

How can human rights contribute to the protection of the environment ?

Thursday 22 September 2016, 10:00-12:00
International Environment House II (7-9 ch. de Balexert)

BIOGRAPHIES

Barbara RUIS, Legal Officer, UN Environment Regional Office for Europe

Barbara Ruis is an international lawyer, specialized in treaty law, law of international organizations, international environmental law and sustainable development law. She joined UNEP in 1993, and left a couple of years later to be the lawyer of the Secretariat of the Commission for Sustainable Development in New York, after which she became a researcher and lecturer at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

She rejoined UNEP in 2002, working with the Biodiversity and Land Law and Governance Unit within the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions till November 2008. She was then transferred to become the legal advisor to UNEP's Regional Office for Europe in Geneva. Her current activities focus on environmental liability, governance, the Ramsar convention and national capacity building activities in the region.

Barbara has been working on the topic of Human Rights and Environment for the past 8 years. She has been representing UNEP in the Human Rights Council. She works closely with the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and suitable environment, appointed by the Human Rights Council, as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and NGOs.

She holds a Masters Degree in International Law and a post doctorate certificate in environmental impact assessment.

John KNOX, UN Special Rapporteur “on human rights and environment”

John Knox is an internationally recognized expert on human rights law and international environmental law. In July 2012, the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed him to a three-year mandate as its first Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and in March 2015, his mandate was extended for three years and his title changed to Special Rapporteur.

In addition to his work on human rights and environmental protection, his recent scholarship addresses the human rights obligations of corporations, citizen suits in international environmental law, and the extraterritorial application of U.S. law, among other topics. In 2003, he was awarded the Francis Deák Prize, established by the American Society of International Law to honor a younger author who has made a “meritorious contribution to international legal scholarship.” For four years, until 2005, he chaired a national advisory committee to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the first regional environmental organization in North America. From 2008 to 2012, he provided pro bono assistance to the Government of the Maldives and the Center for International Environmental Law in their efforts to bring human rights law to bear on climate change and other environmental problems.

After graduating with honors from Stanford Law School in 1987, Professor Knox served as an attorney-adviser at the U.S. Department of State from 1988 to 1994, where he helped to negotiate the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the first protocol to the Convention Against Torture, and the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. He spent four years in private practice in Austin, Texas, and taught at Penn State for eight years before joining Wake Forest in 2006. He is married to Julie Winterich, a professor at Guilford College, and they have three daughters, who are 13, 17, and 19 years old.

Baskut TUNCAK, UN Special Rapporteur “on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes”

Baskut is an international attorney specializing in toxic chemical related matters. He is a visiting scholar at American University School of Law in Washington, DC. Previously, Baskut was a Senior Attorney with the Environmental Health program at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and a research chemist with various technology companies. He was appointed UN Special Rapporteur on "toxics" by the Human Rights Council in 2014.

Achim HALPAAP, Chief, UN Environment Chemicals and Waste Branch

Achim Halpaap has served as Head of the Chemicals and Waste Branch of UN Environment's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics since September 2015. He has more than twenty five years of experience in international environment and sustainable development research, policy analysis and capacity development in public, academic, private-sector, and non-governmental organizations.

In his previous position, Achim was Head of the Environment Unit and Associate Director of Training at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Before joining the UN, he headed the Chemicals and Waste Management Policy Section, Environmental Policy Directorate of the Bayer Corporation. Achim had research appointments at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) and Yale University (US) and holds academic degrees from Yale University (Ph.D.), the University of Oregon (M.A.), and the University of Bonn (B.Sc.).

Bruce GORDON, Coordinator of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health, World Health Organization

Bruce Gordon is the Coordinator of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health at the World Health Organization. He oversees a global portfolio of water and health-related work ranging from development of norms on drinking-water and wastewater/sanitation to global monitoring of access to WASH and burden of disease.

Prior to joining the water unit at WHO in 2004, he contributed to the Organization's work on sustainable development with a focus on children's health and environment. He has an academic background in biochemistry and environmental management.

Zaal LOMTADZE, Chief, Environment for Europe and Sustainable Development Section, Environment Division, UNECE

Zaal Lomtadze is at present the Chief of the Environment for Europe and Sustainable Development Section at the Environment Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The Section includes the Secretariat to the Aarhus Convention and PRTR Protocol. Mr. Lomtadze is also the secretary to the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy - the platform for environmental cooperation between 56 Governments of the pan-european region.

Zaal experience includes 17 years of work on senior posts in the Government of Georgia in the sectors of environment protection, and nuclear safety. During that period he also had been elected to various positions in international organisations dealing with global and regional environmental governance.

Gonzalo OVIEDO, Senior advisor, Social Policy Programme, International Union for Conservation of Nature

Gonzalo Oviedo is IUCN's Senior Advisor for Social Policy. He provides advice to IUCN's senior management, global programmes and regional offices on social aspects of nature conservation, in particular on indigenous peoples, community-based management of natural resources, socio-cultural and equity aspects of conservation and good natural resource governance at local, national and international levels.

An anthropologist by training, Gonzalo started his career working in educational projects with indigenous and rural communities of his home country Ecuador, under several initiatives supported by international organizations, such as UNESCO and the Organization of American States (OAS), which sought to implement innovative and integral approaches to community education. He then moved to the Galapagos Islands to work as the head of environmental education at the Charles Darwin Research Station.

Working with organizations active in environment, development, and educational issues in Ecuador and Latin America, Gonzalo became increasingly interested in issues related to social and cultural aspects of nature conservation. He is the author of several books and technical reports on education and conservation.

Nora KONIG, Councilor, Switzerland Permanent Mission to the United Nation Office in Geneva

Nora Kronig has a degree in economics of the University of St. Gallen. After working in a Swiss private bank, she joined the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 2006 and spent her first year as a diplomatic trainee in Mexico. From 2007 to 2010, she was deputy regional coordinator for Latin America in the Americas Division in the Political Directorate of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs. In 2010, she was assigned as diplomatic advisor to the Staff to State Secretary Peter Maurer and in 2012 appointed as Chief of Staff to State Secretary Yves Rossier. Since August 2016, she heads the Office of specialized institutions at the Swiss Permanent Mission in Geneva.

Nora is married. She is fluent in French, German, English and Spanish.