

UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS CALL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TO BE FULLY INTEGRATED IN THE RIO+20 OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Over the past couple of months, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, all Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, and other UN human rights bodies and experts have called on the international community to fully integrate human rights in the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. States gathering at the UN Headquarters in New York City for the second round of "Informals" negotiations (April 23-May 4) have received a clear and compelling call from the UN Human Rights machinery. Will States respond?

The following excerpts identify some of the statements made by high-level experts and illustrate why a human rights-based approach to sustainable development is critical in the Rio+20 process:

Human Rights Council Resolution 19/L.8/Rev.1 (20 March 2012):

The Human Rights Council,

2. *Decides* to appoint, for a period of three years, an independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, whose tasks will be: (d) To take into account the results of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, and to contribute a human rights perspective to follow-up processes;
5. *Encourages* the Office of the High Commissioner to participate in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in order to promote a human rights perspective;

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay: Open Letter to all Permanent Missions in New York and in Geneva (30 March 2012):

I am appealing to all Member States to fully integrate key human rights considerations in the Rio+20 outcome document. At Rio, Member States should commit to ensuring full coherence between efforts to advance the green economy, on the one hand, and their solemn human rights obligations on the other. They should recognize that all policies and measures adopted to advance sustainable development must be firmly grounded in, and respectful of, all internationally agreed human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. To these ends, all actors, in both the public and private sectors, should exercise due diligence, including through the use of human rights impact assessments. Particular care must be taken to prevent and remedy any negative impacts on the human rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, minorities, migrants, persons living in poverty, older persons, persons with disabilities, and children. The empowerment of women, the protection of their rights, and their meaningful participation in decision making must be assured. States should resolve to work to advance a human rights-based approach to the green economy, based on the principles of participation, accountability (at the national and international levels), non-discrimination, empowerment, and the rule of

law in green economy efforts, and to pursue a model of economic growth that is socially and environmentally sustainable, just and equitable, and respectful of all human rights.

Special Procedures mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council:

Joint Statement to States negotiating the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Summit (14 March 2012):

As independent experts of the Human Rights Council, we call on States to incorporate universally agreed international human rights norms and standards in the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Summit with strong accountability mechanism to ensure its implementation... Rio+20 should ground global commitments in human rights. It should enable citizens to monitor the commitments of their Governments. And it should put accountability, the foundation of a human rights-based approach to development, at the core of its commitments... The Rio+20 Outcome document should integrate specific references to all human rights, which are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, complementing the two existing references to the right to food, and the right to safe and clean drinking water.

UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation Catarina de Albuquerque: Statement (22 March 2012):

In order to achieve the future we want, we need to again underline our commitments to the human right to water and sanitation. We need to speak up for the millions who are marginalized and forgotten – people sleeping on the street, girls who walk miles to fetch water every day, boys who drop out of school because of diarrhoea, people who cannot access water because of their disabilities... Rio+20 and post-2015 development goals should not betray the previous commitments on the right to water and sanitation. It is now time to focus on the world population who only have access to unclean and unsafe water and inadequate sanitation.

**UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability,
Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A future worth choosing (2012):**

5. The truth is that sustainable development is fundamentally a question of people's opportunities to influence their future, claim their rights and voice their concerns. Democratic governance and full respect for human rights are key prerequisites for empowering people to make sustainable choices. The peoples of the world will simply not tolerate continued environmental devastation or the persistent inequality which offends deeply held universal principles of social justice. Citizens will no longer accept governments and corporations breaching their compact with them as custodians of a sustainable future for all.

57. A key prerequisite for empowering people to make sustainable choices is ensuring their human rights, including the right to take part in government directly or through freely chosen representatives as well as the fundamental freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association and assembly. Sustainable choices can be made only where there are opportunities to influence our situation, claim our rights and voice our concerns.

**For more information on the initiative to advance a rights-based approach in Rio+20, please contact:
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