

Human Rights 75 Regional Dialogue for Europe and Central Asia

The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

20 October 2023

Concept Note

Main Objective	Advance implementation and raise the visibility of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in the context of the Human Rights 75 (HR75) Initiative. HR75 Initiative aims to inspire new global, regional and national commitments, pledges and other takeaways from Member States, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. These pledges, commitments and takeaways will feed into the Human Rights 75 High-Level event on 11-12 December 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland and other international and intergovernmental processes and negotiations.
Participants	European and Central Asian States, European Union (EU) and institutions, Council of Europe (CoE), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), UN agencies and entities, experts from the UN and regional organisations, national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society organisations, human rights and environmental human rights defenders, academics, youth and children representatives.
Venue	Egmont Palace, Europa Room, Brussels
Dates	20 October 2023, 9:00 - 17:00

1. Background

2023 marks 75 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 75th anniversary is an opportunity to rejuvenate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, demonstrate how it can meet the needs of our time and advance its promise of freedom, equality and justice for all.

To commemorate this foundational text, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in partnership with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), is organising a Regional Dialogue on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 52/19 ([A/HRC/RES/52/19](#)).

On 28 July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution 76/300 ([A/RES/76/300](#)) recognising the human rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The resolution catalysed States' efforts to ensure the promotion, respect and enjoyment of this right. Nonetheless, climate change-induced disasters continue to rise, intensifying existing and emerging human rights vulnerabilities, even within regions and communities that typically demonstrate greater resilience. Additionally, the detrimental consequences of environmental degradation are progressively propelling migration, including from nations previously less exposed to such challenges. Regrettably, individuals in vulnerable situations and those residing in countries with

elevated exposure and limited adaptability are still disproportionately bearing the brunt of these consequences.

Across Europe and Central Asia, there has been an increased awareness regarding the imperative to tackle the triple planetary crisis, leading to renewed efforts to develop national frameworks and regional legal instruments and processes as well as promoting the important role of environmental and indigenous human rights defenders and supporting at international and regional level discussions advancing the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

In this sense, the [Council of the European Union on February 2023 on EU priorities in UN human rights fora 2023](#) states that it will continue to support measures to address the impact of climate change, the loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation on the full enjoyment of all human rights and support at international and regional level discussions advancing the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. In a recommendation on human rights and the protection of the environment, adopted in 2022, the Council of Europe (CoE) calls on its member States to actively consider recognising, at a national level, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right ([CM/Rec\(2022\)20](#)). In April 2023, the CoE also launched negotiations to review its Convention on the Protection of the Environment through criminal law ([ETS No. 172](#)) and is currently analysing the feasibility of a new instrument (or instruments) on human right and the environment. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in its 2021 ministerial Council Decision on Strengthening Co-operation to address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change ([MC.DEC/3/21](#)) calls for the OSCE Participating States to intensify their dialogue and cooperation towards climate resilience adaptation and mitigation, including through climate risk analysis, early warning, joint research and investment, and exchange of information and best practices in the area of technology and innovation. In 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the European Union and its Member States to strengthen the linkage between human rights and the environment through their external action and to assist and support international, regional and local human rights mechanisms in addressing environmental challenges ([P9_TA\(2021\)0245](#)).

It is urgent to come together to confront one of humanity's most pressing challenges and advance the implementation of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, particularly the right to participation, access to information and justice and remedies in environmental matters and have right-based climate action ahead of the upcoming intergovernmental conferences on environmental policies, such as [2023 UN Climate Change Conference](#) COP 28 which will take place on 30 November – 12 December 2023 in Dubai or negotiations on the new legally binding instrument to tackle plastic pollution.

2. Modalities: date, time, place, format

The dialogue will take place on 20 October 2023, at the Egmont Palace, Europa Room, in Brussels from 9 am to 5 pm. Participation in person is strongly encouraged. To facilitate access for persons who are not able to travel, and as an accessibility measure for persons with disabilities, a limited number of remote interventions (online, video, and other media) may be envisaged in consultation with the organisers. Reasonable accommodation requests should be directed to the organiser preferably by 1st October 2023.

To facilitate an interactive discussion, all interventions of panellists and participants from the floor should be limited to 5 minutes each.

After brief opening remarks setting the scene, the dialogue is split in two panels comprising a segment whereby a moderator and panellists will make introductory remarks, followed by an interactive discussion with interventions from the floor. The moderator and panellists will have the opportunity to respond to the interventions on two occasions, half-way through the interventions and at the end. The moderator will wrap up the panel with concluding remarks.

The first panel will explore the institutional framework of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and will provide an opportunity to share good practices on its implementation. For example, showcase emerging jurisprudence, best practices, and tools related to the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The second panel will explore the challenges to implementing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and propose ways forward. For example, identify critical challenges related to the rights to participation, access to information and access to justice and remedies in environmental matters.

The dialogue will conclude with the pledging session and wrap-up and concluding remarks.

The aim of the pledging session is to advance the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the human rights-based approach in the framework of existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the ongoing environmental policies and multilateral negotiations, including in the context of COP28 (30 November – 12 December 2023), the negotiations on the internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, as well as the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. For example, regional organisations, States, other entities and civil society may make commitments and pledges by highlighting the linkages between environmental degradation and human rights and advocating for rights-based solutions.

