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Call for the adoption of an additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights on the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment

To the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and to the Permanent Representatives of the Member States of the Council of Europe

Excellencies,

We, civil society organizations, social movements, and Indigenous Peoples Organizations signing this letter call for the swift recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment through an additional Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This demand reflects a core priority for children, youth and many other constituencies across the continent and is supported by a broad coalition of organizations working for human rights, environmental protection, gender equality, social inclusion, as well as trade unions and faith-based organizations.

The adverse impacts of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss can be felt by all people living in the Member States of the Council of Europe. Across the continent, more than 300,000 people die prematurely every year due to atmospheric pollution. The accelerating climate crisis fuels unprecedented heatwaves, prolonged droughts, repeated floods, sea-level rise, and disastrous wildfires that ravage communities and ecosystems. From the Mediterranean Sea to the Arctic Circle, entire ecosystems are collapsing and communities suffer from the consequences from the irreversible loss of biodiversity, affecting the supply of safe drinking water, contributing to poor air quality, threatening food security, decreasing the resilience of communities, and wiping out cultural practices. As a result, younger generations now grow up with new forms of anxiety. These crises exacerbate existing inequalities and most seriously affect the human rights of those already in marginalized situations.

In forty-two of the forty-six Council of Europe Member States, the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is already protected through national constitutions, legislation, court decisions, or as these States are Parties to the Aarhus Convention. The scale of the harms for people living in Europe, and the importance of coming to a unified approach in interpreting and implementing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment makes it imperative for the Council of Europe to urgently take decisive steps toward the adoption of a binding legal framework that recognizes and protects the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

The adoption of an additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights would provide the most powerful and impactful human rights-based response to the environmental crisis, filling a gap in human rights protection, leading to clarifying policies required and fostering accountability that is vital for the protection of present and future generations. It would reinforce and consolidate the legal protection of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment

throughout Europe, further ensuring the enjoyment of all human rights. It would also equip governments on the continent with additional legal norms to defend their policies against encroachments and abusive judicial actions by corporate actors.

The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment has been recognized by international and regional bodies. The UN Human Rights Council recognized this right through a [resolution in October 2021](#), and the [UN General Assembly followed suit in July 2022](#). Significantly, every individual Member State of the Council of Europe voted in favor of the UN General Assembly's resolution. At the Reykjavik Summit of the Council of Europe, all Heads of State and of Government of the Council's forty-six Members committed to "strengthening [their] work at the Council of Europe on the human rights aspects of the environment based on the political recognition of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right." This human right is recognized in the main human rights treaties in other regions, most notably in the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, and in the 1988 Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights.

In light of the growing regional and global recognition of the right, we are convinced that an additional Protocol would reinforce existing obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The Protocol would also inspire further and more progressive legislative and policy standards. It would encourage those Council of Europe Member States that have not yet legally recognized the right to affirm its recognition, promoting an equitable, shared responsibility among States in protecting a healthy environment.

The triple planetary crisis and the increasing impact of environmental degradation on human rights have led to an increase in related cases at the European Court of Human Rights, a trend that is expected to continue. While the Court has already affirmed States' obligations to protect existing human rights — such as the right to life (article 2) and to private and family life (article 8) — against environmental hazards, thereby creating a growing body of environmental human rights case law¹, an additional Protocol would consolidate the Court's jurisprudence and make it more coherent, contributing to greater legal certainty.

The explicit protection of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment under the European Convention of Human Rights would clarify States' positive obligations to undertake protection measures and policies. This would contribute to averting human rights violations that affect the enjoyment of other rights such as not only those contained in the Convention including the rights to life, to private and family life, and the prohibition of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, but also other rights such health, food, water, and culture. The protection of this right is especially crucial for those who face the greatest risk of environmental harm, such as children, young people, women, Indigenous Peoples, national minorities, individuals living in poverty, persons living with disabilities, older persons, refugees and migrants, displaced people, and other disproportionately impacted groups.

Recognizing this overarching right would complement and reinforce the existing legal framework, affirming the fundamental importance of a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment to all aspects of human dignity, equality, and freedom. In line with the subsidiary nature of the Convention's

¹ See for instance, [Manual On Human Rights And The Environment](#) (3rd edition), Council of Europe, February 2022.

protection system, it would enable the Court to maintain its current line of environmental jurisprudence while providing an additional legal basis in cases involving States that ratify the additional Protocol.

