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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 AEGEE-Europe / European Students' Forum
- 6 AEGEE-Sofia
- 7 AERDQ
- 8 African Coalition on Green Growth (ACGG)
- 9 Afrihealth Optonet Association (AHOA)
- 10 Age International
- 11 Agrecol Association for AgriCulture & Ecology
- 12 AIESEC Bulgaria
- 13 Aktionsgruppe Indianer & Menschenrechte / Action Group Indigenous & Human Rights
- 14 Albanian Values (ALVA)
- 15 All Together in Dignity to overcome poverty (ATD Fourth World)
- 16 All Win Network
- 17 Alliance des Generations pour le Climat
- 18 Alliance for Cancer Prevention
- 19 Alliance for Cancer Prevention
- 20 Alliance Santé Planétaire
- 21 Almatira & Partners
- 22 Alpe Adria Green , Mednarodno društvo za varstvo okolja in narave
- 23 Amnesty International
- 24 Anti-Slavery International
- 25 ANTS – National Interests Advocacy Network
- 26 Apdhe Asociación pro derechos humanos de España

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

- 66 BlueLink Foundation
- 67 Born Free Foundation
- 68 Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI)
- 69 BUSINESS as NATURE — Association for Sustainable Growth and Production and the Circular Economy (BasN)
- 70 C-Circle Research
- 71 Campaign for Freedom of Information
- 72 Campax
- 73 Cantine sans plastique france
- 74 CEDAWinLAW
- 75 CEE Bankwatch Network
- 76 Center for Environment (FoE Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 77 Center for Environment / Friends Of the Earth Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 78 Center for Environmental Democracy - Florozon
- 79 Center for Environmental Ethics and Law
- 80 Center for environmental research and information (Eko-svest)
- 81 Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
- 82 Center for Protection and Research of Birds
- 83 Center for Rights and Democracy South Sudan (CRD)
- 84 Centre d'Estudis de Dret Ambiental de Tarragona (CEDAT)
- 85 Centre for Children's Rights
- 86 Centre for Climatology and Applied Research
- 87 Centro de Asesoría y Estudios Sociales (CAES)
- 88 Centro de Asesoría y Estudios Sociales, S. Coop. Mad.
- 89 Changing Markets Foundation
- 90 ChemSec
- 91 Child Rights Information Center
- 92 Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
- 93 Citizens' Initiative Ohrid SOS
- 94 Clean Air Action Group
- 95 ClientEarth
- 96 Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
- 97 Climate Cares Centre, Imperial College London
- 98 Climate Change and Law Network for Researchers (CLIMALEX)
- 99 Climate Ethics and Development Foundation
- 100 Climate Justice For Rosa
- 101 Climate Museum UK
- 102 Climate Rights International
- 103 CNCD-11.11.11
- 104 Coalition for an International Court for the Environment (ICE)

105 Codap (Centre de conseils et d'appui pour les jeunes en matière de droits humains)
106 Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) Northern Ireland
107 Conference of European Churches
108 Conflict and Environment Observatory
109 Connected Advocacy for Empowerment and Youth Development Initiative
110 Conseil International pour la Transmission Intellectuelle "CITI"
111 CooLabora - Intervenção Social
112 Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE)
113 Corporate Europe Observatory
114 Cresol Associació
115 Crimean Tatar Resource Center
116 Cross Cultural Bridges
117 Deutsche KlimaStiftung / German Climate Foundation
118 Deutsche Umwelthilfe
119 Diritto Diretto
120 Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
121 Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
122 Doctors of the World - Médecins du Monde
123 Earth Thrive
124 Eco-Accord
125 Ecodes
126 Ecological Manifesto - ManEco
127 EcoLur Informational
128 EcoVisuel – Agence de communication responsable
129 Eden Center
130 Edmund Rice International
131 EHA "Green World"
132 Eko Element Bugojno, BH
133 Eko-Zadar
134 Ekologi brez meja
135 ELYX Foundation
136 Emonyoye Yefwe International
137 Energies2050
138 Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS)
139 Environmental Investigation Agency
140 Environmental Justice Network Ireland
141 Environmental Law Association of South Africa
142 Environmental Management and Law Association
143 Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland
144 Environmental Rights Recognition Project/ King's College Legal Clinic