3. Draft agenda

The draft agenda is included in a separate document, and is in English only.

4. Outcome

The Regional Dialogue is a key component of the 1 year-long programme of activities to commemorate the [75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), as mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 52/19.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will prepare a summary of the discussion of the regional dialogue.

Commitment and pledges will also enrich the "[Pledging Tree](#)", one of the critical elements of the Human Rights 75 Initiative's framework and the related [High-Level event](#) which will take place on 11-12 December 2023 in Geneva.

5. Art exhibition

In addition to the dialogue, and in partnership with the Gabarron Foundation, there will be an art exhibition of paintings and drawing by various artists and children, focusing on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in the Atrium Hall of the Egmont Palace.

6. Interpretation

Simultaneous interpretation into English, French, Spanish, and Russian will be available during the dialogue.

7. Translation of documents

The draft agenda, concept note and summary of discussions of the regional dialogue will be in English only.

8. Lunch and refreshments

A light buffet lunch and refreshments will be served in the Atrium Hall of the Egmont Palace.

Human Rights 75 - Regional Dialogue for Europe and Central Asia: The Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Venue : Europa Room - Egmont Palace, Place du Petit Sablon 8, 1000 Brussels

Friday 20 October
9:00 17:00

TIME (CET)	EVENT
8:45 9:15	Security Check
9:00 9:30	Welcome Coffee
9:30 10:15	Opening remarks (5 minutes each)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video from Mr Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights • Video from Ms Elisabeth Mrema, United Nations Environment Programme, Deputy Executive Director • Ms Florika Fink Hooijer, European Commission, Director General, DG Environment • Ms Saoirse Exton, Member of the UN Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change.
10:15 12:30 Morning Segment:	The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment: institutional framework and sharing of good practices on its implementation (5 minutes each)
10:15 11:00	<p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Veronika Hunt Safrankova, United Nations Environment Programme - Head of Brussels Office <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Arnold Kreilhuber, United Nations Environment Programme, Director, Regional Office for Europe • Mr Luc Lavrysen; President of the Constitutional Court of Belgium • Ms. Belen Martinez Carbonell; European External Action Service Managing Director of Human Rights, Global and Multilateral Issues • Mr Andrea Carta, Greenpeace, Legal advisor • Ms Annalisa Savaresi, Director for Europe of the Global Network on Human Rights and the Environment • Mr Udo Bullmann, European Parliament, Chair DROI Committee
11:00 12:00	Interventions from the floor
12:15 12:30	Wrap-up: Moderator
12:30 13:00	Opening Ceremony for the Gabarron Exhibition (Atrium Room)
13:00 14:00	Lunch (Atrium Room)
14:00 16:00 Afternoon Segment	The right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment: challenges to its implementation and way forward
14:00 14:45	<p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Christian Salazar Volkmann, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Velina Todorova, Member of the Committee of the Rights of the Child • Mr Damien Short, Co-Director of the Human Rights Consortium, University of London. • Mr Ikrom Mamadov, Director of "Youth Group on Protection of Environment" /YGPE Manager of "Aarhus Centre in Khujand" • Ms Vasilka Sancin, Member of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee • Ms Alison Gilliland, Committee of the Region, Rapporteur for the opinion "Towards a structural inclusion of Cities and Regions in UNFCCC COP27"
14:45 15:45	Interventions from the floor
15:45 16:00	Wrap-up: Moderator
16:00 17:00	Pledging Session and Wrap up / Closing remarks

Examples & Guidelines Human Rights 75 Pledges

Human Rights 75 pledges are commitments to take a specific action, with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights. The High Commissioner invites State institutions (executive, legislative and judicial authorities), local and regional authorities, regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organisations, UN entities, international financial institutions, businesses, young people and others to design transformative, innovative and catalytic pledges, which will have significant impact on the enjoyment of human rights in their respective country/region.

Pledges can relate to actions at the domestic, regional, and global levels. They can also be made collectively, by a group of States or regional organizations.

Pledges should follow a human rights-based approach and be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound).

Examples of Human Rights 75 pledges:

- Commit to facilitate effective implementation of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the recognition of this right at the national and regional levels.
- Commit to an equitable phase out of all fossil fuels aligned with a sustainable, evidence-based pathway to limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Commit to support the free, meaningful, active, safe and informed participation in environmental negotiations of diverse stakeholders, civil society and Indigenous Peoples, including those most affected by environmental degradation, and to ensure transparency regarding the participation of industry lobbyists in environmental negotiations.
- Commit to expand the availability and accessibility of regular pathways for migration in the context of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
- Commit to holding accountable the private actors who violate the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- Advocate for greater financial investment in human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- Commit to strengthen national mechanisms to ensure access to remedies and offer protections to environmental human rights defenders.
- Commit to include human rights indicators when setting up mechanism for measuring performance on climate change in order to create awareness and promote sustainable development options.
- Commit to embrace a human rights-based approach in the operationalization of regional and national environmental policies, integrating gender and disability considerations in climate change planning and action.



For more information, please refer to Human Rights 75 Pledges Guidance for:

- [Member States](#)
- [National Human Rights Institutions](#)
- [Civil Society Organisations](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Cities](#)