



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND  
www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9359 / +41 22 917 9407 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org)

**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**

REFERENCE:

8 November 2017

**Open letter from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Léo Heller, to Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Members of GWOPA International Steering Committee and donors**

As an independent expert tasked by the United Nations Human Rights Council to monitor and promote the human rights to water and sanitation worldwide, I wish to call on all relevant actors involved in the Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance (GWOPA) to make utmost efforts to maintain the Alliance and to preserve its inspiring spirit. GWOPA has made successful progresses in establishing partnerships with providers from developing countries.

I have received information on ongoing debates on possible reformulation of GWOPA's structure and on the institutional relationship between UN-Habitat, the International Steering Committee and the management team of the Alliance. Debates also concern potential risks of discontinuity of the administrative and financial support currently granted to this initiative.

I wish to convey my position that any future format of GWOPA should not undermine the continuity and strengths of the initiative as I believe that ensuring access to water and sanitation for all cannot be achieved in isolation. This initiative has contributed and will continue to do so to advance the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation.<sup>1</sup>

It is essential for GWOPA to be supported by a mechanism which protects the Alliance's independence and its main principles i.e. not-for-profit peer support; focus on fragile providers; and open and transparent alliance. It is also essential that the decision-making process on the operations of GWOPA will benefit from an inclusive and participatory mechanism that involves representatives of relevant public providers.

I understand that GWOPA is facing an urgent need to arrange financial and administrative support from 2018. Financial support to GWOPA has been heavily relying on contribution from the Government of Spain. The Hosting Agreement with Spain to host the GWOPA Secretariat in Barcelona is due to expire at the end of this year. In this regard, I

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<sup>1</sup> For the relationship between utilities and the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation, please see my report submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 (A/70/203)

encourage the Government of Spain to continue its support to GWOPA to maximum extent possible. At the same time, I call upon other potential donors to urgently consider the provision of financial support to this unique initiative, which helps the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Léo Heller', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'L' and a trailing flourish.

**Léo Heller**  
**Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**