Dear friends,

As the year comes to a close I would like to take the opportunity to inform you of my activities over the past few months and perspectives for the coming year. The following are the main topics I will be discussing, for your ease of navigation.

* Spreading awareness on this year’s reports
* New shareable media!
* Mission to Portugal
* Year-end highlights
* The mandate in the news
* What to expect in 2017
* How to follow the mandate?

# Spreading awareness on this year’s reports

As many of you already know, earlier this year I submitted two new reports to the United Nations.

On 25 October, I formally presented [report A/71/302](http://bit.ly/2cLLvwv), on development cooperation in the realisation of the human rights to water & sanitation, to the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Find my full statement to the UNGA [here](http://bit.ly/2hR9MSV).

I also presented [report A/HRC/33/39](http://bit.ly/2drD7GJ) on gender equality in the human rights to water & sanitation earlier this year to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

I have been raising awareness on the themes covered in both of these reports over the last few months:

# New shareable media!

I recently created a **new leaflet** that covers the themes discussed in my report **on gender equality**. Ideal for spreading awareness among all types of individuals and groups interested in water and sanitation governance, the leaflet is available in a user-friendly foldable format in [English](http://bit.ly/2hwYGWW), [French](http://bit.ly/2hwPHVM) and [Spanish](http://bit.ly/2hx02RB).

Alternatively, a **mobile-friendly** version of this leaflet can also be viewed in [English](http://bit.ly/2hO33cb), [French](http://bit.ly/2hObBQo) and [Spanish](http://bit.ly/2hOeWz6).

* On the occasion of World Toilet Day (15 November), which focused on toilets and jobs this year, [I spoke with UN Water](http://bit.ly/2f4zyUy) and highlighted the important connections between gender equality and the human rights to water & sanitation. In particular, I responded to such questions as what a lack of adequate toilets in the workplace can mean for women.
* In Belo Horizonte (Brazil) on 21 November, I spoke in an event organized by the State of Minas Gerais Department of Human Rights, Social Participation and Citizenship to launch my report on gender equality. The Department also collaborated in [translating the report to Portuguese](http://bit.ly/2gGrT0K), thereby increasing the accessibility of the report for the millions of speakers of this language around the world.
* On 22 November, I participated in a seminar coordinated via the Spanish Cooperation Agency (Cooperación Española) and the FPSC Organization to discuss the case of Palestine as it relates to gender equality and the human rights to water and sanitation. A summary of this seminar is available (in Spanish) [here](http://bit.ly/2hwPrGp).

[](http://bit.ly/2hOjVzx)

[14 December - AECID/Ongawa Conference](http://bit.ly/2hOjVzx)

* In Madrid (Spain) on 14 December, I participated in a full day of activities organized by the Spanish Cooperation Agency for International Development (AECID) and the NGO Ongawa. In what was a very dynamic set-up, I performed presentations on both of the above-mentioned reports, discussed the human rights to water & sanitation as components of the 2030 SDG Development Agenda, and had an informal Q&A session with citizen groups. A written summary of the conference was prepared by the AECID [here](http://bit.ly/2hOjVzx) (in Spanish). A [video interview](http://bit.ly/2hzxzKR) (12m – in Spanish) was also given to iAgua in which I discuss a variety of the above-mentioned topics and other crucial issues for the human rights to water & sanitation.

# Mission to Portugal

[With UN Special Rapporteur](bit.ly/2hsDC0z)

[Leilani Farha in Portugal](bit.ly/2hsDC0z)

From December 5-13, I was in Portugal performing my second country mission of 2016. The mission was carried out jointly with the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Leilani Farha, which is an innovative initiative for the United Nations Special Procedures. In performing this mission in tandem, it was an opportunity for us to underscore the key principles of indivisibility, interdependence and interrelationship between human rights.

Together, we aimed to assess to what extent the human rights related to our respective mandates are being respected, protected and fulfilled by the Portuguese State, especially taking into account the effects of economic crises and austerity measures. During the trip I travelled throughout the country and met with national and local authorities, service providers, the national regulator, diverse civil society organizations, community members and residents.

My preliminary assessment of the country’s situation regarding the human rights to water & sanitation identified significant overall progress in recent years, but it also uncovered some concerning realities, particularly for certain minorities (e.g. Roma) in the country. But this assessment is not over just yet. Leilani Farha and myself have, in the interim, published some of our preliminary findings.

A short read on these is available [here](http://bit.ly/2hsDC0z) (English/Portuguese),

A slightly longer read [here](http://bit.ly/2hsCGct) (English/Portuguese),

Or you can listen to a [short interview with Rádio ONU](http://bit.ly/2hOhH3g) (5m – in Portuguese) in which I covered the general findings of this mission.

