



TÉLÉCOPIE • FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

DATE: 2 September 2020

A/TO: All Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva

DE/FROM: Beatriz Balbin  
Chief  
Special Procedures Branch

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Beatriz Balbin".

FAX: +41 22 917 90 08

TEL: +41 22 917 98 67

E-MAIL: [srenvironment@ohchr.org](mailto:srenvironment@ohchr.org)

PAGES: 5 (Y COMPRIS CETTE PAGE/INCLUDING THIS PAGE)

OBJET/SUBJECT: **Call for input - Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**

**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**

2 September 2020

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 37/8.

I am writing to invite your Excellency's Government to provide me with contributions for the preparation of my upcoming thematic report focusing on human rights and associated obligations related to water pollution, water scarcity and floods, to be presented at the Human Rights Council in March 2021.

I would be grateful if this letter and a questionnaire (annexed) could be transmitted to relevant authorities, inviting all submissions **no later than 10 November 2020**. Responses to the questionnaire can be sent to [srenvironment@ohchr.org](mailto:srenvironment@ohchr.org) (preferred) or addressed to:

Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment  
Special Procedures  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Viktoria Aberg, Human Rights Officer, who supports my mandate at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights e-mail: [srenvironment@ohchr.org](mailto:srenvironment@ohchr.org), tel: +41 22 917 9790.

Please, accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



David Boyd  
Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment



PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND  
 www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: registry@ohchr.org

## Call for Inputs

### **Too Dirty, Too Little, Too Much: The Global Water Crisis and Human Rights**

“There is simply no way to overstate the water crisis of the planet today.”  
 Maude Barlow, former senior advisor on water to the President of the  
 United Nations General Assembly

A global agreement now exists that human rights norms apply to a broad spectrum of environmental issues, including water and sanitation.

The Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, Dr. David Boyd, is working to provide additional clarity regarding the substantive rights and obligations that are essential to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

He has submitted reports on clean air, a safe climate, a healthy biosphere, and good practices on the promotion and implementation of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. He is now preparing a thematic report focusing on human rights and associated obligations related to water pollution, water scarcity and floods. For that purpose, he is seeking inputs on the topic from States and stakeholders through responses to the brief questionnaire below.

Your replies will inform the Special Rapporteur’s analysis and contribute to his report, which will be presented to the Human Rights Council in March 2021.

### Questionnaire

The Special Rapporteur invites and welcomes your answers to the following questions:

1. Please provide examples of ways in which water pollution, water scarcity and floods are having adverse impacts on human rights. Adversely affected rights could include, among others, the rights to life, health, water and sanitation, food, culture, livelihoods, non-discrimination, a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and indigenous peoples’ rights.
2. How has climate change exacerbated water-related problems?
3. To protect a wide range of human rights, what are the specific obligations of States and responsibilities of businesses in terms of addressing water pollution, water scarcity and floods? Please provide specific examples of constitutional provisions, legislation, institutions, regulations, standards, policies and programmes that apply a rights-based approach to preventing, reducing, or eliminating water pollution, water

scarcity and floods. Please include, inter alia, any instruments that refer directly to the right to a healthy environment and/or the rights to clean water and adequate sanitation.

4. If your State is one of the 156 United Nations Member States that recognizes the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, has this right contributed to preventing, reducing, or eliminating water pollution, water scarcity and floods? If so, how? If not, why not?

5. Please provide specific examples of good practices in preventing, reducing, or eliminating water pollution, water scarcity and floods. These examples may occur at the international, national, sub-national, or local level. Examples may involve water quality and quantity monitoring; guaranteeing procedural rights (e.g. public access to water quality information, public participation in decision-making about proposed uses of water, access to remedies); water use and water quality legislation, regulations, standards, and policies; and initiatives to reduce water consumption and/or water pollution from specific sectors (e.g. agriculture, electricity generation, industry, transportation, domestic use). Where possible, please provide evidence related to the implementation, enforcement, and effectiveness of the good practices.

6. Please identify specific challenges that your government, business, or organization has faced in attempting to employ a rights-based approach to address water pollution, water scarcity and floods and the impacts of these problems on human rights.

7. Please specify ways in which additional protection is provided (or should be provided) for populations who may be particularly vulnerable to water pollution, water scarcity and floods (e.g. women, children, persons living in poverty, members of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic, racial or other minorities and displaced persons). How can these populations be empowered to protect and improve water quality and availability?

8. How do you ensure that the rights of environmentalists working on water issues (environmental human rights defenders) are protected? What efforts has your Government or business made to create a safe and enabling environment for them to freely exercise their rights without fear of violence, intimidation, or reprisal?

9. There is substantial evidence that the actions of high-income States (from high levels of material consumption to high levels of greenhouse gas emissions) are linked to adverse effects on water availability and water quality in low and middle-income States. What are ways in which high-income States should assist low-income States in responding to and preventing water pollution, water scarcity and floods?

10. For businesses, what policies or practices are in place to ensure that activities, products, and services across the entire supply chain (extraction/sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, sale, and end-of life management) minimize water use and water pollution and meet human rights standards, especially those articulated in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights?

### **Submission of responses**

Please send your responses to the questionnaire **in Word format** by email to [srenvironment@ohchr.org](mailto:srenvironment@ohchr.org). Submissions will also be accepted via regular mail at the following address:

Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment  
Special Procedures  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

**We kindly request that your submission be concise and limited to a maximum of 5 pages (or 2,000 words), not including appendices or attachments.**

Due to a limited capacity for translation, we also request that your inputs be submitted in English, French, or Spanish.

To avoid unnecessary duplication: if you have recently replied to other questionnaires from UN human rights mechanisms (or other international bodies) with information that would be relevant to this request as well, we welcome your directing us to those replies.

**The deadline for submission is 10 November 2020.**

Unless otherwise requested, all submissions will be made publicly available and posted on the Special Rapporteur's homepage at the OHCHR website.

\*\*\*