

The Long Overdue Recognition of the Autonomous Human Right of all Europeans to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, and Why the Council of Europe Must Act Now

Thursday, 20th April 2023, 4:00-5:15 PM GMT+2/CEST

To attend, please register here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qZLQwINdThOzkJSys21dXA#/registration

Organizers and co-sponsors: Amnesty International, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), Earthjustice, European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Global Pact Coalition, Greenpeace International, Human Rights Watch, Icelandic Nature Conservation Association (INCA), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNC DH), Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)

Objective: Discuss the current lack of the autonomous right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in the European human rights system, highlight the benefits that would result from its effective recognition by the Council of Europe, and lay out in which circumstances, and through which processes, this recognition could take place.

Location and Date: Online event on Thursday 20 April 2023, 4-5.15pm GMT+2/CEST

Format: The briefing will include a panel of about 10 experts with different backgrounds, each one entitled to a 4-minute intervention and each one addressing the need for the effective recognition of the autonomous right to a healthy environment by the Council of Europe from a specific and unique perspective. Following the panelists' interventions, 30 minutes will be dedicated to answer and discuss a few selected questions from the public. The facilitator(s) will be responsible to distribute the selected questions among the panelists. Questions that are not orally answered by the panelists will be distributed to them by the facilitator(s) and will be answered in writing in the Q&A section of the webinar platform chat.



The banner features a background image of a forest. At the top, there is a row of logos for the following organizations: CIEL (Center for International Environmental Law), Earthjustice (Because the Earth Needs a Good Lawyer), FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), Amnesty International, CNC DH (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme, République Française), GlobalPact (For the Environment), YEE (Youth and Environment Europe), EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Human Rights Watch, and Greenpeace. Below the logos, the text reads: "ONLINE EVENT" in white on a dark blue background. The main title is "THE LONG OVERDUE RECOGNITION OF THE AUTONOMOUS HUMAN RIGHT OF ALL EUROPEANS TO A CLEAN, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT, AND WHY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE MUST ACT NOW", with "HEALTHY" and "ENVIRONMENT" in yellow. At the bottom left, it says "Thursday, April 20, 4pm CET". At the bottom right, it says "REGISTER:" followed by a QR code.

Background of the Experts Briefing

In the context of today's triple planetary environmental crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, the European human rights framework remains the only regional human rights system whose political institutions do not yet explicitly recognize the autonomous right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for the people they protect.

At the international level, the United Nations General Assembly has recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in July 2022, in a resolution that has been supported by all the Member States of the Council of Europe. In addition, at the national level, more than 90% of these Member States recognize the right to a healthy environment in some capacity.

And yet, a recognition of the autonomous right to a healthy environment at the level of the Council of Europe is still missing. Explicitly recognizing this autonomous right is crucial to equip the people protected by the European human rights system with an actionable and internationally enforceable right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and it would be a catalyst for the adoption of more effective policies in favour of environmental and climate protection. This recognition would also assist governments in facilitating its implementation, including by corporate actors, and in promoting legal certainty, and it would contribute to unequivocally including environmental defenders as protectors of human rights, thus enhancing protection for the most at-risk category of human rights defenders.

Several civil society organizations, youth representatives and academic scholars working across Europe on matters related to human rights and to climate and environmental governance, as well as UN and regional human rights experts, are coming together to call upon Member States of the Council of Europe to ensure that this important topic will be duly addressed in the upcoming months, starting with the occasion presented by the Reykjavik Summit (a once-in-a-generation summit of the Council of Europe that will be held in May, during which Member States will convene to refocus the Council's mission in light of today's threats to democracy and human rights).

This Experts Briefing will be an opportunity to discuss the current situation of the autonomous right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in the European human rights system, as well as the next steps towards its recognition. Some of the panelists will highlight the benefits that will result from its effective recognition by the Council of Europe - benefits that have already been experienced in other regional human rights systems. The possible timeline, circumstances and instruments through which this recognition could and should take place will also be addressed.

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ONLINE BRIEFING

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16:00	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Facilitation: Sébastien Duyck, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objective and functioning of the webinar;• Quick round of introduction of the experts.
16:10	<p>Interventions from panelists</p> <p><i>Why does the right to a healthy environment matter?</i></p> <p>Amy Jacobsen - Greenpeace International Emma Pagliarusco - Youth and Environment Europe Olya Melen-Zabramn - Environment, People, Law</p> <p><i>What does the right to a healthy environment mean in practice?</i></p> <p>Chiara Liguori - Amnesty International Katharina Rall - Human Rights Watch Maddalena Neglia - International Federation for Human Rights Ben Schachter - OHCHR</p> <p><i>How should Europe move forward?</i></p> <p>Annalisa Savaresi - Global Network for Human Rights and the Environment Hannah Cecilie Brænden - European Network of National Human Rights Institutions Árni Finnsson - Icelandic Nature Conservation Association</p>
16:40	<p>Q&A and interactive discussion with the online audience</p>
17:10	<p>Closing Remarks</p>
