

**58<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to a healthy environment**

**14 March 2025**

*Delivered by Gyan Kothari*

*Check against delivery.*

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Mr President,

Franciscans International welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur and supports its recommendations, in particular the critical importance of comprehensive environmental and human rights impact assessments of energy projects that might harm the ocean or coastal areas such as the liquified natural gas (LNG) projects.

LNG, seen as a “bridge fuel” in the transition to cleaner energy due to its lower carbon emissions profile, poses several human rights and environmental challenges of its own. Methane, which leaks across the entire gas value chain, is 80 times more potent than Carbon Dioxide<sup>1</sup> in triggering atmospheric warming.

We are concerned about the impacts of an extensive build-up of LNG projects in the Verde Island Passage in the Philippines. The Passage is one of the planet’s most critical marine biodiversity hotspots, vital to global climate mitigation efforts. The projects contribute to the degradation of corals and marine ecosystems, including through the increased shipping traffic and pollution of coastal areas. Toxic cargo spills, in particular, have had catastrophic consequences for the environment and coastal communities in the area. An oil spill in Oriental Mindoro in 2023, destroyed 20,000 hectares of coral reefs and endangered the livelihoods, health and food security of over 200,000 people.

It is critical that as more and more States adopt LNG as a bridging fuel, robust environmental and human rights impact assessments are mandatorily conducted. Assessments must take into account the full spectrum of potential harms stemming from this energy source. Fragile marine ecosystems such as the Verde Island Passage that are important in and of themselves as marine biodiversity hotspots, as well as for their significance for carbon storage and combatting climate change, should be made off-limits for commercial exploitation and declared as Marine Protected Areas.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> [What's the deal with methane?](#) , United Nations Environment Programme, 18 October 2022