

THE HUMAN RIGHTS PLATFORM

CIEL
CENTER for INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

UN
environment programme

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EARTHJUSTICE

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A voice at the United Nations

2021 Annual Conference

CONCEPT NOTE THEMATIC SESSION 2

Environment and human rights: How do national human rights actors address this link and how do they engage with Geneva-based international mechanisms?

**Maison de la Paix (Pétale 5) and online event (Zoom),
Tuesday 12 October 2021, 14:00 – 15:30 (CET)**

A project of the: **GENEVA ACADEMY**
Académie de droit international
humanitaire et de droits humains
Academy of International
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The Geneva Academy, a Joint Centre of

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TOPIC

Climate change and other environmental crises are negatively affecting the full enjoyment of a broad range of human rights, both civil and political, and economic, social and cultural. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement, UN Human Rights mechanisms and other human rights actors at various levels have increased their efforts to include human rights considerations in the implementation and monitoring of State commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other environmental instruments. Today, the fulfilment of the Paris Agreement is notably lagging and the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the international community of the deep links between a healthy environment, human health and human rights. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, recently stated: “To recover better, and prevent future global shocks – including viral pandemics – we must protect the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment” and “as such, human rights must become part of the climate solution” (GANHRI Annual Conference 2020). This statement resounds with the continued efforts by a group of states to move towards global recognition of this right, first by the Human Rights Council, followed by the General Assembly.

In this context, all national human rights actors have a role to play at domestic level, whether by implementing policies to tackle environmental degradation, biodiversity loss or climate change; supporting the integration of human rights in national climate policies; raising awareness among officials and the public and providing technical advice to governments and parliaments. All national human rights actors may also engage at the international level, through platforms for addressing environment related human rights issues and for submitting parallel reports or individual cases to the different regional and UN human rights mechanisms. For these efforts to take hold there must be both political will and adequate understanding of the links between human rights and the environment.

This thematic panel will focus on how different national human rights actors have contributed to a more effective, informed and participatory environmental and climate action, at both national and UN-levels. Ministerial bodies, National Parliaments, NHRIs and CSOs, with their differing mandates and functions, may all play a role in enforcing human rights-based environmental policies, advising national decision-makers and educating the public about the human rights impacts of environmental harms as well as monitoring these impacts. Some actors may also handle complaints and promote accountability, at a national level and through regional and universal human rights mechanisms. All such efforts, if effectively coordinated, may represent of mutual benefit for both human rights and the preservation of the environment.

PANELISTS

- **Millie-Odhiambo-Mabona**, Member of the National Assembly of Kenya
- **Benyam Daswit Mezmur**, Professor of Law at the University of Western Cape and Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- **Michael Windfuhr**, Deputy Director, German Institute for Human Rights, GANHRI
- **Adele Metheson Mestad**, Director, Norwegian National Human Rights Institution
- **Leon Dulce**, National Coordinator, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment in the Philippines

MODERATOR

- **Rodrigo Uprimny**, Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Member of the GHRP Advisory Board

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