

**Oral Statement at the 45th Session of the Human Right Council
Item 3: General Debate
22 September 2020**

Delivered by: Clémence Billard Schachter

Madam President,

This is a joint statement on behalf of FI, CIEL, Earthjustice, (FIAN) and WILPF.

The Covid-19 crisis has brought to light the linkages between environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and the emergence of pandemics. We have seen the resulting catastrophic impacts on peoples' health and on the enjoyment of human rights, disproportionately affecting women and girls, as well as individuals and groups who are already discriminated against and marginalized.

An urgent, ambitious and coherent response addressing the current crisis and future similar threats is now needed. To date, 110 countries have recognized in their Constitutions the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. By doing so, they have affirmed that it is the right of all people to enjoy a safe climate, live in a non-toxic environment with clean air and access to clean water and adequate food, on a planet where biodiversity and ecosystems are protected.

The global recognition of the right to a healthy environment will foster an effective enforcement of laws, policies, and regulations that protect us from environmental degradation and its human rights impacts. It will also help better protect environmental defenders – who are being murdered at a rate higher than ever.

We welcome the statement made earlier by the core group acknowledging the impact that a global recognition of this human right would have, and we are looking forward to achieving further progress under their leadership. We also endorse the joint appeal "The Time Is Now", signed by more than 900 organizations representing civil society and indigenous peoples from more than 100 countries, and which calls this Council to recognize without delay the right of all to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

I thank you.