Under a legally binding Protocol, the protection of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment would send a powerful message both at national and international level, demonstrating and reaffirming Member States' commitment to addressing the triple planetary crisis. It would also send an unequivocal message of solidarity to environmental and human rights defenders who currently pay a grave price for their advocacy.

Faced with unprecedented crises, the time is now for the Council of Europe to fulfill and reaffirm its mandate to promote democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in all Member States by recognizing and protecting the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment through the adoption of a Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Signatories:

- 1 a tip: tap e.V.
- 2 Action Jeunesse pour le Développement (AJED)
- 3 Action4Justice UK
- 4 ACTUAR-Association for Cooperation and Development
- 5 Adivasi-Koordination in Deutschland e.V.
- 6 AEGEE-Europe / European Students' Forum
- 7 AEGEE-Sofia
- 8 AERDQ
- 9 African Coalition on Green Growth (ACGG)
- 10 Afrihealth Optonet Association (AHOA)
- 11 Age International
- 12 Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology
- 13 AIESEC Bulgaria
- 14 Aktionsgruppe Indianer & Menschenrechte / Action Group Indigenous & Human Rights
- 15 Albanian Values (ALVA)
- 16 All Together in Dignity to overcome poverty (ATD Fourth World)
- 17 All Win Network
- 18 Alliance des Generations pour le Climat
- 19 Alliance for Cancer Prevention
- 20 Alliance for Cancer Prevention
- 21 Alliance Santé Planétaire
- 22 Almaturo & Partners
- 23 Alpe Adria Green , Mednarodno društvo za varstvo okolja in narave
- 24 Amnesty International
- 25 Anti-Slavery International

- 26 ANTS – National Interests Advocacy Network
- 27 Apdhe Asociación pro derechos humanos de España
- 28 Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz Kolumbien ask!
- 29 Armenian Forests Environmental NGO
- 30 Arnika, z. s.
- 31 Aroha
- 32 Article 19
- 33 ÄrztInnen für eine gesunde Umwelt
- 34 Asociación Biodiversa
- 35 Asociación Mujeres con Voz
- 36 Asociación para la Justicia Ambiental
- 37 Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España (APDHE)
- 38 Associação de Estudos, Cooperação e Desenvolvimento (EOS) | Association for Studies, Development and Cooperation (Eos)
- 39 Associação dos Professores de Direito Ambiental do Brasil (APRODAB)
- 40 Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH)
- 41 Association des Femmes de l'Europe Méridionale (AFEM)
- 42 Association des Femmes pour le Développement Durable (AFDD)
- 43 Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD
- 44 Association for Research on Treatment against Cancer (ARTAC)
- 45 Association for social innovations and sustainable development RADAR
- 46 Association for sustainable development SFERA International
- 47 Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System (ZERO)
- 48 Association Ipoma
- 49 Association Jeunes Agriculteurs (AJA)
- 50 Association of World Citizens
- 51 Association SOS MCS (Sensibilité Chimique Multiple)
- 52 Associazione italiana del Patto per il Clima (EuClipa.it)
- 53 ASTRA Network
- 54 Aurora
- 55 Ayeright
- 56 Bankwatch Romania
- 57 Barranquilla+20 Foundation
- 58 Bat Conservation Trust
- 59 Belgische Vereniging voor Stabiel, Natuurlijk Uur.
- 60 Better Living Initiatives Global
- 61 BetterTimes - For Healthy Social Times
- 62 Biodiversity Action Europe
- 63 BirdLife Estonia
- 64 BirdLife Sverige

65 Bischöfliches Hilfswerk Misereor e.V.
66 Black Sea Women's Club NGO
67 Bloom Association
68 BlueLink Foundation
69 Born Free Foundation
70 Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI)
71 BUSINESS as NATURE — Association for Sustainable Growth and Production and the Circular Economy (BasN)
72 C-Circle Research
73 Campaign for Freedom of Information
74 Campax
75 Cantine sans plastique france
76 CEDAWinLAW
77 CEE Bankwatch Network
78 Center for Environment (FoE Bosnia and Herzegovina)
79 Center for Environment / Friends Of the Earth Bosnia and Herzegovina
80 Center for Environmental Democracy - Florozon
81 Center for Environmental Ethics and Law
82 Center for environmental research and information (Eko-svest)
83 Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
84 Center for Protection and Research of Birds
85 Center for Rights and Democracy South Sudan (CRD)
86 Centre d'Estudis de Dret Ambiental de Tarragona (CEDAT)
87 Centre for Children's Rights
88 Centre for Climatology and Applied Research
89 Centro de Asesoría y Estudios Sociales (CAES)
90 Centro de Asesoría y Estudios Sociales, S. Coop. Mad.
91 Changing Markets Foundation
92 ChemSec
93 Child Rights Information Center
94 Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
95 Citizens' Initiative Ohrid SOS
96 Clean Air Action Group
97 ClientEarth
98 Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
99 Climate Cares Centre, Imperial College London
100 Climate Change and Law Network for Researchers (CLIMALEX)
101 Climate Ethics and Development Foundation
102 Climate Justice For Rosa
103 Climate Museum UK

