



Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

10 February 2017

Dear friends and colleagues,

I apologize for the delay since the last newsletter! Since September, I took a country visit to Madagascar, participated in the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, joined in statements on the Dakota Access Pipeline, and – most recently – published [my most recent report](#) to the Human Rights Council, which addresses the relationship between biodiversity and human rights. I will formally present the report to the Council on 7 March.

Report on biodiversity and human rights. I recently released my [annual report](#) to the Human Rights Council, which addresses biodiversity and human rights. It explains that full enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food and water, depends on the services provided by ecosystems, that the provision of ecosystem services depends on the health and sustainability of ecosystems, and that in turn they depend on biodiversity. The full enjoyment of human rights thus depends on biodiversity, and the degradation and loss of biodiversity undermine the ability of human beings to enjoy their human rights. The report also outlines the obligations of States to protect biodiversity in order to protect human rights, including the heightened obligations States owe to indigenous peoples and local communities that closely depend on biodiversity for their cultural and material needs.

Country mission to Madagascar. In October, I visited Madagascar and met with government officials, civil society and others. We discussed a number of issues, including the conservation of Madagascar's unique flora and fauna, mining conflicts, illegal trafficking, and the effects of climate change, which is contributing to a drought that is devastating people in southern Madagascar, as well as many other places in Africa. My end-of-mission statement is available in English [here](#), and in French [here](#). The report on the visit will be published soon.

Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity. I participated in meetings at the Conference, which was held in December in Cancun, Mexico, including with representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities that are working to protect biodiversity, which helped to inform my report to the Human Rights Council on biodiversity and human rights.

Statements on the Dakota Access Pipeline. The Standing Rock Sioux tribe in the United States, joined by many other indigenous peoples and others, have been opposing and peacefully protesting the construction of a crude oil pipeline because of concerns that it could adversely affect their drinking water. I have endorsed statements by Vicki Tauli-Corpuz, the Special

Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, [calling on the United States](#) to halt the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, consult with the affected communities in good faith, and ensure their free and informed consent prior to the approval of the project, and by Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, [criticizing](#) U.S. security forces for using excessive force against the protestors.

Events at the Council session in March. During the week of 6-10 March, I will participate in several events at the Human Rights Council, including: meeting with civil society on Monday, 6 March, at 9.30 in the Palais Wilson; participating in a side event on Monday at 13:00, in the Palais des Nations, on environmental human rights defenders; presenting my report to the Council on Tuesday, 7 March, at 15:00, during an interactive dialogue; and participating in another side event, on Thursday, 9 March, at noon, on biodiversity and human rights.

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

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John H. Knox', written in a cursive style.

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