



# ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS BULLETIN ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS

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## **UN Resolution States Clean Water and Sanitation a Human Right: AFN National Chief Calls for Action to Advance Resolution in Canada**

(Ottawa, ON) – The Assembly of First Nations welcomes the United Nations General Assembly resolution declaring clean water and sanitation to be a human right. More than 124 Nations voted yesterday for the resolution brought forward by the country of Bolivia. 884 million people around the world still suffer from a lack of access to drinking water.

“This is welcome news for First Nations people and communities who are struggling to access safe drinking water and sanitation,” said National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo. “This resolution establishes new international standards and, in affirming that clean water and sanitation are a basic human right, compels Canada to work with First Nations to ensure our people enjoy the same quality of water and sanitation as the rest of Canada.”

As of June 2010, 114 First Nations communities across the country were under Drinking Water Advisories and 49 First Nations water systems were classified as “high risk”. Some of these communities have been under a Drinking Water Advisory for 10 years or longer.

“The situation facing First Nations would not be tolerated in any other community or city in Canada,” National Chief Atleo stated. “It is shameful that these conditions are allowed to fester in a country as rich as Canada. This is about nothing less than the health and safety of First Nations children. It is time to act to address longstanding inequity in infrastructure and training to enhance and support safe drinking water systems. The current approach of Canada to focus on regulation will not address these inequities and this is why we are calling for a joint effort to address underlying problems as the real solution.”

Canada was one of 41 nations who abstained from the vote on this resolution. The Assembly of First Nations calls on Canada, as a member of the United Nations, to respect the resolution and engage in real action with First Nations to make sure efforts and resources are in place to honour the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. A resolution passed at the AFN’s recent Annual General Assembly in Winnipeg, Manitoba called for advocacy and action to affirm First Nations rights and interests with respect to First Nations water.

AFN Regional Chief for Nova Scotia-Newfoundland Rick Simon stated: “Canada has committed to endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the UN resolution passed yesterday is consistent with principles in the Declaration that states Indigenous peoples have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The AFN has put forward many plans and initiatives on this issue and we look forward to working with Canada to honour and implement this resolution.”

The United Nations resolution calls on “States and international organizations to provide financial resources, build capacity and transfer technology, particularly to developing countries, in scaling up efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.”

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

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