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Mandate of the Independent Expert on human rights and the environment

20 October 2014

Dear friends and colleagues,

On October 17, 28 UN Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts sent the attached open letter to the State Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The letter states: “There can no longer be any doubt that climate change interferes with the enjoyment of human rights recognised and protected by international law,” and underscores the need for urgency in addressing this topic, because of the approaching deadlines for the climate negotiations to reach a concrete solution. The Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention meets this December in Lima (COP 20), with the goal of adopting a new legal instrument at its next meeting, in Paris in December 2015 (COP 21).

The experts urge the State Parties to the UNFCCC “to recognise the adverse effects of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights, and to adopt urgent and ambitious mitigation and adaptation measures to prevent further harm.” Specifically, we call on the State Parties “to include language in the 2015 climate agreement that provides that the Parties shall, in all climate change related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights for all. And we urge the State Parties at COP 20 in Lima to launch a work program to ensure that human rights are integrated into all aspects of climate actions.”

The letter stresses that the human rights responsibilities of the State Parties in this respect “should not be viewed as stopping at their borders.” Because climate change is a global threat that requires global cooperation to solve, “States must work together in good faith to protect the environment that supports and enables the full enjoyment of our human rights.”

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John H. Knox'.

John H. Knox
UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment
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