

# 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.

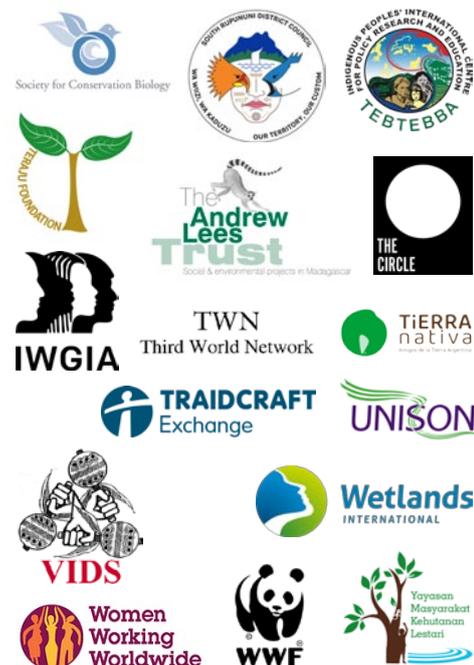
This must change. As a global community we face multiple, intersecting crises: increasing human rights abuses and environmental harms by companies, land grabs, the loss of food and water sovereignty, increasing poverty and inequality, increased attacks and killings of defenders, climate change-induced 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. African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA) – South Africa
5. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man – Palestine
6. Albanian Human Rights Group – Albania
7. ALTSEAN-Burma – Burma
8. Amerindian Peoples Association – Guyana
9. Amnesty International – United Kingdom
10. Anti-Slavery International – United Kingdom
11. Appui pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Développement (APED) – Cameroon
12. Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB) – Brazil
13. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact – Thailand
14. Asian Indigenous Women's Network – Philippines
15. Asocamp – Colombia
16. Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of women - ESE – North Macedonia
17. Association For Promotion Sustainable Development – India
18. Association marocaine des droits humains (AMDH) – Morocco
19. Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS) – Suriname
20. Association Okani – Cameroon
21. Association pour la Promotion des Ecosystèmes Tropicaux et pour la Protection de l'Environnement (APETDS) – Republic of the Congo
22. Avaaz – United States of America
23. Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) – Bangladesh
24. Bank Information Center – United States of America
25. BirdLife International – United Kingdom
26. Both ENDS – Netherlands
27. BUCO – Democratic Republic of Congo
28. Business, Human Rights and the Environment Research Group, The School of Law, University of Greenwich – United Kingdom
29. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre – United Kingdom
30. Cadre de concertation pour la réforme des services de sécurité et de la Justice (CCRSSJ) – Democratic Republic of Congo
31. Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) – United Kingdom
32. Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) – United States of America
33. Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur – India
34. Centro de Políticas Publicas y Derechos Humanos - Peru EQUIDAD – Peru
35. Chepkitale Indigenous Peoples' Development Project (CIPDP) – Kenya
36. Clean Clothes Campaign International Office – United Kingdom
37. ClientEarth – Belgium
38. Comision de Derechos Humanos de Pucallpa – Peru
39. Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz – Colombia
40. Community Empowerment and Social Justice Network (CEMSOJ) – Nepal
41. Comptoir Juridique Junior – Republic of the Congo
42. Conectas – Brazil
43. Confédération générale autonome des travailleurs en Algerie – Algeria
44. Conservation International – United States of America
45. Construisions Ensemble le Monde – Democratic Republic of Congo
46. CoopeSoliDar R.L – Costa Rica
47. Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA) – Ecuador
48. Corporate Justice Coalition – United Kingdom
49. Covenants Watch – Taiwan
50. Deache – Colombia
51. Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia – Slovenia
52. Earthsight – United Kingdom
53. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) – Egypt
54. Emmaus Aurinkotehdas ry – Finland
55. Endorois Welfare Council (EWC) – Kenya
56. Environmental Defender Law Center – United States of America
57. Environmental Investigation Agency – United Kingdom
58. Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) – United Kingdom
59. Equitable Cambodia – Cambodia
60. ESCR-Net (International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) – Switzerland
61. European Anti-Poverty Network – Belgium
62. European Coalition for Corporate Justice – Belgium
63. Fair Trade Advocacy Office – Belgium
64. Federação do Povo Huni Kui do Acre (FEPHAC) – Brazil
65. Federación por la Autodeterminación de los Pueblos Indígenas – Paraguay
66. Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal – Nepal
67. FERN – Belgium
68. Forest Interest Group at the Environmental Peacebuilding Association (EnPax) – United States of America
69. Forest Peoples Programme – United Kingdom
70. Foundation for the Conservation of the Earth (FOCONE) – Nigeria
71. Friends of the Earth International – Netherlands
72. Fundacion De Estudios Para La Aplicacion Del Derecho (FESPAD) – El Salvador
73. Fundación para la Democracia, Seguridad y Paz (FEDEPAZ) – Peru

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

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