

61st Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
on the human right to a healthy environment

9 March 2026

Delivered by Blair Matheson

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Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report. We endorse her recommendations on the obligations of states and duties of businesses to regulate, control, monitor and enforce air quality. Particularly, we welcome the clear recommendations urging States to adopt a human health-based approach to air quality, to align national standards with the World Health Organisation guidelines, and to effectively enforce measures that prevent pollution at its source, including through robust environmental impact assessments.

Franciscans International has consistently worked to promote the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, including through recommendations to States within the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. In respect of the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we commend the commitment undertaken by the state in supporting¹ the recommendation "to promote and respect this right by reducing air pollution in cities, regularly informing the public about air quality, preparing action plans, and enforcing air quality standards"²

However, we echo the concern highlighted by the Special Rapporteur that national environmental regulations in Bosnia-Herzegovina continue to allow legal limit values exceeding the WHO guidelines for key pollutants. Pollution levels remain alarmingly high, particularly in cities such as Sarajevo³ and the country continues to rank as the most polluted based on annual average PM_{2.5} concentration in Europe⁴.

We welcome the report's framework on four viable solutions to overcome challenges and breathe clean air, and we would urge all countries having air pollution problems to be guided by the Special Rapporteur's valuable direction in this area.

Finally, as we find ourselves in a spiralling context of war following the United States and Israel's offensive on Iran, we would be remiss to not only underscore the human toll of conflict, but that specifically caused by pollution and toxics generated by militaries and their munitions that have widespread and inter-generational impacts on people and the environment."

Thank you.

¹ <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/59/17/Add.1> (Recommendation 117.116)

² <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/59/17>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/sarajevo-takes-steps-air-quality-after-most-polluted-city-ranking-2025-12-17/#:~:text=According%20to%20World%20Health%20Organization,8%25%20of%20GDP%20in%20Bosnia.and%20https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/beograd-sarajevo-i-skoplje-medju-10-najzagadjenijih-velikih-gradova-na-svetu/>

⁴ <https://www.iqair.com/bosnia-herzegovina>

