INTERNATIONAL NOTICE

To all the people, organizations and networks that are fighting world-wide in the defence of public and participated water management.

On Tuesday the 10th of July in Rome, the Italian Water Movements Forum has delivered to the President of the Chamber 406,626 signatures belonging to women and men who undersigned a law of popular initiative asking for the whole re-nationalization of the water sector. In Italy the law is disciplined so that in order to present a law proposal to the Parliament, it is necessary to collect signatures. If citizens are able to collect at least 50,000 signatures under a certified procedure, then the Parliament has the obligation to discuss their law-proposal.

The signatures we collected are eight times the number required by the Italian law! This means that, a part from numerical data, the most important goal has been centred: to have mobilized the entire country and to have obtained a place in the Italian political agenda for water and for the disputes over water.

The proposal that we have presented to the Parliament contains the following fundamental points:

1. Water as human right;
2. 50 free litres per person guaranteed;
3. Property of the water systems shall be entirely public with management through agencies disciplined by public law;
4. Participation of the local communities and the citizens to the public management of water;
5. The creation of a National Fund of solidarity and international cooperation for projects supporting the access to water.

The campaign has been promoted by various trade-unions (especially by those coming from the Civil Service), by Attac, by NGOs like the World Water Contract, by different territorial Social Forum, very grass-rooted organizations like those of Abruzzo or Tuscany but also by local churches and parishes, furthermore by social centres and by very important and historical environmental organizations like WWF-Italy.

The signature-collection campaign for the law of popular initiative has carried out thousands of initiatives all over the Italian regions and it has been a great instrument of mass information. It was very useful in order to link, to gather and to connect territorial structures together with organizations at national level and with NGOs already active in the field of water.

The campaign on water was useful as a collecting and valorising instrument for the water-issue at a national level and, on the other hand, the campaign was also very positive for the local disputes that until that moment were just isolated one from each other.

In Sicily, along with the collection of the signatures, there has been a popular mobilisation never seen before, with thousands of people down the road and into the public squares; this mobilization, among the other effects, is also slowing down the privatization process.

In Molise nearly 2% of the population have signed.

In Latina and Aprilia (Lazio), since months a large portion of the population is putting into practice a strong protest shaped around the non-payment of parts of the water-bill. We are facing a true civil disobedience. The campaign has cemented and enriched the unity among the hundreds of promoting organizations, imposing the presence of the fight against the commoditization and commercialization of the water also on the national media that, even though at the end of the campaign, had to speak about this issue.

We can already assist to the first results of our campaign; the Chamber has already approved a provisional suspension of the ongoing privatization process waiting for a legislation framework on water management. We are convinced that these important results obtained so far, are the outputs of many common efforts and tangible popular mobilisation.
Some leftist parties have also joined the campaign and we are working in order to obtain the support of further MPs belonging to other political areas, hoping that this number will become larger and larger.

This consensus will become more and more necessary while approaching the time of the discussions in the Chamber-commissions and when the final vote will take place in the plenary. In that very moment also the neutrality, the abstention or the favourable ballot of parliamentarians who now are not taking any position about the law, will be determining for the approval and the content-preservation of the bill in Parliament.

The approval of our proposal within the Parliament is an essential point to fulfil both for resolving the problems of property and management and for finally putting into practice the rearrangement and the protection of the water systems.

Next September there will be the national assembly at the Italian Water Movements Forum and next October there will be national manifestation-demonstration in Rome; we wish that other water movements from abroad could participate.

Mass mobilization, popular movement, lobbying to the MPs, territorial fights in defence of the water, organizational strengthening of our movement: these will be the modalities of our future engagement! Moreover we shall never forget that the battles on the water, even if they are rooted in to our local territories, might reach positive and stable results if we take into account also of the international framework of water struggles. Reinforced by the positive result that we have just obtained here in Italy, it becomes more and more urgent for us getting connected to the movements, the NGOs and the social forum currently present in Europe and strongly committed the water issue.

For this reason we are beginning to discuss about the foundation of an European Network of Movements in defence of water, like those that have already been created in the Americas and in Africa. In an Europe that is the place where the greatest multinational water companies are located, the formation of a continental network will be helpful not only to all the European realities, but also to all the international realities.

The common commitment of all the movements and the continental network create will mutual help reach common aims, matured and defined in Florence in 2003, in Caracas in 2005, in Mexico City in 2006, and in Nairobi in 2007.

Water must be recognized from all the elective bodies worldwide as a human right not for sale; the contention of the World Water Council to be the organ that decides about the fate of the water sources of the human-kind, that is supposed to be carried on next time in Istanbul 2009, should be declared illegitimate and unfair.

From Italy a warm greeting to all the people, the organizations and the networks of the world that we have met, that we have known, from which we have learned so much knowledge and with which we have shared, the civil passion, necessary to the humanity, and the determination necessary in order to build another possible world, here and now.

On behalf of the Italian Water Movement Forum

Renato Di Nicola