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**OHCHR Statement to the Round Table on Environmental Defenders,
Extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus
Convention**



Statement by Amanda Kron

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Thank you Chair. I speak on behalf of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights has described the interlinked triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss as the greatest human rights challenge of our era.

In October 2021, the Human Rights Council responded to this crisis by adopting resolution [48/13](#), entitled the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

It comes as no surprise that, in the face of these great challenges, people want to have a say in the design of the responses. International human rights law, including the right to a healthy environment, guarantees them the space to do so: it **empowers environmental defenders to participate, access information and ultimately help protect the environment including through increased accountability**. Ensuring environmental human rights defenders, including women, young and indigenous defenders, can safely exercise these rights must be at the heart of our efforts to protect the environment.

OHCHR advocates for **urgent, ambitious and rights-based action to protect people and planet** at global, regional and national levels.

For instance, presences in **Kenya** and **Mexico** are working to catalyze rights-based environmental action including through support to networks for protection of environmental human rights defenders.

OHCHR's Regional Offices for **South East-Asia** and the **Pacific** co-organized the Asia Pacific Environmental Human Rights Defenders Forum in November last year with nearly 400 participants from 57 countries. The Regional Office for **Central America** is working to promote and protect environmental defenders, including by supporting ratification of the Escazú Agreement.

Several human rights mechanisms have also engaged on the right to a healthy environment and the situation of environmental defenders, as referenced by the Special Advisor to the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders earlier today. The **Human Rights Council** has in resolution 40/11 recognized the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development, and in resolution

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48/13 recalled the responsibility of all business enterprises to respect human rights, including the rights to life, liberty and security of human rights defenders working in environmental matters.

In September 2020, under the Secretary-General's [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), the United Nations launched a **system-wide Guidance Note on Protecting and Promoting Civic Space**, structured around the 3 P's participation, protection and promotion and including several references to environmental defenders.

Under the [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), OHCHR is also co-leading the development of **United Nations system-wide guidance for the protection of environmental human rights defenders** with the UN Environment Programme.

We have also been delighted to collaborate with UNECE as part of the UN Environment Management Group's Issue Management Group on human rights and the environment.

OHCHR welcomes the appointment of the new Special Rapporteur Michel Forst and looks forward to continued joint action for rights-based environmental governance.

Thank you.