



Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

27 October 2015

Dear friends and colleagues,

In my last newsletter, I asked you to send me your input as I draft my next report, which will be on implementation of the human rights obligations relating to the environment, by 30 October 2015. Thanks to all of you who have already replied! For those who need a little more time, please respond by **9 November 2015**. For those of you who are in Geneva, I hope to see you at the public meeting on this topic tomorrow from 10.00 to 13.00 in the Palais des Nations.

Good practices database. My last report to the Human Rights Council was on good practices in the use of human rights obligations relating to the environment. With the help of the UN Environment Programme and input from many representatives of civil society, governments, international organizations, and academic institutions, we identified more than 100 practices. Last week, we made available a stand-alone website, <http://environmentalrightsdatabase.org/>, which makes the practices easily searchable by the type of right, the location, the government or other actor implementing them, and other factors. I encourage you to check it out!

ECLAC negotiations. Last week, I joined with 14 other UN special procedure mandate holders to issue [a statement applauding the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean](#) for negotiating a new agreement, which will implement Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, as well as human rights norms, by safeguarding the rights to environmental information, to participation in environmental decision-making, and to access to justice in environmental matters.

This negotiation is one of the most important steps ever taken to protect and promote environmental democracy at the international level, and it will provide a model for such steps in other regions and countries. Emerging from a proposal at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, the new agreement is being negotiated by 20 member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, representing more than 500 million people.

Although the importance of rights to information, participation, and remedy is universally acknowledged, implementation of the rights at the national and local level is often incomplete or ineffective. A robust, legally binding regional instrument would provide invaluable support for such implementation, including by protecting indigenous and other environmental human rights defenders, who are at high risk of harassment and even death in many countries.

ASEAN Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission. Last month, I participated in [a workshop on human rights and the environment](#) hosted by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission, in Mandalay, Myanmar. The Commission heard from a number of experts on many aspects of the relationship between human rights and the environment, and the members engaged in a detailed discussion. Such regional workshops help to promote the dissemination and implementation of human rights obligations relating to the environment.

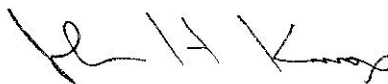
Climate change and human rights. As the dates of the critical Paris negotiation grow nearer, increasing attention is being paid to the relationship of climate change and human rights. To that end, I will attend the Paris meetings and speak at side events there. In the last year, I have attended a number of meetings and conferences on this topic, including a productive conference on climate change and human rights in Beijing hosted by [the Ching Soong Ling Foundation](#). As I described in a previous newsletter, other special procedure mandate-holders and I issued [a joint report for the Climate Vulnerable Forum](#), which emphasized that even a two-degree increase in average global temperature would have grave effects on the worldwide enjoyment of human rights. I also joined other mandate-holders in [a statement released on World Environment Day](#), June 5, which drew attention to specific ways that climate change interferes with human rights.

Sustainable development goals. The UN General Assembly recently adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (and 169 targets), which will help to shape development priorities for years to come. In [an article for the Washington International Law Journal](#), I analyze the SDGs and targets in light of international human rights obligations relating to the environment. I conclude that the proposed SDGs would promote those obligations, but that the specific targets are often written in language that is neither concrete nor closely linked to existing human rights obligations. (The article analyzes the 2014 draft, but no relevant changes were made from that draft in the final form of the SDGs.)

Twitter. In August, I began using Twitter as a way to receive and present information about the mandate, and about developments in human rights and the environment generally. If you are on Twitter, I encourage you to follow me at <https://twitter.com/SREnvironment>.

As always, I am inspired and encouraged by the work that you are doing to promote and protect the environment and human rights!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John H. Knox', written in a cursive style.

John H. Knox
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