104 Climate Rights International
105 CliMates France
106 CNCD-11.11.11
107 Co-ordination Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference for International Development and Mission (KOO)
108 Coalition for an International Court for the Environment (ICE)
109 Codap (Centre de conseils et d'appui pour les jeunes en matière de droits humains)
110 Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Northern Ireland
111 Conference of European Churches
112 Conflict and Environment Observatory
113 Connected Advocacy for Empowerment and Youth Development Initiative
114 Conseil International pour la Transmission Intellectuelle "CITI"
115 Conservation-litigation.org
116 CooLabora - Intervenção Social
117 Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE)
118 Corporate Europe Observatory
119 Cresol Associació
120 Crimean Tatar Resource Center
121 Cross Cultural Bridges
122 DesertNET International
123 Deutsche KlimaStiftung / German Climate Foundation
124 Deutsche Umwelthilfe
125 Diritto Diretto
126 Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
127 Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
128 Doctors of the World - Médecins du Monde
129 Earth Thrive
130 Eco-Accord
131 Ecodes
132 Ecological Manifesto - ManEco
133 EcoLur Informational
134 EcoVisuel – Agence de communication responsable
135 Eden Center
136 Edmund Rice International
137 EHA "Green World"
138 Eko Element Bugojno, BH
139 Eko-Zadar
140 Ekologi brez meja
141 ELYX Foundation
142 Emonyoye Yefwe International

143 Energies2050
144 Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)
145 Environmental Investigation Agency
146 Environmental Justice Network Ireland
147 Environmental Law Association of South Africa
148 Environmental Management and Law Association
149 Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland
150 Environmental Rights Recognition Project/ King's College Legal Clinic
151 Estonian Environmental Law Center
152 Ethics Specialist Group, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law
153 Eurochild
154 Eurogeo
155 European Alliance for the Self-Determination for Indigenous Peoples
156 European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)
157 European Cancer and Environment Research Institute (ECERI)
158 European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights - ECCHR
159 European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC)
160 European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC)
161 European Council of Spatial Planners – Conseil européen des urbanistes (ECTP-CEU)
162 European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
163 European Lawyers Union (UAE)
164 European Network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability (ECOLISE)
165 European Network for Environmental Medicine
166 European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)
167 European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL)
168 European Parent's Association (EPA)
169 European Sex Workers Rights' Alliance (ESWA)
170 European Students' Union
171 European Water Movement
172 Everyday Plastic
173 Exeter Centre for Environmental Law
174 Exit Plastik
175 Exit Plastik
176 Faculty of Public Health
177 Fairtrade International
178 Faith for the Climate
179 Fältbiologerna (Nature & Youth Sweden)
180 Fastenaktion Schweiz
181 Fédération Internationale des Jardins Familiaux
182 Federation of Young European Greens

183 Feedback Global
184 Flemish Youth Council
185 Fondation Eboko
186 Food First Information and Action Network Germany (FIAN)
187 Foreningen Grunnloven §112
188 Forest Peoples Programme
189 Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung
190 Fossilvrij NL
191 Foundation Atelier for Community Transformation (ACT)
192 France Nature Environnement
193 Franciscans International
194 Free Legal Advice Centres
195 Fridays For Future Sweden
196 Friends of the Earth - SPZ
197 Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
198 Fundação Montescola
199 Fundación Red Colombiana Para La Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, el medio Ambiente y la Paz
200 Fundación Sustenta
201 Gaialux asbl
202 Gallifrey Foundation
203 Generation for Rights Over the World
204 Générations Futures
205 GEYC - Group of the European Youth for Change
206 GEYC - Group of the European Youth for Change
207 Global Ecovillage Network
208 Global Enviro-Action
209 Global Forest Coalition
210 Global Human Rights Group
211 Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
212 Global Pact Coalition - Green Rights Coalition
213 Global River Protection Coalition
214 Global Youth Biodiversity Network Europe (GYBN)
215 Governance and Human Rights Research Group
216 Grandmother Act to Save the Planet (GASP)
217 Grands-parents pour le climat/Klima-Grosseltern Schweiz
218 Greek Helsinki Monitor
219 Green Armenia
220 Green Armenia NGO
221 Green Foundation Ireland
222 Green Front

