



Her Excellency
Ms Michelle Bachelet
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

10 September 2020

Your Excellency,

Re: Global civil society and Indigenous Peoples call for the recognition of the right to a healthy environment

As HRC45 approaches, the under signed organisations would like to draw your attention to a civil society and Indigenous Peoples call to States to recognise the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment ([English](#), [Spanish](#)). This Call is endorsed by [over 800 civil society and Indigenous Peoples organisations](#) from all regions of the world. It is also endorsed by CSOs from a broad range of groups representing women, Indigenous Peoples, children and youth, persons with disabilities, peasants and other rural communities, labor as well as all major environmental networks and human rights organisations.

The CSO Call highlights that a healthy environment is essential for human life and dignity. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the life-sustaining climate we enjoy, are all dependent on healthy, diverse, integral and functioning ecosystems. Without a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, many other rights are unachievable. Therefore, civil society are calling on States to urgently guarantee people's right to a healthy environment through formal recognition in human rights law.

We welcome the support you and your office have shown for the recognition of the right to a healthy environment and on the importance of addressing climate change and environmental degradation in order to protect rights. We note for example the OHCHR report on realising the rights of the child through a healthy environment: *'States should integrate the human right to a healthy environment into national constitutions and legislations, and recognize this right at the global level so that it can be enjoyed by everyone everywhere'* (A/HRC/43/30, paragraph 107, (c)).



We were also pleased to hear your remarks identifying the link between COVID-19 and environmental degradation and highlighting the urgent need to protect the environment in order to protect rights, in your Informal Briefing to the Human Rights Council on COVID-19 (9 April 2020) and at HRC44 at the Annual Day on the Rights of the Child: *'Over-exploitation of our environment increases the risk of infectious diseases like COVID-19 jumping from animal to human hosts. The pandemic is a very powerful example of the threat to human well-being that results from environmental damage.'*

Therefore, it is our hope that you will acknowledge the CSO Call and indicate support for the recognition of the right to a healthy environment during your presentations at HRC45. This is an important moment in this CSO campaign which has seen an unprecedented mobilization of CSOs from all backgrounds behind this collective objective. We consider that you can play a key role in building momentum and support for this objective by speaking out in support of the CSO Call and of the importance of a healthy environment for the realisation of rights. We would appreciate any support you can offer to make sure that during HRC45, States hear the call to take action in relation to the recognition of the right to a healthy environment, in particular in view of the resolution the Council will consider at this session on realising children's right to a healthy environment.

The CSO Call, with the [list of all signatories](#), will be shared with all Permanent Missions tomorrow morning but we thought that it might be useful to give you advance notice about this upcoming initiative so that you could consider including it in your plans for the session.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information or if you would like to discuss this initiative. Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona.

Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona
Executive Director
Global Initiative for Economic,
Social & Cultural Rights

Handwritten signature of Lucy McKernan.

Lucy McKernan
Geneva Representative
Global Initiative for Economic,
Social & Cultural Rights



On behalf of the following civil society and Indigenous Peoples organisations:

Child Rights International Network
Earthjustice
Center for International Environmental Law
International Indian Treaty Council

Contact:
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