

# Put human rights at the centre of environmental policy

**R**especting and protecting human rights and protecting the environment are inextricably linked. Yet while Heads of State from 88 countries have called to end siloed thinking in the Leaders Pledge for Nature, environmental policy-making still too often excludes or sidelines human rights.

Today we, the undersigned – a broad range of indigenous peoples’ organisations, civil society groups, including human rights, environmental and conservation organisations and human rights, land and environmental defenders, as well as academics and experts from the Global South and North – call on the world’s leaders to bring together human rights, environmental and climate in policy-making in order to secure a just, equitable and ecologically healthy world for all.

The reciprocal relationship between nature and people has existed since time immemorial, but it is now unbalanced. There are countless examples in all parts of the world of how forests, savannas, fresh water sources, oceans, and even the air itself, are being privatised, polluted and destroyed by industries such as agriculture, timber, pulp and paper, mining and oil and gas extraction. These and many other industries not only wreak destruction on Mother Earth, but they also have direct and devastating impacts on human rights. Indigenous peoples and local communities living in close proximity to the production, extraction and processing of raw materials suffer dispossession of their lands, impoverishment, deterioration of their health, and destructive impacts on their culture, among many other abuses. In turn, human rights, land and environmental defenders who seek to prevent these violations suffer threats, criminalisation and violent attacks, and increasingly, killings.

The costs of both environmental destruction and measures to address this often fall disproportionately on those already in precarious positions – such as indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, local communities, women, children and youths, and poorly-paid workers, particularly in the Global South but also in the Global North – while the profits of the largest and



most environmentally-damaging industries, and the wealth of their owners and financiers, continues to grow. It is unforgivable that polluting industries profit at the expense of the health and human rights of marginalised communities. And, ultimately, this environmental destruction has indirect human rights impacts on us all.

Just this month the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution recognising the Right to a Healthy Environment. Yet while there is evidence that the protection of human rights can lead to better environmental outcomes, calls for recognition of the holistic and indivisible nature of human rights and the environment often go unheeded in global, regional and national environmental and climate policy forums.

This must change. As a global community we face multiple, intersecting crises: increasing human rights abuses and environmental harms by companies, land grabs, the loss of food and water sovereignty, increasing poverty and inequality, increased attacks and killings of defenders, climate change-induced disasters and migration, the diminishing health of the oceans and critical biodiversity loss. Resolving these crises demands a holistic approach to environmental policy that embeds human rights and tackles systemic problems, including historically rooted social injustice, ecological destruction, state capture by corporations, corruption and impunity, as well as social and economic inequality.

We urge world leaders to ensure that all policymaking related to the environment – including the climate and biodiversity crises, ownership and use of land, water and resources, ecosystem degradation, corporate accountability and trade, among others – address human rights and the environment in an integrated manner. This would help to catalyse the transformative action that is urgently required.

Respect for, protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights, and the protection of those who defend them, must be an essential and non-negotiable part of measures adopted in upcoming negotiations at the UN Convention of Biological Diversity, COP15, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP26. Human rights must also be central to regional and national level climate and environmental policies, such as proposed deforestation legislation in the UK, the EU and the USA, which must be further strengthened.



The time to act is now: we call on you to unite human rights, climate and the environment once and for all. In doing so, you can help us and our future generations to thrive by living in harmony with nature. And in doing so, you can affirm that both nature and people have intrinsic worth and that governments are serious about living up to their duty both to protect Mother Earth and to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.



