

Statement delivered during the UN Human Rights Council interactive dialogue with UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment on 3 March 2021.

Realising children's right to a healthy environment

This statement is made on behalf of the Child Rights Connect Working Group on child rights and the environment and the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative.

No group is more vulnerable to environmental harm than children. The numbers are truly shocking. More than 1.7 million children under the age of five lose their lives every year as a result of avoidable environmental impacts, while millions more suffer disease and permanent forms of harm. We welcome the focus on children's rights in the latest report from the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, which states that every day, more than 700 children under the age of five die from water- and sanitation-related disasters. By 2040, almost 600 million children will live in regions with extremely limited water resources. From toxic water pollution and chemicals, to the climate crisis and global biodiversity loss, environmental risks pose grave and wide-ranging threats to children's rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with particular burdens faced by children facing intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalisation, including girls, children with disabilities, indigenous children and those living in poverty.

Although this has been widely documented in the past couple of years, there is still a gap in the recognition of the links between environmental harm and children's rights. Children are not sufficiently recognised as holders of environmental rights; violations of their rights in relation to environmental breakdown are still underreported and are not met with adequate remedies. Strong normative standards to advance children's environmental rights are missing.

The UN should formally recognise the right to a healthy environment as soon as possible. It would provide comprehensive protection against environmental harm, spur all states to prioritize actions to implement this vital human right and empower those working to protect the environment. Such a step would be of particular relevance to children and future generations, who shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of environmental harm. It is beyond debate that children are wholly dependent on the natural environment to lead dignified, healthy and fulfilling lives, including a safe climate, clean air, safe water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments to learn and play in, and healthy

biodiversity and ecosystems. In the face of an unprecedented environmental crisis, children and youth across the world are calling for more urgent and ambitious action.

Signatories

1. Advocates of Hope Zimbabwe
2. AFCOD-UGANDA
3. Africa Movement of Working Children and Youth
4. Association des Citoyens pour le Développement Durable en Haïti
5. Awometrust
6. Burundi Child Rights Forum
7. Centre for Children's Rights, Queen's University, Belfast
8. Centre for Environment and Rural Development
9. Child Rights Coalition Asia
10. Child Rights Connect
11. Childline
12. Children and Young People Living for Peace (CYPLP)
13. Children and Youth Movement - Philippines
14. Children Rights Advocacy and Legal Aid Foundation (CRALAF)
15. Climate Warriors India
16. Collective Community Action
17. Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE)
18. Connecting
19. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
20. CRN COMMITTEE
21. Environment Africa
22. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Kenya
23. Gatef organizations
24. Give Hope Uganda
25. Green Institute
26. How Impact
27. Human Rights Watch
28. Humanium

29. IAM Mbare Youth Development Centre
30. International Institute for Child Rights and Development
31. Joy Village Foundation
32. Kiambu county CHV CBO
33. Kishoka Youth Community Based Organization
34. Kiwangala Community Early Childhood Development Centre
35. Kiwangala Community Library
36. Kiwangala Community Primary School
37. Kiwangala Community Social Initiatives
38. Let Girls Learn Kenya Initiative
39. Letsema Child Right Ambassadors
40. Letsema Child Rights Network
41. Livingstone Rhinos Rugby Union Club
42. LRC ambassadors
43. Make Mothers Matter
44. Manyatta Development is Power
45. MDT
46. MenEngage Uganda Network
47. Midlands AIDS Services Organisation
48. Midlands State University
49. Midlands State University Environmental Society(MSUES)
50. Mtoto News
51. Mubimba Primary School
52. Mwanakwaye Movement
53. Nest Foundation
54. New Zimbabwe Youth Forum
55. Pahchan Foundation
56. PIVJET International
57. Plan International
58. The Boys Brigade Nigeria
59. Rede de jovens
60. REPSSI
61. Retsepile Support and Development Group
62. Revival NGO

63. RNCYPT
64. Save the Children
65. SGE Initiatives
66. Soka Gakkai International (SGI)
67. Somero
68. Sonke Gender Justice
69. SOS Children's Villages - Eswatini
70. Strive Foundation Uganda
71. SUHAKAM - Human Rights Commission Malaysia
72. Terre des Hommes Deutschland e.V.
73. The B Team
74. The Community Human Rights Defenders Network (ACPDH)
75. The Conscientization Movement
76. The Future Generations Project
77. Trinity Project
78. TROVOCO
79. University Student Chamber International
80. UNMGCY
81. Village of Hope for Development and Rehabilitation for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities
82. Vunja Kimya Foundation
83. Young People's Network on Sexual Reproductive Health on HIV and AIDS, Zvishavane
84. Young Voices Trust
85. YOUNGO
86. Youth Environment Service
87. Youth Network for Positive Change
88. Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association
89. Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association Youth Network