

Annual Full-Day Meeting on the Rights of the Child
Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment

Statement by
United Nations Environment Programme

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Human Rights Council, 44th Session

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations Environment Programme is pleased to take the floor at this important meeting.

Environmental rights are human rights. The interdependence of the two cannot be emphasized enough -- especially in the world we live in where nature is being severely degraded by pollution, climate change and ecosystem destruction. The environmental degradation has demonstrated links to the emergence of novel zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19 which resulted in negative impacts on a wide range of human rights.

UNEP works to make environmental rights a reality by supporting good environmental governance and environmental rule of law for the benefit of people and the planet.

Children's right to a healthy environment is a high priority for UNEP. Children are one of the most vulnerable groups to environmental harm as many of you already addressed.

In recent years, UNEP has collaborated with UN partners and other bodies, as well as child rights organizations and child/youth environmentalists. Together, we have advanced children's right to a healthy environment through producing legal guidance, including in child-friendly formats, convening workshops and promoting child and youth participation in meetings on the environment.

UNEP also works closely with Member States to strengthen policies and to effectively implement human rights and environmental laws at the national and regional levels. For example, UNEP, together with OHCHR, UNICEF and experts from ASEAN countries, is developing policy guidance for the implementation of children's right to a healthy environment in the South-East Asian region.

UNEP is in the process of revising its Environmental Defenders Policy through an inclusive consultation process. Through the Defenders Policy, UNEP continues to promote greater protection for environmental human rights defenders, including child and youth environmentalists.

Children and youth proved that they are not merely victims of environmental degradation but the agents of change – calling for a healthy environment from all corners of the world.

Their voices come from different parts of the world, but they are unified in their call – they demand *action*.

UNEP is committed to taking action to respond to the needs and demands of its constituencies

UNEP will enhance its environmental rights work by operationalizing the SG’s Call to Action for Human Rights, by implementing the recommendations of human rights mechanisms and by working with child and youth environmentalists and UN organizations including OHCHR and UNICEF, and by assisting the work of the Human Rights Council.

Please rest assured of UNEP’s support in implementing your important work.

Thank you.