### List of signatory organisations

1. ABColombia – United Kingdom
2. AbibiNsroma Foundation – Ghana
3. ADeD – Republic of Benin
4. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man – Palestine
5. Albanian Human Rights Group – Albania
6. ALTSEAN-Burma – Burma
7. Amerindian Peoples Association – Guyana
8. Anti-Slavery International – United Kingdom
9. Appui pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Développement (APED) – Cameroon
10. Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB) – Brazil
11. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact – Thailand
12. Asian Indigenous Women's Network – Philippines
13. Asocamp – Colombia
14. Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of women - ESE – North Macedonia
15. Association For Promotion Sustainable Development – India
16. Association marocaine des droits humains (AMDH) – Morocco
17. Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS) – Suriname
18. Association Okani – Cameroon
19. Association pour la Promotion des Ecosystèmes Tropicaux et pour la Protection de l'Environnement (APETDS) – Republic of the Congo
20. Avaaz – United States of America
21. BirdLife International – United Kingdom
22. Both ENDS – Netherlands
23. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre – United Kingdom
24. Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) – United Kingdom
25. Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) – United States of America
26. Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur – India
27. Centro de Políticas Públicas y Derechos Humanos - Peru EQUIDAD – Peru
28. Chepkitale Indigenous Peoples' Development Project (CIPDP) – Kenya
29. Clean Clothes Campaign International Office – United Kingdom
30. ClientEarth – Belgium
31. Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz – Colombia
32. Community Empowerment and Social Justice Network (CEMSOJ) – Nepal
33. Comptoir Juridique Junior – Republic of the Congo
34. Conectas – Brazil
35. Confédération générale autonome des travailleurs en Algérie – Algeria
36. Construisons Ensemble le Monde – Democratic Republic of Congo
37. CoopeSoliDar R.L – Costa Rica
38. Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA) – Ecuador
39. Corporate Justice Coalition – United Kingdom
40. Covenants Watch – Taiwan
41. Deache – Colombia
42. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) – Egypt
43. Emmaus Aurinkotehdas ry – Finland
44. Endorois Welfare Council (EWC) – Kenya
45. Environmental Defender Law Center – United States of America
46. Environmental Investigation Agency – United Kingdom
47. Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) – United Kingdom
48. Equitable Cambodia – Cambodia
49. ESCR-Net (International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) – Switzerland
50. European Anti-Poverty Network – Belgium
51. European Coalition for Corporate Justice – Belgium
52. Federação do Povo Huni Kui do Acre (FEPHAC) – Brazil
53. Federación por la Autodeterminación de los Pueblos Indígenas – Paraguay
54. Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal – Nepal
55. FERN – Belgium
56. Forest Peoples Programme – United Kingdom
57. Foundation for the Conservation of the Earth (FOCONE) – Nigeria
58. Friends of the Earth International – Netherlands
59. Fundacion De Estudios Para La Aplicacion Del Derecho (FESPAD) – El Salvador
60. Fundación para la Democracia, Seguridad y Paz (FEDEPAZ) – Peru
61. Global Forest Coalition – Paraguay
62. Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Mexico
63. Global Justice Now – United Kingdom
64. Global Witness – United Kingdom
65. ICCA Consortium – Mexico
66. Inclusive Development International – United States of America
67. Indepaz – Colombia
68. Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development – Philippines
69. Indigenous Peoples Rights International – Philippines

70. Instituto de Defensa Legal – Peru
71. Instituto Runyn Pupykary Yawanawá – Brazil
72. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) – France
73. International Institute for Environment and Development – United Kingdom
74. International Service for Human Rights – Switzerland
75. International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific – Malaysia
76. Just Associates (JASS) – United States of America
77. Just Fair – United Kingdom
78. Justiça Global – Brazil
79. Karapatan Alliance Philippines – Philippines
80. La Route du Sel et de l’espoir – France
81. Landesa – United States of America
82. Le Centre pour le Développement et l’Environnement – Cameroon
83. Legal Resources Centre (LRC) - South Africa – South Africa
84. Lok Shakti Abhiyan – India
85. Lok Shakti Abhiyan – India
86. Lok Shakti Abhiyan (National Alliance Of People’s Movements) – India
87. London Mining Network – United Kingdom
88. Mbou-Mon-Tour (MMT) – Democratic Republic of Congo
89. MINBYUN - Lawyers for a Democratic Society – Republic of Korea
90. Minority Rights Group International – United Kingdom
91. Movement for the Survival of the Ohoni People (MOSOP) – Nigeria
92. Nairobi People’s Settlement Network – Kenya
93. National Fisheries Solidarity Movement – Sri Lanka
94. Natural Justice – South Africa
95. Natural Resource Governance and Economic Justice Network (NaRGEJ) – Sierra Leone
96. Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) – Sierra Leone
97. New Wind Association – Finland
98. Ogiek Peoples’ Development Program (OPDP) – Kenya
99. Organisation Guinéenne de défense des droits de l’homme et du citoyen (OGDH) – Guinea
100. Organisation pour le développement et les droits humains au Congo – Republic of the Congo
101. Peace Brigades International – United Kingdom
102. Project HEARD – Netherlands
103. Protection International – Belgium
104. RedConPaz Somos Genesis – Colombia
105. Réseau Ressources Naturelles (RRN) – Democratic Republic of Congo
106. Resguardo de Origen Colonial Cañamomo Lomapieta, Riosucio y Supía Caldas, Colombia – Colombia
107. Right to Education Initiative – United Kingdom
108. Sanjoy Hazarika – India
109. Sengwer of Embobut CBO – Kenya
110. Sin Olvido – Colombia
111. SITOAKORE (Organização de Mulheres Indígenas do Acre, Sul do Amazonas e Noroeste de Rondônia) – Brazil
112. Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development – Liberia
113. Society for Conservation Biology - Cameroon Chapter – Cameroon
114. South Rupununi District Council – Guyana
115. Support Group for Indigenous Youth – Brazil
116. Sustainable Development Foundation – Thailand
117. Sustainable Development Institute – Liberia
118. Tebtebba – Philippines
119. Teraju Foundation – Indonesia
120. The Andrew Lees Trust – United Kingdom
121. The Circle NGO – United Kingdom
122. The Corner House – United Kingdom
123. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) – Denmark
124. Third World Network – Malaysia
125. Tierra Nativa / Amigos de la Tierra Argentina – Argentina
126. Traidcraft Exchange – United Kingdom
127. TuK INDONESIA – Indonesia
128. Unison – United Kingdom
129. We Women Lanka – Sri Lanka
130. Wetlands International – Netherlands
131. WGII (Working Group ICCAs Indonesia) – Indonesia
132. Women Working Worldwide – United Kingdom
133. World Wildlife Fund – United Kingdom
134. Yayasan Masyarakat Kehutanan Lestari (YMKL) – Indonesia

