



GOVERNO DO ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO
CASA CIVIL
GABINETE DO SECRETÁRIO

São Paulo, August 31st, 2014

His Excellency
Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva

Your Excellency,

The Government of the State of São Paulo, Brazil, and the UN system share a history of partnership and mutual cooperation which may be epitomized by the recent cooperation agreements signed with the United Nations Development Programme or the participation of the state government in the UN Global Compact.

In this context, we received with utmost bewilderment the alleged public declarations conveyed by Mrs. Catarina Albuquerque, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, to a Brazilian newspaper during her recent visit to the state of São Paulo. Only four weeks before the state election, the Special Rapporteur stepped into the electoral debate by allegedly stating that the government of São Paulo is the one to blame for one of the worst water shortages in years, which in fact is brought on by the worst drought to hit São Paulo state in 84 years. In the same interview, the Special Rapporteur is also quoted by the newspaper as stating that *leakage* in the public water supply systems in São Paulo amounted to 40 percent.

This standing is puzzling for a set of different reasons. First, because Mrs. Albuquerque has not requested to be received by any official member of the state government of São Paulo or the São Paulo state Company for Water and Sanitation (SABESP), the company holding the concession for basic sanitation services in São Paulo servicing 27.7 million inhabitants. In December last year, when Mrs. Albuquerque undertook an official visit to Brazil, the president of Sabesp warmly received the Special Rapporteur and showed ample interest in meeting the Special Rapporteur again every time she took a new mission to Brazil to collect new data. In fact, the Special Rapporteur recent decision not to meet with representatives from the government

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and Sabesp in order to receive solid and updated information goes against the intent, expressed by the Special Rapporteur in her Report on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation (A/HRC/27/55/Add.1), to engage in a dialogue with various actors in the sector, including governments.

Secondly, the figures released by the Special Rapporteur are simply incorrect. In the municipalities covered by Sabesp, the leakage reaches only 19,8 percent and if we include water theft and *illegal* connections that figure goes up to 31,2 percent - far from the 40 percent figure declared by the Special Rapporteur. The mistake was so blunt that the newspaper that published the interview decided to add an *erratum* in the following day.

Given this graceless situation, the government of São Paulo would like to request the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to contribute to the full understanding of this situation by amending the information conveyed to the São Paulo population by the Special Rapporteur.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

Saulo de Castro Abreu Filho
Chief of Staff to the Governor