



Catarina de Albuquerque | Class of 1996

Catarina de Albuquerque is an award-winning human rights activist and lawyer, dedicated to the human rights to water and sanitation. As the first United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, de Albuquerque worked for their recognition by the United Nations as important human rights. Then, she ensured the implementation of these rights by successfully lobbying for the creation of a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on water and sanitation – SDG 6, during her work as CEO of the UN partnership, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), composed of around 400 multisectorial partners, including almost 100 UN Member States.



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Catarina de Albuquerque was a diplomat and negotiator for many years. She presided over the negotiations of the Optional Protocol to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR), which she holds here. This human rights treaty, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly, allows for complaints to be brought to the UN against governments.



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Due to her contribution for the recognition of water and sanitation as human rights, Catarina de Albuquerque received the 2016 IWA Global Water Award. Previously, she was awarded the Human Rights Golden Medal by the Portuguese Parliament and the Order of Merit by the Portuguese President, as well as an honorary degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2015.



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After the end of her two term mandates as Special Rapporteur in 2014, Catarina de Albuquerque joined SWA. Her work helped ensure the rights to water and sanitation were incorporated into the SDGs 2015-2030 and mobilised political will, at the highest level, in support of the human rights to water and sanitation .

