



The [United Nations Independent Expert on human rights and the environment](#) , John Knox, urged world governments to take into account human rights laws in designing and developing environmental governance. Mr. Knox reminded a global gathering of environmental Ministers and high level officials in Nairobi that "environmental harm can infringe the enjoyment of human rights."

"When governments around the world fail to restrict emissions of greenhouse gases, jeopardizing the continued existence of, among others, vulnerable communities in the Arctic and in low-lying coastal areas, they fail to protect many human rights, including rights to life, health, property, and development," the rights expert said at the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum hosted by the UN Environmental Programme, from 18-22 February.

"Human rights and the environment are not only interrelated, they are also interdependent," he stressed. "A healthy environment is fundamentally important to the enjoyment of human rights, and the exercise of human rights is necessary for a healthy environment."

However, Mr. Knox warned that despite the interdependent nature between the two areas, the relationship between human rights and the environment is still less well-known than it should be. "Human rights to freedom of expression and association, to information, to participation in decision-making, and to remedies, must be protected, at both the national and the international level," Mr. Knox noted. "Human rights law must be taken into account in developing environmental governance."

The expert stressed to States that human rights law must inform the development of the post-2015 sustainable development goals and fundamental standards for environmental protection. "The Rio+20 follow-up should reflect States' obligations to take steps to prevent environmental degradation that violates human rights, and to protect the human rights of those

threatened by environmental harm," he said.

"States should continue to take account of the decisions and recommendations from the many forums and mechanisms, from international conferences to special procedures to regional human rights tribunals, which are actively developing and implementing the human rights norms relevant to environmental protection," the expert highlighted.

Mr. Knox is taking part in the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum and the first universal session of the UNEP Governing Council from 18-22 February 2013. He will also convene a consultation in Nairobi from 22-23 February on procedural human rights and duties as they relate to environmental protection.

The UN Independent Expert's 2013 report to the Human Rights Council, to be presented in March, identifies issues related to human rights and the environment that he will explore during the course of his mandate. [Check the report](#) .

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John Knox was appointed as the Independent Expert on human rights and the environment in July 2012 by the United Nations Human Rights Council. He is independent from any government or organization. [Learn more...](#)

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