



Mandate of the Independent Expert on human rights and the environment

August 30, 2013

Dear friends and colleagues,

This is to update you on my work as the UN Independent Expert on human rights and the environment since the last newsletter in May.* It's been a busy summer!

Website. In May, we launched a new website on the work of the mandate. The address is <http://ieenvironment.org>. This site will not replace the UN website, which will continue to be <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/IEEnvironment/Pages/IEEnvironmentIndex.aspx>. The new website will allow me to post additional information about the mandate. For example, we recently posted, at <http://ieenvironment.org/regional-decisions/>, environmental decisions issued by regional human rights tribunals, including from the African, Inter-American, and European systems. The website also includes links to other websites on human rights and the environment; if you would like your organization to be linked on the website, please let us know!

Expert Consultations. We held two expert consultations this summer: one in Geneva in June, and one in Panama City in July. The first consultation was on substantive obligations arising from human rights law as they relate to environmental protection. It also included a discussion of transboundary (or extraterritorial) duties. After the consultation, I attended the annual meeting of the special mandate-holders in Vienna and met with members of civil society at the Vienna+20 conference.

In Panama, experts from Latin America and the Caribbean focused on the ways that human rights can and should protect people in vulnerable situations from environmental harm. We sought to identify not only legal obligations, but also best practices in the use of rights-based approaches to environmental protection. The consultation was organized with the UN Environment Programme as part of its ongoing efforts to identify and promote good practices that could be used as models by States. We are preparing a report on the consultation, which we will make available as soon as possible.

Country Visit to Costa Rica. In late July and early August, I went to Costa Rica on my first country visit as an Independent Expert. I met with members of civil society, officials in many departments of government, representatives of international organizations, and others. Costa

* 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.

Rica has been a leader in many ways in the use of human rights in environmental protection. We discussed examples of good practices, as well as challenges, in Costa Rica's experience with a rights-based approach to environmental protection. My press release at the conclusion of the visit is available at <http://ieenvironment.org/2013/08/01/human-rights-and-the-environment-mission-to-costa-rica-and-panama/>, and press coverage of the mission at <http://ieenvironment.org/2013/08/06/costa-rica-must-defend-its-citizens-and-protected-lands-says-u-n-expert/>. I will submit a report on the visit to the Human Rights Council for its meeting in March 2014.

Future Meetings. On October 9, I will be speaking on human rights and climate change at the annual meeting of the International Bar Association in Boston. At the urging of Mary Robinson, the IBA created a task force on human rights and climate change, which will issue its report at the meeting. For more information, see http://www.ibanet.org/Conferences/boston_welcome_messages.aspx.

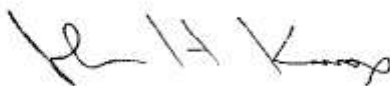
In late October, I will participate in the Asia-Europe Meeting Seminar on human rights and the environment in Copenhagen and I will also hold an expert consultation there. You can find more information about the ASEM Seminar at <http://www.aseminfoboard.org/upcoming-events/event/447-13th-informal-asem-seminar-on-human-rights.html>.

We are planning several events for 2014, including possible consultations in South Africa and southeast Asia.

Mapping Report. The meetings and consultations this year will help to inform the next report to the Human Rights Council, to be presented in March 2014. That report will map the current law on human rights obligations pertaining to the environment. 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.

As always, thanks to all of you for your help and support! I'm always interested in hearing your thoughts and questions about the mandate!

Best regards,



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