

The members of the Turkish Water Assembly bow respectfully before the Nature that have nourished life for people of today and all the civilizations founded on this land since time immemorial.

January 17th, 2010
İkizdere, Rize