**Category: Obligation to Provide Access to Legal Remedies**

**Sub-Category: National Human Rights Institutions**

**Name of Good Practice: Ombudsperson on Human Rights’ Focus on Environment**

Key Words: Ombudsperson, Accountability, Access to Justice, Right to Health

Implementing Actors: National Ombudsperson: Ombudsperson of Croatia

Location: Croatia

Description: The 1990 Constitution established the Institution of the Ombudsperson of Croatia and mandates it to promote and protect human rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, laws and international human rights treaties that Croatia has ratified. Since 2013, Croatia’s current Ombudsperson has implemented three specific areas of work that address environmental issues. First, the Institution receives complaints on environmental protection and human rights from the public. Beginning in 2013, the Ombudsperson has received 20 complaints relating to environmental protection and another 19 complaints relating to noise pollution, with most of the complaints expressing serious concern for health issues stemming from the operation of industrial facilities and waste disposal sites in the vicinity of human settlements. The Ombudsperson can request information about a complaint from the relevant government body and subsequently issue opinions, recommendations or warnings to the relevant public administration body, and if necessary can report on the issue to the Croatian Parliament. However, according to the Ombudsperson, she is still processing the complaints she received relating to the environment due to the complex and time-consuming nature of the issues raised.

Second, the Institution added environment protection as a new section within its report on Croatia for the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the Ombudsperson’s Annual Report to Parliament beginning in 2013. The Annual Report recommended that the government: 1) better address pollution from industrial and waste disposal sites and 2) monitor and gather data on the impact from environmental pollution on health.

Third, the Institution began in 2013 to participate in environmental decision-making processes by providing comments on three separate air protection regulations. Although the government did not accept her recommendations on the air pollution regulations, according to the Ombudsperson, she was able to raise human rights issues in a context where such issues have previously not been raised.

Further Information**:** The Ombudsperson’s web page: <http://www.ombudsman.hr/index.php/en/documents-3/ombudsman-s-reports>.