

February 5, 2013

Dear friends and colleagues,

This email is to update you on my work as the UN Independent Expert on human rights and the environment since the last newsletter, in November.

If you know of someone else who would like to be on this email distribution list, please let us know by reply email, and we'll add them. Of course, if you do NOT want to be on this list, let us know the same way, and we'll remove your name.

First Report. My first report is now publicly available. It provides a brief history of the evolution of human rights and the environment, frames some of the outstanding issues, and describes my proposed plan of work for the next year. I have attached a copy to this email. It is also available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=199, in all six official UN languages. It benefited enormously from the comments I received at the consultations we held in Geneva and Washington, and from the work so many of you have done in this area over the years. If you have thoughts or comments on the report that you would like to share, please don't hesitate to send them to me!

Nairobi Expert Consultation. The next expert consultation will be in Nairobi, on February 22-23, 2013, just after the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Forum session. It will have a thematic focus on rights to access to information, participation, and remedy in the context of environmental protection. In addition, I will speak at the first Ministerial Plenary session of the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum on Monday, February 18, and at a side event of the Governing Council on Thursday, February 21, on strengthening the relationship between human rights and the environment. I know that some of you are planning to attend some or all of those events, and I look forward to seeing you there!

March Human Rights Council Session. I am scheduled to formally present my report to the Human Rights Council on Wednesday, March 6, at 9:00 am, in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. In addition, Switzerland, Maldives, Costa Rica, and Slovenia have organized a side event to further discuss issues related to my report on March 7 from 13:00 to 15:00 in Room XXIV in the Palais des Nations. We plan to have additional opportunities for interaction with civil society that week, and we will keep you informed when we have more details.

Going Forward. I plan to continue to hold consultations in 2013, to the extent that funding permits! Among the topics I would like to address in the consultations are vulnerable groups and substantive rights and obligations. My next newsletter should have more specific information on the planned dates and locations for various consultations. The next report, to be presented in March 2014, will seek to map the current law on human rights obligations pertaining to the environment. As I stated in the last newsletter, the goal is to provide a strong evidentiary basis, grounded primarily in existing international human rights law, for the clarification of the human rights norms relevant to the environment. The report will also identify areas where further attention is warranted, which I will turn to in the third and final year of the mandate.

I have been in contact with some of you regarding research assistance through your institutions. I am still hoping to find more institutions interested in contributing to this work, especially outside North America. If you are interested in participating in this respect, please let me know!

Again, the official mandate email is ieenvironment@ohchr.org. That's usually the best one to use, because we'll know that emails sent to that address concern the mandate and Ramin Pejan (the OHCHR staff person on this mandate) and I both have access to it. My personal email is knoxjh@wfu.edu.

Best regards to all,

John

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