# Year-end highlights

* In [resolution A/HRC/RES/33/10](http://bit.ly/2hRmAsg), the UN Human Rights Council recently renewed my mandate as Special Rapporteur for 3 more years (December 2017-December 2020) and reaffirmed the human rights to water & sanitation as distinct but integrated rights.
* Slovenia became the [first European country](http://bit.ly/2hOugvk) to recognise the human right to water in its constitution. A new article in the country’s constitution now states that “everyone has the right to drinkable water”. Moreover, it specifies that, “[w]ater resources represent a public good that is managed by the state”, and, “are not a market commodity.”

# What to expect in 2017

1. **Follow-up report to the UN General Assembly on development cooperation**

As I have announced previously, I will address the subject of development cooperation in the realisation of the human rights to water & sanitation once more in a new report to the United Nations General Assembly, to be submitted mid-2017.

Over the course of the past few months, I selected a number of funders to be analysed as case studies for the report and invited them to be part of the research. Thus far, I am happy to have received affirmative confirmation from Japan, Germany, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Commission. Similarly, I am now working on selecting partner States to be assessed as case studies in the report.

I am very excited about the methodology that has been prepared for this report. An in-depth analysis of key funders and partner States will allow for a thorough assessment of the human rights to water & sanitation in development cooperation and will give consistency to the findings.

1. **Report to the UN Human Rights Council on regulation**

Regulation as a component to realising the human rights to water & sanitation will be the subject of my next report that will be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in mid-2017. To briefly outline the aims of the report, it will clarify how States can deploy regulatory mechanisms that help to ensure their water supply and sanitation services – of all scales and descriptions – are being provided in ways that respect international human rights obligations and contribute to progressively realising these human rights. I look forward to engaging with States, regulators, and sector experts in the coming months to gather information on this subject from a variety of world regions and situations.

# The mandate in the news

Unfortunately, the end of 2016 was marked by the reminder of tragic past events and the appearance of a few new ones.

* On December 22, I released a [press statement](http://bit.ly/2i5gSUj) on the deplorable situation of the rights to water & sanitation in Lagos (Nigeria). Government reports indicate alarmingly high deficits in the sector, representing clearly unacceptable conditions for millions of the megacity’s residents. I have called on the national government to address this situation, but have not yet received a response. I hope that my call will be heard by the society and lawmakers in Lagos who will shortly be voting in the 2017 budget.

[](../../../Downloads/bit.ly/2i5gSUj)

* On November 15, several United Nations Special Rapporteurs endorsed a [statement](http://bit.ly/2hzJokq) released by Maina Kiai, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, with respect to the case of an oil pipeline construction in North Dakota (USA). [Previously this year](http://bit.ly/2df5Glt), I joined other Special Rapporteurs in decrying the several human rights concerns linked to this project, including serious worries for the protection of indigenous peoples’ right to water.
* November 5th marked the 1-year anniversary since the collapse of the Fundão tailing dam in Mariana (State of Minas Gerais, Brazil), which unleashed a catastrophic wave of mining waste that devastated more than 700km of a major river and impacted on millions of residents. Taking score of the actions taken by the Brazilian government and the responsible companies for what has been deemed the country’s worst socio-environmental disaster, several UN Special Rapporteurs stated that they were “simply insufficient to deal with the massive extent of the environmental and human costs of [the] collapse”. Read the full press release [here](http://bit.ly/2fj9B4y).

# How to follow the mandate? [FB%20logo/FB-f-Logo__blue_50.png](http://bit.ly/2drYMym) [Twitter%20logo/TwitterLogo_%2355acee.png](http://bit.ly/2dK5M4U)

The [website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](http://bit.ly/2dK5gE0) remains the number one place to discover the mandate’s past and upcoming activities. There you can discover the role of the mandate (which has existed for nearly 8 years now!); all thematic reports submitted by the mandate to the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council; a review of all country visits (now 19 total!); press releases where the mandate has used its voice to speak out against concerning human rights situations around the world; and a wide variety of informational tools and shareable media, available in multiple languages, aimed at educating, spreading awareness, and growing the stock of human rights defenders worldwide.

[Medium.com](https://medium.com/tools-for-transformation) is also being used by the mandate as a mobile-friendly platform to share select media, such as the variety of leaflets created by the mandate. Most of the material placed on Medium is available in English, French and Spanish!

The mandate is also present on major social media platforms [Twitter](http://bit.ly/2dK5M4U) and [Facebook](http://bit.ly/2drYMym) (@SRWatSan), where it actively engages with the global community on issues related to the human rights to water & sanitation.

**Warm wishes to all this holiday season, hoping that a great new year awaits us all with more human rights worldwide.**

**Léo Heller**

**UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water & sanitation**