



Stand Up For Your Rights  
The Hub Amsterdam Westerstraat 187  
1015 MA Amsterdam The Netherlands  
[www.StandUpForYourRights.org](http://www.StandUpForYourRights.org)

To the Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey  
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
Parliament Building West  
CH-3003 Bern  
Fax +41 31 324 90 47

12 March 2010

***“A democratic and equitable international order requires, inter alia, the realisation of the right of every person and all peoples to a healthy environment.”***

United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Resolution 2005/57

***“A healthy environment is a human right. Demand Dignity.”***

Amnesty International banner - Demand Dignity Campaign in 2009

***“I accepted the role of International Executive Director at Greenpeace, because I believe that ensuring a green and peaceful planet is also a basic human right.”***

Mr. Kumi Naidoo, new IED of Greenpeace International in 2010

Dear Ms. Calmy-Rey,

The quotes above all relate to the human right to a healthy environment. Today the (Inter) American and African regional human rights charters, other conventions and declarations - like the Aarhus Convention and the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous People - and over 100 constitutions worldwide contain a pronouncement of a human right to a healthy environment. Still, this right has not yet been codified under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The time, however, has come to do just that and I write you on behalf of Stand Up For Your Rights and many other organisations who support this right. Acknowledging this right is not just our wish: codifying this right in the ECHR is currently on your agenda for the coming Committee of Ministers (CoM) of the Council of Europe meeting. You currently chair this Committee on behalf of Switzerland.

We ask you not to just support, but to – in relation to the vote of CoM - push for the codification of this right to a healthy environment in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Your leaflet with priorities for this period in which Switzerland chairs CoM proclaims: Human rights cannot be safeguarded in the long term without taking account of respect for the environment. Recently you (again) linked environmental issues, such as climate change, to human rights. We know you are a 'human rights' minister and one that has repeatedly stated she cherishes nature and wants better laws to protect the environment - our common heritage. We are sure that you, as a person, are in favour of a human right to a healthy environment.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), by an almost unanimous vote, late 2009 (in recommendation 1885) recommended for the drafting of an additional protocol to the ECHR, which would codify the right to a healthy environment in the ECHR.

The CoM, which you chair and which consists of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 47 Member States, is now to decide whether it this right will be add to the other rights codified in and protected under the ECHR. CoM and its advisory bodies, in the past have been and still seem reluctant to accept this right, despite the overwhelming support for it in the PACE.

PACE, however, has dealt with all arguments used to deny or delay the codification of this right in the recommendation process and has proven these to be invalid. Recommendation 1885 and the documents leading to it actually clearly state so and explain why.

Ensuring sustainable development, a balanced environment and safekeeping nature for current and future generations is of vital concern to people now and to our children. A healthy and clean environment is a basic human right and elevates the entire spectrum of sustainability, conservation and environmental issues to a place amidst the most fundamental values of society, on a level equal to other human rights and superior to ordinary legislation. A level where it belongs.

We call on you on behalf of millions of people - men, women, children and future generations - to support the PACE recommendation 1885 and to openly push and call for the drafting of an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights which clearly acknowledges this human right. May this be Switzerland's major achievement during this term of presidency of the Committee.

"Because everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and to have nature protected, for the benefit of present and future generations. "

The time has come to acknowledge, protect and respect our human right to a healthy environment. Thank you.

Respectfully,



Jan van de Venis  
Board Chair, Stand Up For Your Rights