223 Green Legal Impact Germany e.V.
224 Green Team
225 Greenhouse Communications
226 Greenpeace
227 Grootouders voor het Klimaat
228 Habitat Defenders Africa
229 Health and Environment Justice Support (HEJSupport)
230 Health Care Without Harm Europe
231 Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung
232 Heirs To Our Ocean
233 Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka
234 Hope For Children - CRC Policy Center
235 Human Development Research Initiative
236 Human Right House Banja Luka
237 Human Rights Association Turkey
238 Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
239 Human Rights Watch
240 Humane Society International/Europe
241 Humusz Szövetség
242 Icatelist
243 Iceland Nature Conservation Association
244 ICLEI Europe
245 Improve Your Society Organization (IYSO)
246 Independent Institute for Environmental Issues
247 Indigenous Environmental Network
248 Initiative Earth
249 INKOTA Netzwerk
250 Innovea Development Foundation
251 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
252 Institute for the sustainable development of indigenous Lenca women of Honduras (IDESMULH)
253 Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Medio Ambiente / International Institute for Law and the Environment
254 Internacional Council of Jewish Women (ICJW)
255 International Association of River Keepers (Eco-Tiras)
256 International Charitable Organization "Environment – People - Law" (EPL)
257 International Commission of Jurists
258 International Committee for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (Incomindios)
259 International Council of Jewish Women
260 International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) - Europe
261 International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) Europe

262 International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
263 International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT)
264 International Federation of Landscape Architects Europe
265 International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
266 International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)
267 International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
268 International Partnership for Human Rights
269 International Partnership for Human Rights
270 International Pollutant Elimination Network (IPEN)
271 International Service for Human Rights
272 International Society of Doctors for Environment (ISDE)
273 International Union of Architects (UIA)
274 International Voluntary Service (IVS Great Britain)
275 International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
276 International Youth Health Organization
277 Irish Council for Civil Liberties
278 ISDE, International Society of Doctors for Environment Italy
279 Italian Climate Network
280 Italian Federation for Human Rights - FIDU
281 Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour le Climat
282 Journalistes for Human Rights in North Macedonia
283 Juridisk Klimaforening
284 Just Access e.V.
285 Just Fair
286 Just Planet
287 Justice & Environment
288 Justice Institute Guyana
289 Justicia i Pau Barcelona
290 JustLaw
291 Karibs Foundation
292 Klima-Allianz Schweiz / Alliance Climatique Suisse
293 Klub sportskih ribolovaca Travnik
294 Knowledgepanel
295 Kolping International
296 L'Association européenne des Cheminots
297 La Ribera en Bici
298 Lab for Future Generations
299 Latin America Solidarity Centre Ireland
300 Law and Wildlife
301 Learning for Sustainability Scotland

302 Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO)
303 Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (PIC)
304 Legal Resources Foundation Trust (LRF)
305 LIDIB - Human Rights Lab - University of the Balearic Islands
306 Liga voor de Rechten van de Mens (Netherlands League for Human Rights)
307 Ligue des droits de l'Homme France (LDH)
308 Ligue des droits humains Belgique
309 Ligue suisse des droits de l'Homme / Swiss League for Human Rights
310 Living Law
311 Low Carbon Economy Foundation
312 Mekanda Adalet Derneği (Center for Spatial Justice)
313 MIAMSI : Mouvement International des Milieux Sociaux Indépendants - Europe International
314 Milieudedefensie/ Friends of the Earth NL
315 Minority Rights Group International
316 National Youth Forum - Bulgaria
317 Natur og Ungdom (Young Friends of the Earth Norway)
318 Naturefriends Greece
319 Naturfreunde Internationale
320 Naturvernforbundet
321 Next Energy Consumer
322 NGO "Save Pikuy"
323 Nigerian Women Agro Allied Farmers Association
324 No Plastic In My Sea
325 Non c'e' pace senza giustizia (No Peace Without Justice)
326 Norsk Nettverk for Menneskerettigheter/Norwegian Network for Human Rights
327 Norwegian forum for Development and Environment
328 Norwegian Helsinki Committee
329 Notre Affaire A Tous
330 Nourish Scotland
331 Observatori DESCA
332 Observatório Ibérico Energia (O.I.E.)
333 OIEC
334 Oil Change International
335 ÖKOBÜRO - Allianz der Umweltbewegung
336 Ökotárs-Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
337 On Est Prêt
338 One Ocean Hub
339 Organisation for the Promotion of Ecoclubs
340 Ośrodek Działań Ekologicznych "Źródła"
341 Oxfam

