



## **COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN SIERRA LEONE**

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### **COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN SIERRA LEONE (CCSL) STATEMENT MARKING WORLD WATER DAY TUESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> MARCH, 2022**

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Today March 22 marks World Water Day – a day set aside to focus on the importance of water to everyone in the world. This day was set aside by the United Nations in 1993.

Churches in Sierra Leone, through the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL), join other faith communities all over the world, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Water Network in celebrating this day.

The theme for this year's celebration is: "Groundwater: Making the invisible visible." This theme draws our attention to the importance of "Ground water" as a hidden vital resource that is believed to provide almost half of all drinking water worldwide. This year's celebration seeks to draw our attention to this hidden vital God-given resource.

The value of water cannot be measured in monetary terms. Water indeed is life. Every human being needs water for survival. Thus, if people are denied adequate supply of water, they are denied life. Water is indispensable for human dignity. Provision of water is not a privilege offered to people, but the right of people.

The provision of safe and affordable water is a HUMAN RIGHT recognized by International Human Rights Law, through treaties and declarations that Sierra Leone subscribes to. It is incumbent on any government to see to it that clean, safe, accessible and affordable water is available for personal and domestic uses of the people it governs. For any government to negate that responsibility is to violate the God-given right of God's people.

**Members:** African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist Convention Sierra Leone, Bo Anglican Diocese, Christ Apostolic Church, Christian Reformed Church, Church of the Lord Aladura, Church of God of Prophecy, Church of God World Missions Sierra Leone, Congregational Evangelical Mission, Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, El-Shaddai Charismatic Ministries, Emmanuel Baptist Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Evangelical Mission, Freetown Anglican Diocese, Methodist Church Sierra Leone, Missionary Church of Africa, National Evangelical Mission, National Pentecostal Mission, United Brethren in Christ, United Methodist Church, Vine Memorial Baptist, Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone and West African Methodist Church. **Affiliate:** Bible Society Sierra Leone, Christ United Pentecostal, Faith Worship Ministries, Scripture Union, Sierra Leone Theological College & Management and Church Training Center, St. Peters Healing Church, United Church Women, Young Men Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association.



We express our strong concern that an estimated two thirds of our population are without adequate supply of portable clean and affordable water.

We recognize the various challenges and constraints of the companies/agencies that are entrusted with the supply of this essential commodity to the population of our nation. But these challenges have remained unresolved for far too long. The provision of water for the vulnerable population of our nation MUST be a priority. We need decisive actions towards solving the problems. Hence the relevance of this year's theme.

As a church we share the pain of the damning global report that only 13 % of Sierra Leone's population has access to water and sanitation.

We will like to draw government's attention to the fact that pipe-borne water in Freetown, the capital, is sometimes obtained in unhygienic ways – with pipes going through gutters and drainages and people having to put their containers in gutters to obtain water. Water-borne infections and parasites found in contaminated water are among the leading causes of death in Sierra Leone as people contract typhoid fever and hepatitis 'A'. We need pipe-borne water running into homes and public stand pipes. Some people pay water bills, yet they are not supplied. This is worrying. Government should ensure that people enjoy commodities paid for, keeping in mind that it is a right, not a privilege.

We look forward to the successful timely completion of proposed water supply projects such as the Rokel River Water Supply, the Orogu Water Supply, Kongo and Babadorie water systems while the expansion of the Guma Valley system must be encouraged to remain on course.

We heartily welcome the news from government that there is a plan to do about 300 bore holes across the country by 2023.

We appreciate government's move to vacate squatters from water ways, catchment areas and installations and look forward for its speedy implementation.



**We appeal that there should be no further shift in the green belt.**

**We are also concerned about the high level of commercialization of water and use of water plastics by entrepreneurs whose sole aim is profit making. This is so because of the inadequacy of water supplied by government-backed agencies and companies.**

**Plastic water sachets are not environmentally friendly. They contaminate our streams, rivers and ocean.**

**Many of the plastic water are from sources belonging to SALWACO and Guma Valley Water Company with little or no added value. We call for the ban of non-renewable plastics that are very difficult to dispose of and has dire environmental impact for now and the future.**

**We are also greatly concerned with the high level of mining taking place in or along water bodies across the country which have resulted into pollution of rivers that communities use for livelihoods.**

**Our Advocacy team did a case study on mining and pollution on one main river that runs from the north of the country to the south – the Taia (as it is known in Taiama, Jong(as it is called in Matru Jong and Pampana (as known in Tonkolili District). We were appalled by the level of pollution that has brought untold suffering on communities that live along the river.**

**The river used to be a source of livelihood (fishing, agriculture and sand mining) for many. It no longer serves that purpose as a result of pollution. The river has become infectious to both fish and man. Even the sand quality has deteriorated sharply. Women who planted vegetables on the river banks can no longer do so. The river has all gone brown in color and the water level gone low. In addition to being source of livelihood, it provided recreation for the villagers. Now they can no longer swim on the river.**

**The pollution is believed to be as a result of mining activities in the Tonkolili District around the source of the Pampana River.**

**As Church, we believe that this is not what God wills for his people. To the contrary, God says:**

**“And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish...and there will be very many fish...” (Ezekiel 47:9).**

**We appreciate the response to our call to action by the ONS, EPA and NMA that we made during the last world water day.**

**Today, we call on the government of Sierra Leone through the Ministries of Environment, Mines, Water Resources and their agencies to take urgent action to stop the pollution of our rivers, especially River Taia and save the lives of our citizens.**

**We call for a complete ban of all gold and diamond mining activities along the rivers and that persons/companies found guilty be requested to make compensation.**

**GOD BLESS OUR NATION AND ALL ITS RESOURCES!!!**

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Henry Samuels', with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the name.

**Rev Henry Abioseh Samuels  
President of Council of Churches in Sierra Leone**