145 Estonian Environmental Law Center
146 Ethics Specialist Group, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law
147 Eurochild
148 Eurogeo
149 European Alliance for the Self-Determination for Indigenous Peoples
150 European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)
151 European Cancer and Environment Research Institute (ECERI)
152 European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights - ECCHR
153 European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC)
154 European Council of Spatial Planners – Conseil européen des urbanistes (ECTP-CEU)
155 European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
156 European Lawyers Union (UAE)
157 European Network for community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability (ECOLISE)
158 European Network for Environmental Medicine
159 European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)
160 European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL)
161 European Parent's Association (EPA)
162 European Sex Workers Rights' Alliance (ESWA)
163 European Students' Union
164 European Water Movement
165 Everyday Plastic
166 Exeter Centre for Environmental Law
167 Faculty of Public Health
168 Fairtrade International
169 Faith for the Climate
170 Fältbiologerna (Nature & Youth Sweden)
171 Fastenaktion Schweiz
172 Fédération Internationale des Jardins Familiaux
173 Federation of Young European Greens
174 Feedback Global
175 Flemish Youth Council
176 Fondation Eboko
177 Food First Information and Action Network Germany (FIAN)
178 Foreningen Grunnloven §112
179 Forest Peoples Programme
180 Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung
181 Fossilvrij NL
182 Foundation Atelier for Community Transformation (ACT)
183 France Nature Environnement
184 Franciscans International

185 Free Legal Advice Centres
186 Friends of the Earth - SPZ
187 Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
188 Fundação Montescola
189 Fundación Red Colombiana Para La Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, el medio Ambiente y la Paz
190 Fundación Sustenta
191 Gaialux asbl
192 Gallifrey Foundation
193 Generation for Rights Over the World
194 Générations Futures
195 Générations Futures
196 GEYC - Group of the European Youth for Change
197 Global Ecovillage Network
198 Global Forest Coalition
199 Global Human Rights Group
200 Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
201 Global Pact Coalition - Green Rights Coalition
202 Global River Protection Coalition
203 Global Youth Biodiversity Network Europe (GYBN)
204 Governance and Human Rights Research Group
205 Grandmother Act to Save the Planet (GASP)
206 Grands-parents pour le climat/Klima-Grosseltern Schweiz
207 Greek Helsinki Monitor
208 Green Armenia
209 Green Armenia NGO
210 Green Foundation Ireland
211 Green Front
212 Green Legal Impact Germany e.V.
213 Green Team
214 Greenpeace
215 Grootouders voor het Klimaat
216 Habitat Defenders Africa
217 Health and Environment Justice Support (HEJSupport)
218 Health Care Without Harm Europe
219 Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung
220 Heirs To Our Ocean
221 Helsinki Citizens Assembly Banja Luka
222 Hope For Children - CRC Policy Center
223 Human Development Research Initiative
224 Human Right House Banja Luka

225 Human Rights Association Turkey
226 Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
227 Human Rights Watch
228 Humusz Szövetség
229 Icatalist
230 Iceland Nature Conservation Association
231 ICLEI Europe
232 Improve Your Society Organization (IYSO)
233 Independent Institute for Environmental Issues
234 Indigenous Environmental Network
235 Initiative Earth
236 INKOTA Netzwerk
237 Innovea Development Foundation
238 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
239 Institute for the sustainable development of indigenous Lenca women of Honduras (IDESMULH)
240 Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Medio Ambiente / International Institute for Law and the Environment
241 Internacional Council of Jewish Women (ICJW)
242 International Association of River Keepers (Eco-Tiras)
243 International Charitable Organization "Environment – People - Law" (EPL)
244 International Commission of Jurists
245 International Committee for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (Incomindios)
246 International Council of Jewish Women
247 International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) Europe
248 International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
249 International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT)
250 International Federation of Landscape Architects Europe
251 International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
252 International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX)
253 International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
254 International Partnership for Human Rights
255 International Pollutant Elimination Network (IPEN)
256 International Service for Human Rights
257 International Society of Doctors for Environment (ISDE)
258 International Union of Architects (UIA)
259 International Voluntary Service (IVS Great Britain)
260 International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
261 International Youth Health Organization
262 Irish Council for Civil Liberties
263 Italian Climate Network
264 Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour le Climat

265 Journalistes for Human Rigths in North Macedonia
266 Juridisk Klimaforening
267 Just Fair
268 Just Planet
269 Justice & Environment
270 Justice Institute Guyana
271 Justicia i Pau Barcelona
272 JustLaw
273 Karibs Foundation
274 Klima-Allianz Schweiz / Alliance Climatique Suisse
275 Klub sportskih ribolovaca Travnik
276 Knowledgepanel
277 Kolping International
278 L'Association européenne des Cheminots
279 La Ribera en Bici
280 Lab for Future Generations
281 Latin America Solidarity Centre Ireland
282 Law and Wildlife
283 LDH (Ligue des droits de l'Homme)
284 Learning for Sustainability Scotland
285 Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO)
286 Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (PIC)
287 Legal Resources Foundation Trust (LRF)
288 LIDIB - Human Rights Lab - University of the Balearic Islands
289 Liga voor de Rechten van de Mens (Netherlands League for Human Rights)
290 Ligue des droits de l'Homme France (LDH)
291 Ligue des droits humains Belgique
292 Ligue suisse des droits de l'Homme / Swiss League for Human Rights
293 Living Law
294 Low Carbon Economy Foundation
295 MIAMSI : Mouvement International des Milieux Sociaux Indépendants - Europe International
296 Milieudefensie/ Friends of the Earth NL
297 Minority Rights Group International
298 National Youth Forum - Bulgaria
299 Natur og Ungdom (Young Friends of the Earth Norway)
300 Naturefriends Greece
301 Naturvernforbundet
302 Next Energy Consumer
303 NGO "Save Pikuy"
304 Nigerian Women Agro Allied Farmers Association