## List of individual signatories

135. Carol Kalafatic, Resistance Studies Initiative, University of Massachusetts-Amherst – United States of America
136. Dr Alice Karuri, Strathmore University – Kenya
137. Dr Ariell Ahearn, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford – United Kingdom
138. Dr Asma Jabeen, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan – Pakistan
139. Dr Cathal Doyle, Senior Lecturer in Law, Middlesex University London – United Kingdom
140. Dr Diogo Veríssimo, University of Oxford – Portugal
141. Dr Emiel de Lange, University of Oxford – Netherlands
142. Dr Francisco J. Rosado-May, Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo – Mexico
143. Dr Henry Travers, Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science, Oxford University – United Kingdom
144. Dr Jerome Lewis, Centre for the Anthropology of Sustainability (CAoS) – United Kingdom
145. Dr Jorge C. Llopis, Centre for Development and Environment, Switzerland – Switzerland
146. Dr Leejiah Dorward, School of Natural Sciences, Bangor University – United Kingdom
147. Dr Richard Axelby, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS University of London – United Kingdom
148. Dr Stephanie Brittain, Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science, University of Oxford – United Kingdom
149. Dr Timothy Kuiper, University of Cape Town – South Africa
150. Edith Bastidas, Indigenous Lawyer – Colombia
151. James McNamara, Conservation Research Consultants Ltd – United Kingdom
152. Jérémie Gilbert, Professor of Human Rights, the University of Roehampton – United Kingdom
153. Jessica Campese, Member, IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) – United States
154. John H. Knox, Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law, Wake Forest University School of Law and former UN special rapporteur on human rights and the environment – United States of America
155. Jorge Varela Marquez, Goldman Environmental Prize winner 1999; Ambiente, Desarrollo y Capacitación, Honduras – Honduras
156. Michael Stein, the Harvard Law School Project on Disability – United States of America
157. Niall Watson, Independent Consultant – United Kingdom
158. Professor Ann Taket, Deakin University – Australia
159. Professor Ian Scoones, co-director STEPS Centre, IDS, University of Sussex – United Kingdom
160. Professor Laura T. Murphy, Sheffield Hallam University – United Kingdom
161. Professor Michel Pimbert, Director of the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University – United Kingdom
162. Ruth Spencer, Local Community Advisor – Antigua & Barbuda
163. Sarah Lunacek, University of Ljubljana, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology – Slovenia
164. Tim Cooke-Hurle, Barrister, Doughty Street Chambers – United Kingdom
165. Universidad de Paz – Colombia
166. Werner Soors, Equity & Health, Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp – Belgium