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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **European Ministers ignore Parliament and UN bodies and refuse to codify the Human Right to a healthy and viable Environment into the European Convention on Human Rights.**

On 16 June 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe rejected a proposal by the Council's Parliament to draw up an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights ('ECHR'), recognising the right to a healthy and viable environment.

The Committee had rejected such a right before several years ago, so the Parliament, in its recommendation (no. 1885) and the process leading to it, had dealt with all arguments in favour and against such a right and late 2009 came to an almost unanimous decision and recommendation: the time has come to acknowledge and adopt this human right into the ECHR.

Today the African and American regional human rights charters, other conventions and declarations - like the Aarhus Convention and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and over 100 constitutions contain a pronouncement of a human right to a healthy environment. The European Convention has lacked behind on this area of human rights law for decades now, despite repetitive calls from human rights, environmental and international organisations and academics to acknowledge this right.

Recently the United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 64/157 dated 8 March 2010, called out for the international realisation of the human right to a healthy environment. And, as recent as 14 May 2010, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director Mr. Achim Steiner by letter even directly approached the Committee with a warm plea in favour of this human right, whilst expressing his confidence that the Committee would accept this right.

The Committee currently apparently decided to ignore these calls of the Parliament, of highly renowned UN bodies and also of several of the Council's internal advisory bodies who – when asked by the Committee – advised to adopt and acknowledge this right.

“If one were to describe the main argument of the Committee to reject this right, it would be ‘there’s no need for a specific human right as we already do enough for human rights and the environment.’ But that’s not a viable argument”, says Stand Up For Your Rights Board Chair Jan van de Venis, “Just like, based on the international human rights framework, they would not get away with saying ‘we do not need to codify equality as a human right as we already do enough on equal treatment’ or ‘no need for a right to life here, as we do enough to protect life’.

A healthy and clean environment is a human right. Like UNEP ED Steiner said in his recent letter: "It elevates the entire spectrum of sustainability, conservation and environmental issues amidst the most fundamental values of society, on a level equal to other human rights."

"It's time that Europe catches up with the rest of the world and even takes the lead in the area of human rights and sustainability. A human right to a healthy environment will not only lead to more environmental consciousness, but will also give rights to an individual whose environment has been disrupted.", says chairman Jan van de Venis, who continuous "Obviously we all have the right to a healthy and clean environment and to have nature, ecosystems and animal species protected for the benefit of humans and children now and for future generations."

Stand Up For Your Rights calls on all people, peoples, governments, NGOs , UN bodies and others to take on an active and leading role to have this human right acknowledged and codified at the ECHR and international (UN) level.

**Stand Up For Your Rights is an Amsterdam based NGO that focuses on Human Rights issues that are intertwined with a sustainable future of people and all life on this planet.**

**At this time, Greenpeace International, IUCN The Netherlands, Friends of the Earth UK, the Club of Rome Erasmus Liga, the Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists (NJCM), the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED), The Small Earth Foundation and BothEnds formally rallied behind our call for this right to a healthy and clean environment to be codified in the ECHR.**

Note for editors, for more information call Stand Up For Your Rights: +31 6 2170 6773.

For the rejection by the Committee click on the text of the header and follow the hyperlink or go to: <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc10/EDOC12298.htm>

For more info, please see [www.StandUpForYourRights.org](http://www.StandUpForYourRights.org) , the [Q&A attached](#) and [www.RightToEnvironment.org](http://www.RightToEnvironment.org)

*"We are one. We all share this planet. We need our planet and direct surroundings to be clean, healthy and balanced. For us and for future generations. We have human rights that affirm this. We Stand Up For Your Rights."*