305 No Plastic In My Sea
306 Non c'e' pace senza giustizia (No Peace Without Justice)
307 Norwegian forum for Development and Environment
308 Norwegian Helsinki Committee
309 Notre Affaire A Tous
310 Nourish Scotland
311 Observatori DESCA
312 OIEC
313 Oil Change International
314 ÖKOBÜRO - Allianz der Umweltbewegung
315 Ökotárs-Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
316 On Est Prêt
317 One Ocean Hub
318 Organisation for the Promotion of Ecoclubs
319 Ośrodek Działań Ekologicznych "Źródła"
320 Oxfam
321 PAX
322 Pax Christi International
323 People in Need
324 People's Trust for Endangered Species
325 Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe
326 Pesticide Action Network Netherlands
327 Plastic Change
328 Plastic Soup Foundation
329 Plataforma de Infancia
330 Plataforma de Toledo en Defensa del Tajo
331 Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD
332 Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres - Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights
333 Policies for Equitable Access to Health (PEAH)
334 Polish Zero Waste Association
335 Porgera Red Wara (River) Women's Association Incorporated (PRWWA INC)
336 Project Seagrass
337 Public Association EcoContact
338 Quaker Council for European Affairs
339 Reclame Fossielvrij
340 Rehabilitation International - RI Europe
341 Renature Festival voor kunst en natuur
342 Restor
343 Right To Know CLG
344 River Action

345 Rural Women Empowerment Network.
346 Save the Med
347 SCI - Projets Internationaux ASBL
348 Scientists for Future Netherlands
349 SCO "Office for Analytics and Advice on Sustainable Development"
350 Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN)
351 SDG Allianz Liechtenstein
352 Seal Research Trust
353 Seas At Risk
354 SERES
355 Service Civil International ivzw (SCI)
356 Slovak Ornithological Society/BirdLife Slovakia
357 Social Tipping Point Coalitie
358 Soka Gakkai International
359 Source International
360 Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO)/BirdLife
361 Stamp Out Poverty
362 Stand Up For Your Rights
363 Stop Ecocide International
364 Sukaar Welfare Organization
365 Surfrider Foundation Europe
366 Sustainably Wise
367 Sustentarse (Chile)
368 Sweden's Environmental Association of Law
369 Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)
370 Swiss league for human rights
371 TEMA, The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats
372 Terra-1530
373 Terre des Hommes International Federation
374 Thalassaemia International Federation
375 Thames Blue Green Economy
376 The European Law Students' Association (ELSA)
377 The Gaia Foundation
378 The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development
379 The Kent Environment & Community Network
380 The Organization for Poverty Alleviation and Development (OPAD)
381 The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)
382 The Water Diplomat
383 The Zoöconomic Institute

384 Tokata-LPDG RheinMain e.V.
385 Traffed-RDC, Asbl
386 UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
387 Umanotera, the Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development
388 UNAEC-Europe, Union européenne des anciens élèves de l'enseignement catholique
389 Union Professionnelle Internationale des Gynécologues et Obstétriciens
390 University Women of Europe (UWE)
391 Uplift
392 Verein zur Unterstützung nordamerikanischer Indianer ASNAI
393 Volonteuroppe
394 Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire
395 Volunteer Action for Peace (UK)
396 Water Integrity Network e.V.
397 Wildlife and Countryside Link
398 WILPF Italia
399 WILPF UK
400 Women Engage for a Common Future
401 Women for peace and ecology, Germany
402 Women's Environmental Network (Wen)
403 WOMENVAI - WOMen and Men in ENVIRONMENT and Artificial Intelligence
404 Working Circle Indians of North America (AKIN)
405 World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC Network)
406 World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO)
407 World Future Council
408 World Organization of the Scout Movement
409 World's Youth for Climate Justice
410 WWF-Ukraine
411 Youth and Environment Europe
412 Youth Environmental Services (Yes)
413 Youth for Climate
414 Youth4Nature
415 Zdravo da ste
416 ZEA
417 Zelena akcija / FoE Croatia
418 Zero Waste Kiel e.V.
419 Zero Waste Society
420 Zimbabwe Climate Change Coalition