



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
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## Mandate of the Independent Expert on human rights and the environment

26 February 2015

Dear friends and colleagues,

This letter is to provide an update on my current activities as the UN Independent Expert on human rights and the environment.

**Report on good practices.** My third annual report to the Human Rights Council is now available [here](#). In the past year, my principal focus has been to identify, promote and exchange views on best practices relating to the use of human rights obligations to inform, support and strengthen environmental policymaking. Through regional consultations, country visits, questionnaires and research, and through assistance from many of you, we have identified more than 100 good practices.

The report describes practices of national Governments, subnational Governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, corporations and others that employ human rights obligations relating to the environment in ways that go beyond basic human rights obligations. The practices are in the use of a wide range of human rights obligations relating to the environment, including (a) procedural obligations to make environmental information public, to facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making, to protect rights of expression and association, and to provide access to legal remedies; (b) substantive obligations, including obligations relating to non-State actors; (c) obligations relating to transboundary harm; and (d) obligations relating to those in vulnerable situations.

**March session of the Human Rights Council.** I will present the annual report and the compilation of good practices at an interactive dialogue with the Human Rights Council on Monday, March 9. The next day, March 10, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., I will speak at a side-event on good practices and on possible future activities for the mandate. Both the Council session and the side-event will be at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The preceding Thursday, March 5, I will meet with civil society at the Palais Wilson from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. to discuss my work. If you would like to attend, please let us know by return email.

**Panel discussion of climate change and human rights.** On Friday, March 6, the Human Rights Council will have a panel discussion on climate change and human rights at the Palais des Nations. At the morning session, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., the panel will discuss challenges and ways forward, including best practices, in addressing the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. I will moderate the second

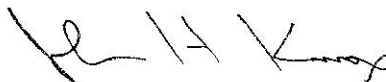
panel, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., which will focus on the adverse impacts of climate change on States' efforts progressively to realize the right to food. Closing remarks will be by Mary Robinson, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on climate change.

**Joint statement by UN special rapporteurs and independent experts.** On Human Rights Day, December 10, all of the UN special rapporteurs and independent experts issued a joint statement urging Member States of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to integrate human rights standards and principles in the climate change negotiations during the 20th Conference of the Parties, which was then taking place in Lima, Peru, and in the agreement to be adopted in Paris in December 2015. The full statement is available [here](#).

**Conference at Wake Forest University.** On March 26 and 27, Wake Forest University will host an interdisciplinary conference on “the human face of environmental inequality” in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Speakers will include Mary Robinson and Andrew Revkin, the author of the Dot Earth blog for the New York Times. More information about the conference, including a program, is available [here](#). I would enjoy the opportunity to welcome you to my academic home!

As I approach the end of the three-year term established by the Human Rights Council resolution that created the mandate, I want to thank all of you who have contributed to the work of the mandate. I deeply appreciate all that you have done, and are continuing to do, to protect the environment and human rights.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John H. Knox', written in a cursive style.

John H. Knox  
UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment  
Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law  
Wake Forest University School of Law