



**INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATING
COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS FOR THE
PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS (ICC)**

**ICC OPEN LETTER TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

2 April 2012

Dear Member States, Bureau members, UN, IGO and Major Groups,

1. The International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) is an international and independent body which promotes the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in conformity with the Paris Principles (Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions). Fully compliant NHRIs currently exist in 69 countries worldwide. In 2008 the ICC was incorporated under Swiss law with a Bureau of 16 voting members representing its four regions: the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Europe. The ICC coordinates the relationship between NHRIs and the United Nations human rights system and is unique as the only non-UN body whose internal accreditation system, based on compliance with the 1993 Paris Principles, enables access to UN committees and the Human Rights Council.

2. The ICC, cognisant of the importance of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012, calls on States to ensure full coherence in the Outcome Document and for it to make explicit the link between efforts to advance development and green economy with respect for human rights. To this end we echo the call from independent experts of the UN Human Rights Council to incorporate and provide for protection for universally agreed international human rights norms and standards.

3. It is imperative that States pursue a model of economic growth which is socially and environmentally sustainable, just and equitable, and respectful of all human rights. The purpose of development is to enable people to live with dignity and to attain the highest standards of humanity guaranteed by international human rights laws. Human rights is both the end and the means of sustaining economic life and the key to securing the general welfare of the world's entire population. Human rights is therefore the most appropriate framework for concrete action to progress development, develop a green industry and eliminate poverty.

4. Environmental degradation, including through the adverse impacts of climate change, is one of the most critical issues we all face for the future of our planet. Climate change has adverse implications for the full enjoyment of human rights and it is the global nature of climate change which calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions. It is imperative that all action to combat climate change is consistent with internationally agreed human rights. There is a need for explicit reference to human rights in the Rio+20 Outcome Document. Reference to human rights monitoring mechanisms will inform and strengthen policy and decision-making and help fulfil the potential of national and international measures. Additionally, human rights monitoring

mechanisms can prevent unintended but significant negative consequences of certain adaptation measures.

5. We therefore call on all States to integrate a human rights based approach in the outcomes of the Rio+20 conference. In particular the Rio+20 Outcome Document should include:

a. an integrated human rights-based approach to the institutional framework for sustainable development and a green economy.

A human rights-based approach emphasises the empowerment of people, particularly those living in poverty, to participate in decisions which affect their human rights, including measures intended to combat climate change. It recognises the inherent dignity of every human being without distinction and so ensuring non-discrimination whilst enabling prioritisation of those in the most vulnerable circumstances. This can be in regard to access to goods, services and resources essential for the realisation of human rights.

A human rights-based approach also includes accountability of duty-bearers for the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights, including through monitoring and strengthening capacity of duty-bearers to act together to realise those rights, including in measures of adaptation to climate change. It promotes national and international systems based on equity and social justice.

b. specific references to all human rights, which are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, are essential, in particular to rights to information, participation and access to justice.

This would include the following: the rights to water and sanitation as endorsed by the UN General Assembly in resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010 and the UN Human Rights Council in its resolution 15/L.14 of 30 September 2010; the right to adequate food as defined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment 12 of 12 May 1999, and supported unanimously by all FAO-members in 2004 when adopting the “Voluntary Guidelines on the progressive implementation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security”; the responsibilities of private actors and business enterprises as contained on the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in its resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011; the right to adequate housing as defined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment 4 of 13 December 1991 and the protection of the environment, including the urgent issue of climate change as described by the Human Rights Council’s resolutions relevant to the relationship between human rights and the environment, including resolution 16/11 of 24 March 2011 on human rights and the environment, resolutions 7/23 of 28 March 2008, 10/4 of 25 March 2009 and 18/22 of 30 September 2011 on human rights and climate change. Furthermore the UN Human Rights Council in resolution 19/10 of 22 March 2012 on “Human Rights and the environment” decided to appoint an independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment whose mandate includes working in consultation with Governments and all other human rights mechanisms including national human rights institutions.

c. an accountability mechanism, which ensures specific, measurable, achievable and time bound commitments with an independent monitoring process.

Such national and international accountability mechanisms will facilitate the implementation of the Rio+20 commitments and could be integrated in or aligned with existing review frameworks, including the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council.

6. NHRIs can play a supportive, strategic and distinctive role at both international and national levels in supporting states to include and adopt such a human rights-based approach

to environmental protection and sustainable development. The ICC therefore supports member States in their efforts to address these challenges urgently so that the Rio+20 Summit takes up its shared responsibility to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, to review progress, identify remaining implementation gaps and assess new and emerging challenges.