Right to a Healthy Environment

Researchathon

October 1-31, 2019

Prizes!!! International Recognition!!!

As the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, I am preparing a report for the Human Rights Council on good practices in implementing the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. There are currently more than 150 UN member nations where this right enjoys some form of legal recognition at the national level—in the constitution, in legislation, or as a party to a legally binding regional treaty that explicitly includes the right to a healthy environment.

One of my goals for the report is to include at least one good practice from each of these 150+ nations. I am defining “good practice” broadly, as any law, policy, program, institution or other government measure that contributes to improved environmental protection.

The right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment includes procedural and substantive elements. Procedural elements include the right of access to environmental information, public participation in environmental impact assessments and other decision-making processes affecting the environment, and access to justice/effective remedies when a person’s rights are being violated or threatened. Substantive elements include clean air, clean water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, a non-toxic environment in which to live, work, study and play, healthy ecosystems, and a safe climate. Related cross-cutting issues include gender equity, prioritizing vulnerable populations, protecting environmental human rights defenders, and imposing responsibilities on businesses.

This [Google Sheet](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wCGNIuAqlSzG8bltLKS-zkNN-3gSesT1xMUyeTbWCok/edit?usp=sharing) includes a list of the 150+ nations where the right to a healthy environment is recognized at the national level. Please select one nation, and place your name in the box beside it, **committing to email me 1-3 good practices for that nation by October 31**. My email address is drdavidboyd@gmail.com

Your email submission should include

1. Name of the country

2. Your name

3. Title of the good practice(s)

4. A concise 1-2 paragraph description of the good practice(s)

5. Any evidence that this good practice is contributing to improved environmental protection

6. From one to five references that describe the good practice or its effects

\*\*An example can be found on the following page. Useful sources include Google Scholar, Ecolex, INFORMEA, and Google. Submissions can be made in English/Spanish/French\*\*

**Every person who completes a submission will have their name recognized in the UN report and entered in a draw for five great prizes, including autographed books and gift certificates!**

EXAMPLE: Good Practices in Implementing the Right to a Healthy and Sustainable Environment

1. Nation

Canada (note this is a hypothetical example, since Canada is not yet among the 150+ nations that legally recognize this fundamental human right!)

2. Name of submitter

David Boyd

3. Title of the good practice

Eliminating coal-fired electricity generation

4. Description of the good practice

The Canadian government enacted a regulation pursuant to the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* that effectively requires all coal-fired electricity generating facilities to close down by 2030 (subject to several exceptions). Facilities can continue to operate if they implement carbon capture and storage systems, or in certain circumstances where provinces reach equivalency agreements with the federal government to implement other measures that ensure equal reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada, along with the United Kingdom, also created the Powering Past Coal Alliance, a coalition of dozens of governments and businesses that have pledged to eliminate or avoid dependence on coal-fired electricity.

5. Evidence of improved state of the environment

Elimination of coal-fired electricity generation has already resulted in a substantial improvement in air quality in the province of Ontario and will have similar positive impacts in other provinces. There will also be a major reduction in Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions as coal is replaced by a combination of renewables (mainly wind and solar) and natural gas.

6. References

*Reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from Coal-fired Generation of Electricity Regulations*, SOR/2012-167, as amended. <https://pollution-waste.canada.ca/environmental-protection-registry/regulations/view?Id=116>

Government of Canada. No date. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/greenhouse-gas-emissions/regulations/reducing-electricity-generation.html>

Powering Past Coal Alliance. <https://poweringpastcoal.org>