



The Global Initiative
for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

HRC45 NGO Oral Statement

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to water and sanitation

16 September 2020

We thank Mr Léo Heller for his outstanding contribution to the work of the Human Rights Council and to the protection and promotion of the rights to water and sanitation over the past six years.

We also thank him for the important report on progress on the rights to water and sanitation, reminding us of how far we have come since the formal recognition of these rights. We appreciate the three-dimensional framework he outlines: human rights as a driver, human rights as a policy tool and human rights as a people-centric approach.

One driver of failure to realise the right to water is environmental degradation and pollution. The full enjoyment of the right to water depends on a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including the essential ecosystem services that filter and clean our water. In particular, protection of the environment, including action to address climate change, is necessary to ensure maximum accessibility, quality and safety of drinking water.

I therefore would like to draw the Council's attention to a civil society and Indigenous Peoples Call to States to recognise the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, endorsed by over 900 organisations from all regions of the world and from a broad range of groups.

The CSO Call highlights that a healthy environment is essential for human life and dignity. The air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat are all dependent on healthy, diverse and functioning ecosystems. In fact, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment has presented evidence to this Council demonstrating that legal recognition of the right to a healthy environment in some States, has contributed to safer water and increased access to safe drinking water.

Civil society are calling on States to urgently guarantee people's right to a healthy environment through formal recognition in human rights law.

Special Rapporteur, we would be interested in your view on the importance of the global recognition of the right to a healthy environment, for the full realization of the rights to water and sanitation for all.

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