

# UN Environment's Environmental Rights Initiative

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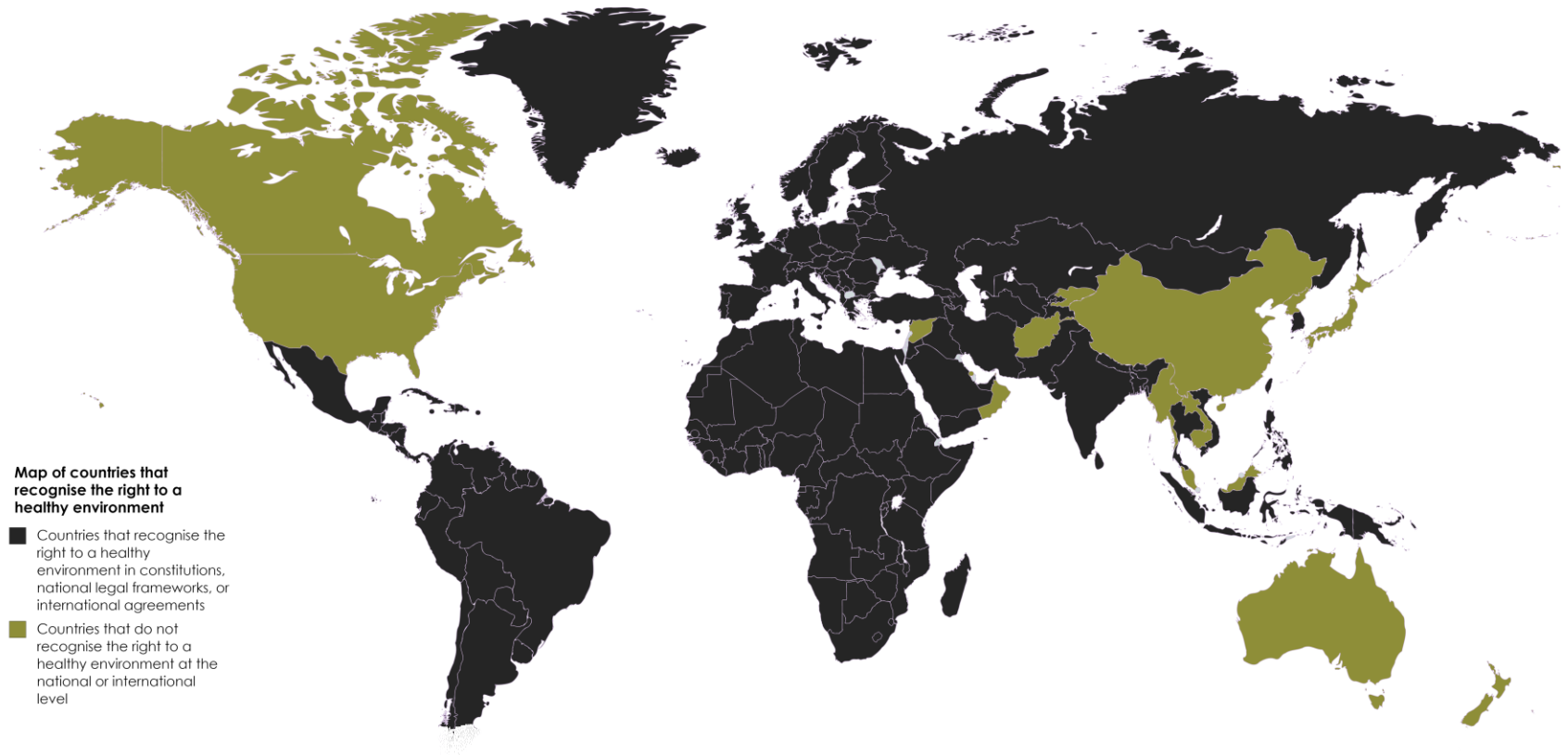
**Human rights for thriving indigenous peoples, local communities and healthy ecosystems, 24 November 2018**

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Andreas Obrecht, Law Division, UN Environment (Nairobi, Kenya)

- **Already in 2018, around 50 defenders have lost their lives while protecting their community's environment and natural resources**
- **Around 40% of those killed, harassed and intimidated are from indigenous and local communities from around the world**
- **This rising death toll is likely to continue if governments and businesses fail to act**





- **No global recognition of the right to a healthy environment**
- **Over 100 countries recognize the right to a healthy environment in their constitutions**
- **Major advantages of adopting a constitutional environmental right:**
  - **increased legitimacy of policies by integrating social and environmental concerns,**
  - **enhanced accountability of governments, the private sector and environmental or human rights organizations, and**
  - **and stronger cross-sectoral links, which can further efforts towards sustainable development.**

# **Constitutional Environmental Rights**

# THE ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS INITIATIVE



## WORK AREAS



COMMUNICATIONS AND  
PUBLIC OUTREACH:



ADVOCACY:



INFORMATION SHARING:



PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

→ **Three-pronged approach:**

- 1) **Speaking Out (Rapid Response Mechanism – statements, letters, social media);**
- 2) **Legal Assistance; and**
- 3) **Scaling up Partnerships**



## OBJECTIVES



PROMOTE AWARENESS:



PROMOTING INTER-AGENCY  
COOPERATION ON  
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS



PROMOTE ACCESS TO  
INFORMATION:



STRENGTHENING  
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS



BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE  
BASE ON ENVIRONMENTAL  
RIGHTS

# UN Environment's Policy on Environmental Defenders

- Objective: To promote greater protection for people defending their environmental rights, and identify solutions to mitigate the abuse of environmental rights which affects a growing number of people in many parts of the world
- Developed in response to growing severity of environmental rights problems and shrinking civil society space
- Three-pronged approach: 1) Speaking Out (Rapid Response Mechanism – statements, letters, social media); 2) Legal Assistance; 3) Scaling up Partnerships

# BRINGING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEARER TO THE PEOPLE

Promote,  
Protect,  
Respect  
Environmental  
Rights

1. Support environmental defenders
2. Engage governments (and other legal stakeholders)
3. Collaborate with media
4. Work with businesses



# **Linking Environmental Rights, Agenda 2030, Paris Agreement and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework**

- **Environmental rights is at the core of the three pillars of the UN system because human rights, development, and peace and security—are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.**
- **Rights-based approach taken by the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which clearly emphasizes the need for human rights to be at its core**
- **Human rights approach promotes people centred' development that leaves no one behind and no one out.**

## **Engaging with the post-2020 framework preparations**

- **Work through the 16 framework principles: biodiversity, NBSAP, voluntary peer-review**
- **Prepare a 15 December submission including suggestions using different ‘entry-points’**
- **Prepare a targeted discussion paper**
- **Use human rights debate to foster ambition**
- **Human right discussion as source of ‘solutions. Getting out of this room**
- **Expand the informal network and build alliances outside of the group**



**Outreach:** Communicating your work to a global audience and to decision-makers. Provide us with your links for important materials for [www.environmentalrightsinitiative.org](http://www.environmentalrightsinitiative.org)

**Rapid Response Mechanism:** eyes and ears on the ground...intelligence on emerging threats and actual incidents; [unenvironment-defenders@un.org](mailto:unenvironment-defenders@un.org)

**Civil society unit contact:**  
[unepcivilsociety@un.org](mailto:unepcivilsociety@un.org)

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