

8th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (Astana, 10-12 October 2018)  
Statement by Ms. Carolina Caycedo, Artist, 10 October 2018

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all I would like to thank UNECE for this very special invitation. My name is Carolina Caycedo. I am Colombian visual artist based in the United States and I am here at this Meeting of Parties to create a unique and historical art installation with the objects you have selected to symbolize the Transboundary rivers, groundwaters and International Lakes that each of your countries share.

For the last 7 years I have developed artworks about rivers and environmental justice. During my research I've had the opportunity to work with grassroots water protectors, scientists, politicians, academics, but one of the most striking meetings I have ever had was with Mamo Pedro Juan the late spiritual leader of the Kogui indigenous community from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Northern Colombia. He told me that all bodies of water are connected, and that when a river or lake gets polluted or cut off from that water network, the human, animal and plant communities living along that body of water get sick and get disconnected from each other too. See, here in the basin of the Ishim River we are actually connected to the Magdalena river in my home country, to the Danube river in Europe, to the Nile in Africa, to the Mekong in Asia, and to the Colorado in North America, through air currents, through water particles like rain and through radiation. The ancestral Mamos from the Sierra Nevada know it, science calls it the global hydrosphere.

And it's precisely this idea of the global hydrosphere that I want to tackle through the art installation I propose, by creating One Body of Water with all the objects you brought in. We will be working during the meeting to arrange them in an installation that symbolizes a single river of objects, representing One Body of Water, understanding that peaceful cooperation between the parties is crucial if we want to achieve the 2030 sustainable development goals, within a framework of social and climate justice.

I have taken the liberty to bring an object from my country Colombia that symbolizes our many transboundary waters, such as the Orinoco, the Amazonas, the Caqueta, the Putumayo, and the Catatumbo Rivers among others. I brought an artisanal fishing net or cast net. In Spanish we call it Atarraya, it has an Arab etymology which means to throw, toss or cast. An Atarraya like this takes approximately a week and a half to weave, its woven with a handmade needle made of bamboo, the weights are made out of recycled lead, and it is used daily to fish the necessary to feed the family and to have a dignified life. Artisanal fisherfolk will never overfish, because they know there are communities downstream that also depend of that river, and they are conscious that they need to keep healthy the riverine ecosystem for their future generations. For me this is the true sustainability, rather than just a word used to make us feel better about a system of production and consumption that is taking us towards a climate collapse, its a life practice that is based on care and sustenance for those you love.

The atarraya contains the wisdom of weaving, that means the power of linking things together. Through the atarraya the men and women who fish embody the knowledge of the cycles of the river, its flood tides, its currents and the migrations of fish. In this sense, a fishing net may serve us as a guide for a society and for social networks which are more horizontal, flexible, dynamic and equitable, where all the knots, links and pieces are important for the wellbeing and good functioning of the whole. A social structure that is respectful of the environment, of other species, of the future.

I hope my work inspires you, and I am looking forward to working with all the special objects and

symbols you brought in. I'll be happy to answer any questions and to engage in conversation with you during the meeting. I'll be working in the lobby right outside this forum. So here is my contribution to fruitful and engaging meeting!

Thank you.