



PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND
www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9159 • FAX: +41 22 917 9006 • E-MAIL: srenvironment@ohchr.org

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

1 February 2018

Dear friends and colleagues,

I hope this finds you all well!

It is hard to believe, but it has been over five years since I began work as the holder of this mandate. At the March session of the Human Rights Council, I will present my last set of reports. This newsletter describes the reports, as well as other recent and upcoming activities.

Report on Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment. One of the reports, available [here](#), presents Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment. My last newsletter, in October, sought comments on draft Guidelines on Human Rights and the Environment. After receiving many comments on the draft guidelines, through written submissions and in an expert meeting and a public consultation on 17-18 October, I finalized them in the form of “Framework Principles.” (Quite a few of the suggestions were to change the name!) The Framework Principles do not purport to create new law; instead, they summarize the principal obligations of States under human rights law relating to the environment, as they have been applied and clarified by human rights bodies. I hope that they will be of use to States, civil society organizations, international organizations and others working to bring human rights to bear on environmental issues.

The Human Right to a Healthy Environment. As I have pointed out in earlier reports, the absence of a global instrument that recognizes the human right to a healthy environment has not prevented the development of human rights norms relating to the environment. Those norms have bases in many rights, including the human rights to life and health. However, it is also true that the right to a healthy environment has been recognized in many regional agreements and in more than 100 national constitutions. In my report, I suggest that, based on the extensive and growing experience with the right and with environmentally related human rights norms generally, the Human Rights Council consider supporting recognition of the right in a global instrument, such as a General Assembly resolution. A model could be the resolution recognizing the right to water, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010.

Children’s rights and the environment. The other thematic report I will present to the Council this March is on children’s rights and the environment. Building on the work of many others, including Baskut Tuncak, the Special Rapporteur on hazardous substances, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, this report describes how environmental harm interferes with the

ability of children to enjoy their rights, and discusses the obligations of States to take measures to protect children from such interference. The report is available [here](#).

Presentation to the Human Rights Council. My presentation to the Council is currently scheduled for the afternoon of Friday, 2 March, although it may be postponed to the following Monday, 5 March. I plan to have two side events during the session, one on the Framework Principles and one on children's rights. I will also have a meeting with CSOs in the morning of Friday, 2 March. If you are in Geneva and would like to attend, please contact Soo-Young Hwang (shwang@ohchr.org). Detailed information about the schedule is available [here](#).

Reports on Mongolia and Uruguay. I will also be presenting reports to the Council on my country visits to Mongolia, which I visited in September, and to Uruguay, which I saw last April. When they are available, they will be posted on the United Nations website [here](#).

UN Environment Assembly. I attended the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi in December. The number of events and discussions focused on human rights and the environment was quite impressive, and shows how far the human rights perspective on environmental issues has come. In particular, it was wonderful to hear that the UN Environment Programme has decided to have a new "environmental rights initiative," which will involve, among other things, increasing attention to the threats facing environmental defenders around the world. UN Environment plans to provide more information on this initiative at the March session of the Human Rights Council.

Renewal of the mandate. At its March session, the Council will decide whether to renew this mandate for another three years. I cannot be reappointed to a third term, to the relief of my family, which is looking forward to seeing more of me! Assuming that the mandate is renewed, the Council will then proceed to seek nominations for the next mandate-holder.

As always, thank you all for your work in defending human rights and the environment!

Best regards,



John H. Knox
UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment
Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law
Wake Forest University School of Law