



# Compendium of Good Practices on Human Rights and the Environment



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UNEP

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February 2016

Cover Photo: Rice Farming, Bhutan

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Printing: UNON Publishing Services Section, Nairobi – ISO 14001:2004-certified

D1 No.: 15-03568/50 Copies

# Acknowledgements

This publication was developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Good Practices contained within are the result of a collaborative effort between UNEP, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, Professor John Knox. The report was drafted by Ramin Pejman, Legal Consultant with the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions, UNEP. The final critical review and consolidation of the draft was undertaken and overseen by Arnold Kreilhuber (Head of the International Environmental Law Unit), Lara Ognibene (Legal Officer), and Katy Ayres (Legal Consultant), UNEP.

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# Foreword

The close links between human rights and the environment have long been recognized. Recently, however, the precise nature of this relationship has received greater attention from the international community. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been at the centre of this work, collaborating with partners to help bring further clarity to these links.

In early 2013, UNEP partnered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to support the work of the Human Rights Council-appointed Special Rapporteur in this area. He sought to identify good practices relating to human rights and the environment through thematic consultations, conferences, questionnaires and country visits.

The compendium that follows presents the results of this collaborative effort. It provides over one hundred examples of how a wide and diverse range of actors has used human rights obligations and commitments to strengthen environmental policymaking. For the first time, it assembles a large number of practical and innovative examples of environmental protection viewed through a human rights lens. These examples will serve to inform and educate actors working in the field, and hopefully enable them to replicate the positive results achieved, as well as create new good practices.

This compendium brings us a step closer to understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between human rights and the environment. It provides a tool to assist the achievement of goals related to both environmental protection and human rights. In so doing, it serves to illustrate and emphasize the central nature of environmental sustainability to fundamental human values and rights.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Achim Steiner". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Achim Steiner**  
**UNEP Executive Director**

# Executive Summary

The purpose of this compendium is to present good practices relating to the use of human rights obligations and commitments to inform, support and strengthen environmental policymaking, especially in the area of environmental protection that were identified through a joint programme between UNEP, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (formerly the Independent Expert), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The good practices presented in this compendium provide practical and concrete examples of states and other actors who have successfully and innovatively implemented human rights obligations related to environmental protection and management. Although not all of these practices may always be replicated exactly in every context, it is hoped that they will increase the understanding and awareness of the linkages between human rights and the environment so that others can implement similar practices or create new practices. Moreover, users of this compendium can follow-up with the various actors who are implementing the practices presented here, thus promoting the interaction between various groups and organisations working in the environmental field with groups and organisations working in the human rights field.

The compendium defines the term “practice” broadly, to include laws, policies, case law, jurisprudential shifts, strategies, administrative practices, projects, and so forth. A good practice would also include any practice that goes beyond established legal obligations related to the environment, such as NGO initiatives. Good practices can also be carried out by a wide range of actors, including all levels of government, civil society, the private sector, communities, and individuals.

The practices included in this compendium have multiple sources. First, the project partners held a series of regional consultations each of which addressed a particular set of thematic issues. In addition to the consultations, the two other principal sources for good practices included a questionnaire seeking good practices that was sent to Governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, and other interested stakeholders. The Independent Expert also identified good practices in his official country visits to Costa Rica and France, and through additional contacts

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