The interdependence of human rights and the environment
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
The Universal Declaration as a word cloud
100+ national constitutions include a right to a healthy environment
Even more recognize the right in legislation or regional treaties
“Greening” human rights
International jurisprudence on human rights and the environment

- rights to life, privacy – European Court
- right to property – Inter-American Court
- rights to water, health – Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- rights to food, housing, water – United Nations special rapporteurs, treaty bodies
FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
THE ENVIRONMENT

2018

The main human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
Human rights and the environment are interdependent

- A healthy environment is necessary for the full enjoyment of human rights.

- The exercise of human rights is vital to the protection of the environment.
Procedural obligations

- Protection of environmental defenders
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of peaceful assembly and association
Procedural obligations

- Access to information
- Assessment of environmental and social impacts
- Public participation in decision-making
- Access to justice (effective remedies)
Substantive obligations

- Environmental standards should:
  - be non-discriminatory and non-retrogressive

- take into account relevant international standards

- strike a reasonable balance between environmental and other societal goals

- be implemented and enforced
International cooperation is necessary to address global threats.
Protection of the most vulnerable

- Non-discrimination

- Additional steps to protect those most at risk:
  - women
  - children
  - disabled
  - older persons
  - persons living in poverty
  - indigenous peoples and traditional communities
The UN Human Rights Council
Promoting a human rights perspective on the environment

- Country visits
  - Madagascar, Uruguay, Mongolia

- Communications

- Environmental human rights defenders
  - www.environment-rights.org/

- Judicial conferences
  - South Africa, Brazil, Pakistan
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...