342 Oz Orman
343 PAX
344 Pax Christi International
345 People in Need
346 People's Trust for Endangered Species
347 Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe
348 Pesticide Action Network Netherlands
349 Plastic Change
350 Plastic Soup Foundation
351 Plataforma de Infancia
352 Plataforma de Toledo en Defensa del Tajo
353 Plataforma de Toledo en defensa del Tajo
354 Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD
355 Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres - Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights
356 Policies for Equitable Access to Health (PEAH)
357 Polish Zero Waste Association
358 Porgera Red Wara (River) Women's Association Incorporated (PRWWA INC)
359 Project Seagrass
360 Protect the Forest Sweden
361 Public Association EcoContact
362 Quaker Council for European Affairs
363 Queremos un medio ambiente sano y limpio
364 Reclame Fossielvrij
365 Rehabilitation International - RI Europe
366 Renature Festival voor kunst en natuur
367 Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute
368 Restor
369 Rewilding Britain
370 Rewilding Europe
371 Right To Know CLG
372 River Action
373 Rural Women Empowerment Network.
374 Save the Med
375 Schatmakers
376 SCI - Projets Internationaux ASBL
377 Scientists for Future Netherlands
378 SCO "Office for Analytics and Advice on Sustainable Development"
379 Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN)
380 SDG Allianz Liechtenstein
381 Seal Research Trust

382 Seas At Risk
383 SERES
384 Service Civil International ivzw (SCI)
385 Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife Slovakia
386 Social Tipping Point Coalitie
387 Soka Gakkai International
388 Source International
389 Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO)/BirdLife
390 Stamp Out Poverty
391 Stand Up For Your Rights
392 Stop Ecocide International
393 Sukaar Welfare Organization
394 Surfrider Foundation Europe
395 Sustainably Wise
396 Sustentarse (Chile)
397 Sweden's Environmental Association of Law
398 Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)
399 Swiss league for human rights
400 TEMA, The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats
401 Terra-1530
402 Terre des Hommes International Federation
403 Thalassaemia International Federation
404 Thames Blue Green Economy
405 Thames Blue Green Economy
406 The European Law Students' Association (ELSA)
407 The Gaia Foundation
408 The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development
409 The Kent Environment & Community Network
410 The Organization for Poverty Alleviation and Development (OPAD)
411 The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
412 The Water Diplomat
413 The Zoöconomic Institute
414 Tokata-LPDG RheinMain e.V.
415 Traffed-RDC, Asbl
416 TRAFFED-RDC, Asbl
417 UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
418 Umanotera, the Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development
419 UN Etxea - Basque Country Association for UNESCO
420 UNAEC-Europe, Union européenne des anciens élèves de l'enseignement catholique

421 Union Professionnelle Internationale des Gynécologues et Obstétriciens
422 University Women of Europe (UWE)
423 Uplift
424 Verein zur Unterstützung nordamerikanischer Indianer ASNAI
425 Volonteuropé
426 Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire
427 Volunteer Action for Peace (UK)
428 Water Integrity Network e.V.
429 Wildlife and Countryside Link
430 WILPF Italia
431 WILPF UK
432 Women Engage for a Common Future
433 Women for peace and ecology,Germany
434 Women's Environmental Network (Wen)
435 WOMENVAI - WOMen and Men in ENVIRONMENT and Artificial Intelligence
436 Working Circle Indians of North America (AKIN)
437 World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC Network)
438 World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO)
439 World Future Council
440 World Organization of the Scout Movement
441 World's Youth for Climate Justice
442 WWF-Ukraine
443 Youth and Environment Europe
444 Youth Environmental Services (Yes)
445 Youth for Climate
446 Youth4Nature
447 Zdravo da ste
448 ZEA
449 Zelena akcija / FoE Croatia
450 Zero Waste Kiel e.V.
451 Zero Waste Society
452 Zimbabwe Climate Change Coalition