

CLIMATE CHANGE

Summary of the activities of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Mr. John Knox

MARCH 2016 – REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS RELATING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In its resolution [28/11](#), the Human Rights Council recognized the ongoing need to clarify some aspects of the human rights obligations relating to the environment. The Council asked the Special Rapporteur to continue to study those obligations, in consultation with Governments, human rights mechanisms, civil society organizations and others. The present report ([A/HRC/31/52](#)) examines the human rights obligations relating to climate change.

In this report, the Special Rapporteur describes the increasing attention paid to the relationship between climate change and human rights in recent years, reviews the effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights and outlines the application of human rights obligations to climate-related actions. He explains that States have procedural and substantive obligations relating to climate change, as well as duties to protect the rights of the most vulnerable.

DECEMBER 2015 – PRESS RELEASE

On 3 December 2015, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, John Knox, issued a [press release](#) reminding all parties attending the Paris Climate Conference that “States’ human rights obligations also encompass climate change,” and urged them to adopt a rights perspective in tackling environmental issues.

DECEMBER 2015 - COP21 OF UNFCCC

From 7 to 11 December 2015, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, John Knox, engaged in various events at the COP21 in Paris, including giving the keynote address at the Climate Law and Governance Day at La Sorbonne, presented at the International Bar Association conference on Existing Use of Arbitration in Resolving Climate Change-related Disputes; participated in a high-level breakfast organised by the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Change, held a press Conference with OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli Corpuz, on Human Rights Day.

JUNE 2015 - JOINT STATEMENTS BY UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES, WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

On 5 June 2015, on the occasion of World Environment Day, the Special Rapporteurs issued a [joint statement](#) drawing attention to the grave harm even a two degree Celsius increase in average global temperature would cause to the enjoyment of human rights around the world. The Special Rapporteurs urged the negotiators to reach a climate change agreement that reflects the obligations human rights law places on States to protect and promote human rights.

MAY 2015 - REPORT FOR THE CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM

Several United Nations Special Rapporteurs prepared a report for the Climate Vulnerable Forum, a group of twenty countries that are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. On behalf of the Forum, the Philippines, the current chair, submitted the report, [entitled "The Effects of Climate Change on the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights,"](#) on 1 May 2015 to the Conference of Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC. The Forum urged the COP to adopt a more ambitious target in the climate agreement currently under negotiation, in order to avoid the devastating effects of a rapidly warming planet on the basic rights of all of us who inhabit it.

DECEMBER 2014 - JOINT STATEMENT BY UN SPECIAL PROCEDURES, HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

On 22 December 2014, on the occasion of Human Rights Day, all of the United Nations Special Procedures mandate-holders issued a [joint statement](#) urging Member States of the UNFCCC to integrate human rights standards and principles in the climate change negotiations during the 20th Conference of the Parties, which was then taking place in Lima, Peru, and in the agreement to be adopted in Paris in December 2015.

OCTOBER 2014 - OPEN LETTER TO STATE PARTIES TO UNFCCC

In October 2014, the Special Rapporteur together with 28 Special Procedures mandate-holders transmitted an Open Letter to State Parties to the UNFCCC urging them "to adopt urgent and ambitious mitigation and adaptation measures to prevent further harm" and to include in the 2015 climate agreement a paragraph that "the Parties shall, in all climate change related actions, respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights for all, and to launch a work program to ensure that human rights are integrated into all aspects of climate actions." The Open Letter is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

MARCH 2014 – CLIMATE CHANGE MAPPING REPORT

In response to Human Rights Council resolution 19/10, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (then the Independent Expert) undertook an extensive research project to map the statements made by important sources on the human rights obligations relating to the environment. A specific report within the project was dedicated to the human rights obligations relating to climate change. This [Climate Change mapping report](#) describes statements made by human rights bodies on the human rights threatened by climate change and on the human rights obligations relating to climate change.

[Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Mr. John H. Knox](#)

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