



**Joint Oral Statement: 39th session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue - Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation**

10 September 2018

Speaker: Taisuke KOMATSU

Thank you Mr. President,

This statement is delivered in solidarity with International Dalit Solidarity Network, Jan Sahas, as well as the Movement to end Manual Scavenging (SKA). We express our great appreciation to the Special Rapporteur's country visit report on India which sheds light on the continuing discrimination against Dalits in their enjoyment of human rights to water and sanitation.

We echo the Special Rapporteur's concerns that Dalits are vulnerable to physical assault, violence and discrimination when they seek to access water and sanitation. We are particularly concerned that Dalit women are often subject to sexual violence including rape due to their lack of access to safe sanitation facilities and intersecting forms of discrimination based on caste and gender. In this regard, we wish to draw your attention to the pervasive culture of impunity for caste violence against Dalit women in India, which was highlighted in our side event at the Human Rights Council session in June this year with the participation of UN independent experts and human rights defenders from India.¹

We reiterate the Special Rapporteur's concerns on the continuing practice of manual scavenging. 95% of manual scavengers are Dalit women who continue to face stigma and discrimination as "untouchables among the untouchables". We regret that the 2013 Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act falls short in providing effective measures to end the degrading practice and redress human rights violations.

Against this backdrop, we urge the Government of India to secure the safe access to water and sanitation for Dalits and ensure justice for Dalit victims of violence. Moreover, the Government of India must place the freedom from caste discrimination at the centre of its implementation of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations for the full realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation.

Thank you Mr. President.

¹ *HRC38 Event Report: #DalitWomenFight against Caste-Based Violence (21 June 2018)*, <http://imadr.org/hrc38-report-dalitwomen-vaw-21june2018/>

NGO without ECSOC consultative status in support of the statement