Biodiversity and human rights
Ecosystem services

“Everyone in the world depends completely on Earth’s ecosystems and the services they provide, such as food, water, disease management, climate regulation, spiritual fulfillment, and aesthetic enjoyment.”

Biodiversity makes ecosystems:

- more productive
  - fisheries, agricultural crops, forests
  - “10% loss of [forest] biodiversity can bring about a 2 to 3% reduction in productivity”

- more stable

- more resilient to disasters, climate change
Ötzi

birch fungus
Right to health: medicinal drugs

Purple foxglove (digitalis)

Rosy periwinkle
Right to health: immune systems
Right to food: pollination
Right to water: filtration

Lake Baikal
Biodiversity is necessary for the full enjoyment of human rights.

Therefore, States have a general obligation to protect biodiversity.
Procedural obligations

- to assess impacts
- to make environmental information public
- to facilitate participation in decision-making
- to provide access to justice
- to protect freedom of association, expression
2015 saw 185 killings, 3 a week

KILLINGS BY COUNTRY IN 2015
GLOBAL WITNESS DOCUMENTED 185 KILLINGS IN 16 COUNTRIES IN 2015, OF WHOM 67 OF THE VICTIMS WERE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

BRAZIL: 50
PHILIPPINES: 33
COLOMBIA: 26
PERU: 12
NICARAGUA: 12
DR CONGO: 11
GUATEMALA: 10
HONDURAS: 8
INDIA: 6
MEXICO: 4
INDONESIA: 3
LIBERIA: 2
MYANMAR: 2
CAMBODIA: 2
THAILAND: 2
PAKISTAN: 1
INT. WATERS: 1

NON-INDIGENOUS
INDIGENOUS
States must protect against foreseeable environmental harm to human rights.

They have discretion to strike a balance between environmental protection and economic development.

But the balance cannot be unreasonable, or result in unjustified, foreseeable infringements of human rights.
In striking a balance, States . . .

- should take into account international health and environmental standards
- should not take retrogressive measures
- must not discriminate among groups
- should comply with environmental standards once adopted
The 20 Aichi Targets include:

1. Prevent extinction of known threatened species and improve conservation status of those most in decline.

2. Restore and safeguard ecosystems that provide essential services, taking into account needs of women, indigenous/local communities, and poor
Progress towards Aichi Targets

TARGET

Reducing risk of extinction

By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

Why this target is important

Reducing the threat of human-induced extinction requires action to address the direct and indirect drivers of change. Achievement of this target is therefore highly dependent on most of the other Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Nevertheless, imminent extinctions of known threatened species can in many cases be prevented by protecting the sites where such threatened species are located, by combating habitat loss and habitat fragmentation, and by reversing or managing the impacts of invasive species.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET ELEMENTS (BY 2020)</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extinction of known threatened species has been prevented</td>
<td>⭐️⭐️⭐️</td>
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<tr>
<td>The conservation status of those species most in decline has been improved and sustained</td>
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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TARGET
Living Planet Index - 2016
Bramble Cay melomys
Angonoka or Ploughshare tortoise
Silky Sifaka
Progress towards Aichi Targets

**TARGET 14**

Ecosystem services

By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities and the poor and vulnerable.

**Why this target is important**

All terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems provide multiple ecosystem services. However some ecosystems are particularly important in that they provide services that directly contribute to human health and wellbeing by providing services that are critical to human wellbeing, such as water, food, and health care.

**SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TARGET**

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<tr>
<td>... taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.</td>
<td>1</td>
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States have duties:

- to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in the territories they have traditionally occupied

- generally, to allow extractive activities within those territories only with their free, prior and informed consent
INDIGENOUS GROUPS ARE GOOD FOREST STEWARDS

Deforestation rates inside legally-recognized indigenous lands are 2–3 times lower than in similar areas that are not registered to Indigenous Peoples.

Average Annual Rates, 2000–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Outside</th>
<th>Inside</th>
<th>Deforestation Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>2.8x LOWER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
<td>2.5x LOWER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>2x LOWER</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The biodiversity crisis is also a human rights crisis.

The best way to protect biodiversity is to protect human rights.
Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (former Independent Expert on human rights and the environment)

Introduction

All human beings depend on the environment in which we live. A safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. Without a healthy environment, many other human rights become unattainable.

Latest news:

“As the Covenants turn 50, it is time to turn norms into action” – UN experts
9 December 2015

COP21: “States’ human rights obligations encompass climate change” – UN expert
3 December 2015

More press releases and statements....

Announcements

Implementation report (A/HRC/31/53) is available!
@SREnvironment

John H Knox
@SREnvironment

John H. Knox is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, and an international law professor at Wake Forest University.

John H Knox @SREnvironment  Feb 6
My latest report to #HumanRightsCouncil: biodiversity is necessary for full protection of human rights, & vice versa