

Safe Drinking Water for the People

The 9th National Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on Safe Drinking Water for the People¹

Informed that the United Nations has made the sustainable management of water and sanitation and their availability for use by all a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG); that the UN General Assembly passed a resolution to adopt the human right of access to water and hygiene and conceded that clean drinking water and hygiene are necessary for the maintenance of human rights in order to provide the people with access to clean drinking water and safe hygiene at a fair and affordable price; and that the 2nd Charter on National Health System, B. E. 2559 prescribed principles for a health system, affirming consumer rights on drinking water,

Concerned that household drinking water is of substandard quality in terms of bacteria presence, physical characteristics and chemical component; and that Thailand still lacks unified standards on safe drinking water,

Concerned that relevant laws are neither efficiently enforced nor integrated,

Concerned that drinking water not passing the quality criteria in terms of bacteria may be contaminated with micro-organisms, causing diarrhea and dysentery; and that water not passing the quality criteria in terms of chemical component and others may cause other impacts on the people's health,

Aware of the need for a surveillance, monitoring and auditing mechanism for drinking water to make it safe and equitably priced, with the participation of all sectors; and of the need for the provision of accurate and complete information to facilitate consumers' informed decision-making,

Aware of the significance of consumer capacity building and the support provided to enhance participation by consumers, consumer organizations and networks in the surveillance and monitoring of issues regarding safe drinking water for the people,

Believing that all sectors, including government agencies, local government organizations, academia, the business sector, the people's sector and civil society, have important roles in improving the situation appropriate to each locality's social context; and have important roles in providing accommodative environments,

Hereby passes the following resolutions:

1. Requesting the Ministry of Public Health's Department of Health in conjunction with the Thai Food and Drug Administration, relevant agencies and various sectors, to establish a central standard for the country's safe drinking water, based on WHO standards and in accordance with the country's context within one year, in order to issue ministerial regulations according to Public Health Act, B.E. 2535;

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2. Requesting relevant agencies to review, prepare and improve laws/regulations and enforce laws in order to monitor and track raw water sources, production facilities, tools and machinery, drinking water vending machines and to provide maintenance for material and equipment in order to more efficiently provide safe and equitably priced drinking water as follows:

2.1 The Ministry of Public Health's Department of Health to improve public health laws to cover safe drinking water and hygiene for drinking water storage.

2.2 The Ministry of Interior's Department of Local Administration to provide support and oversight for local government organizations to issue local codes, providing guidelines for drinking water vending machine operators.

2.3 Within one year, the Thai Industrial Standards Institute to expedite its efforts in drafting mandatory standards for drinking water vending machines in order to provide the people with safeguards by, for example, using warning lights, shutting down services when filters need to be replaced, providing water storage equipment, setting expiry dates for drinking water vending machines and equipment, and drafting a mandatory standard for 5-200-liter water bottles, which is still pending.

2.4 Within one year, the Central Committee on the Price of Goods and Services and the Department of Internal Trade to consider ways to provide oversight for the sale of bottled and sealed consumption water and the sale of drinking water from vending machines, taking into account suitable pricing.

2.5 Within one year, the Ministry of Public Health's Food and Drug Administration to accelerate its issuing of Ministry of Public Health Regulations to control production facilities and non-bottled and sealed drinking water; and to join forces with Provincial Public Health Offices to provide oversight for standards relating to producers and production facilities of both bottled and sealed and non-bottled and sealed drinking water produced for commercial purposes.

2.6 The Office of the Consumer Protection Board to intensify its efforts in monitoring the labeling of drinking water vending machines by entrepreneurs, producers, sellers, importers, import order placers; and to expedite communication with the people to facilitate their informed decision making with regard to purchasing from and using the services of safe drinking water vending machines.

3. Requesting The Ministry of Public Health's Department of Health, Department of Medical Sciences, and Thai Food and Drug Administration; the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Department of Water Resources, Department of Groundwater Resources; the Ministry of Interior's Department of Administration, Department of Local Administration; the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority and the Provincial Waterworks Authority to support local government organizations, community enterprises or entrepreneurs to make safe drinking water accessible to the people by providing budgetary, academic and other forms of assistance, in all dimensions, according to each agency's roles and responsibility, while safe drinking water will be provided to the public by local government organizations in at least one venue per community;

4. Requesting the Thai Food and Drug Administration, in conjunction with the Department of Health, the Department of Medical Sciences, Provincial Public Health Offices, the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority, the Provincial Waterworks Authority, local government organizations and relevant agencies to regularly provide to the public data or reports on the monitoring and surveillance of drinking water and

water sources used in the production of drinking water; and to jointly issue warnings about unsafe drinking water through national and local media easily accessible by the people;

5. Requesting the Provincial Public Health Sub-committee and the Provincial Consumer Protection Sub-committee to provide continued oversight to make drinking water safe and equitably priced; and the consumer protection network and civil society to participate in this effort by sitting on sub-committees and taking part in drinking water monitoring and surveillance activities, within the framework of relevant laws;

6. Requesting the Area based Health Assembly Network and consumer protection network to participate in drinking water monitoring and surveillance efforts to make it safe and equitably priced; and to be involved in campaigning, promoting and disseminating information to create public awareness on the dangers of substandard drinking water;

7. Requesting the Secretary-General of the National Health Commission to report the progress to the 11th National Health Assembly.