



Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

24 March 2017

Dear friends and colleagues,

This newsletter reports on my presentation to the Human Rights Council and a new website on environmental human rights defenders, as well as other developments in relation to the mandate.

Presentation to the Human Rights Council. On March 8, I presented my [annual report](#) to the Human Rights Council. This year's report explains that the full enjoyment of human rights depends on biodiversity, and describes how the exercise of human rights is important to the protection of biodiversity. A World Post article on the report is available [here](#). My statement to the Council is available in written form [here](#), and a video of the presentation and the interactive dialogue with governments and other participants is [here](#). On the whole, the government representatives who spoke during the dialogue supported the importance of recognizing the relationship between biodiversity and human rights. We also had a very productive discussion at a side event on March 9, at which the heads of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund International both spoke strongly in favor of increasing attention to the ways that biodiversity and human rights are interrelated.

On March 24, the Council adopted a resolution on human rights and environment that, among other things, welcomes my work, takes note of my report on biodiversity, and encourages States to adopt an effective normative framework for the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including biodiversity and ecosystems.

New website on environmental human rights defenders. On March 6, Universal Rights Group and several other partners, including myself, announced the launch of a new web portal with information and links for environmental human rights defenders – that is, those who defend the environment and the human rights that depend on it. As Global Witness has described, environmental defenders are increasingly under threat: at least 185 were killed in 2015 alone. Called www.environment-rights.org, the new site describes the rights of environmental defenders, includes links to sites of international organizations and others who can help them, and provides a great deal of other relevant information. The organizers plan to continue to add to the site in the future, and to translate it into other languages, including Spanish and French.

Environmental defenders in Kenya and Viet Nam. On February 24, I issued a [press release](#) urging the Government of Kenya to take all necessary measures immediately to protect Ms. Phyllis Omido, the recipient of the 2015 Goldman Prize, and three members of her organization,

who were assaulted, subjected to death threats, and forced into hiding after they filed a law suit against a lead smelter. I joined with the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on toxics, and the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, to send a joint communication on this matter to the Government of Kenya.

On March 8, I joined the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of association, freedom of expression, human rights defenders, and toxic substances, in issuing a [joint statement](#) urging the Government of Viet Nam to immediately release a popular blogger known as Mother Mushroom, who has been detained incommunicado since October last year. Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, a 37-year-old environmental human rights defender, is accused of spreading propaganda against the Government, on the basis of her writing posts online about, among other issues, the dumping of toxic chemicals in April 2016 in Vietnamese waters.

Report on pesticides. On March 8, during the same interactive dialogue at which I presented my report, Hilal Elver, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, presented a [report](#) to the Council that she had prepared with the Special Rapporteur on toxic substances, Baskut Tuncak, on the dangers of pesticides to human health and the environment. Their report describes research showing that pesticides cause an estimated 200,000 acute poisoning deaths every year, the vast majority of which occur in developing countries. The Special Rapporteurs have called on governments to negotiate a new international treaty to regulate and phase out the use of dangerous pesticides.

Visit of Vicki Tauli-Corpuz to the United States. On March 3, at the end of her two-week visit to the United States, Vicki Tauli-Corpuz, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, issued a [statement](#) that, among other things, criticized the United States for authorizing the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline without an adequate assessment or meaningful consultation with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other tribes in the area. She will issue a full report with recommendations in the next few months.

Visit to Uruguay. I will visit Uruguay from April 24 to 28 to examine how it is implementing human rights obligations relating to the environment. If you have information you would like to share in that respect, or you would like to meet with me during my visit, please email me at srenvironment@ohchr.org. Feel free to refer to questions prepared for the visit, available here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

As always, thank you for your interest in and support for the mandate!

Best regards,



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