

**COP30 PRESIDENCY ROADMAP FOR TRANSITIONING AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS IN A
JUST, ORDERLY AND EQUITABLE MANNER CONSULTATION**

Submission by

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
1 Why EHRDs, Biodiversity and the Right to a Healthy Environment in the Transition away from Fossil Fuels.....	3
1.1 EHRDs Rights in Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels	3
1.2 Biodiversity on the Road towards Existing a Fossil Fuel Economy	5
1.3 The Right to a Healthy Environment: Interplay between Substantive and Procedural Elements in Just Transition Pathways	6
2. Recommendations on <i>how</i> to advance EHRDs Rights and Biodiversity Stewardship in the Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels	6
2.1 Incorporating EHRD Rights	7
2.2 Maintreaming Biodiversity.....	10
2.3 Catalysing the right to a healthy environment	12
3 Conclusions	13

Introduction

This submission was prepared by an international and interdisciplinary team in the context of the Transnational Legal Clinic Defending a Living Earth (Defendbio Legal Clinic) - hosted by the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and Lund University – and the Global Network for Human Rights and Environment to respond to the Request COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner Consultation (hereafter, Roadmap). This submission focuses on question (c) What country, regional or sector roadmap experiences, best practices, and lessons learned for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner?

This Roadmap represents an opportunity to align climate ambition with human rights and biodiversity protection. We consider this stage of the process a crucial waypoint for responding in a systematic way to address the root causes of the climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution crisis. Drawing on experience from previous negotiations, we argue that a successful integration of all relevant dimensions in the roadmap depends on their explicit inclusion at an early stage. Understanding that time is of the essence, we see however that there is a risk to leave behind important dimensions in the acceleration of the process towards a just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels. We therefore call for the explicit

and systematic inclusion of **1) Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs)**, **2) Biodiversity** and **3) the Right to a Healthy Environment** in the Roadmap. This submission focuses on these three levers.

Two challenges arising from Multilateral Environmental Agreements, hereafter MEAs, are their **fragmentation into separate silos**: climate, biodiversity, energy, and pollution, and a **weak integration of human rights**. This stands in stark contrast to a reality in which people, communities and **EHRDs** are experiencing the combined consequences of climate change, environmental degradation or industrial pollution.¹ It is important to note that climate change goes beyond mere fossil emissions. With fossil fuel extraction, deforestation, large-scale renewable energy projects and critical mineral mining disrupting ecosystems and generating cumulative socio-ecological impacts, the drivers of the climate crisis are multiple and cannot be addressed in isolation.²

1 Why EHRDs, Biodiversity and the Right to a Healthy Environment in the Transition away from Fossil Fuels

1.1 EHRDs Rights in Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels

The notion of EHRD offers entry points to understand the web of connections between climate, biodiversity and peoples. EHRDs are individuals and groups in diverse settings around the globe, including rural as well as urban areas, mobilizing to tackle climate, biodiversity, pollution and water crises, along with those defending their lands and territories when their ways of life and livelihoods are threatened by destruction of ecosystems or injustice. People who support individuals and collectives with their professional capacities (e.g. lawyers, journalists, and scientists) to advance the realization of environmental rights at various geographical scales are also EHRDs, often conducting their work at high personal risk.³

EHRDs are key agents in catalysing the realisation of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as they are in the front line of protecting the multiplicity of life on

¹ Diaz et al. (eds) (2019), *IPBES Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science, Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)*. Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Bonn: Germany.

² Fletcher, C., Ripple, W. J., Newsome, T., Barnard, P., Beamer, K., Behl, A., Bowen, J., Cooney, M., Crist, E., Field, C., Hiser, K., Karl, D. M., King, D. A., Mann, M. E., McGregor, D. P., Mora, C., Oreskes, N., & Wilson, M. (2024). Earth at risk: An urgent call to end the age of destruction and forge a just and sustainable future. *PNAS nexus*, 3(4), 10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae106.

³ Ituarte-Lima, C., Nardi, M. A. and Sjöstedt, B. (2025) *Environmental human rights defenders: New developments and their implications for the European Union and the European Parliament*. Study No. PE 754.480, European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union. Available at:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2025/754480/EXPO_STU\(2025\)754480_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2025/754480/EXPO_STU(2025)754480_EN.pdf) (Accessed: 10 April 2026).

Earth. However, in the current conditions, EHRDs face vulnerabilities and persecution, and their traditional or scientific knowledge is usually not considered in decision-making processes.⁴ With the Roadmap potentially having wide impacts beyond solely climate policy, it is necessary to address the role of EHRD and their rights in the just transition and to guarantee that their voices are heard, acknowledging that traditional and scientific knowledge can significantly contribute to the efforts of protecting the ecosystems and the diversity of life on Earth.

Exiting fossil fuels and transitioning to alternatives may come with heightened pressure on communities – as of now, this can already be witnessed from the Atacama Salt Flat in Chile to reindeer herding pathways in Swedish Sápmi and pressure on local communities and in particular on those protecting the environment, is expected to be rising.⁵ In order to advance towards a world where no one is left behind, we urge for the explicit inclusion of EHRDs as a group that is at the forefront of preventing human rights and nature impacts from extractive projects -be it of coal, gas and oil or transition minerals such as lithium, copper or cobalt. We note ambitions to leave no one behind and to include Indigenous Peoples, labour, gender, youth, faith and human-rights networks in certain initiatives towards the non-proliferation of fossil fuels.⁶ However, we identify a lack of inclusion of EHRDs explicitly and systematically. This stands at odds with their essential role in protecting nature, catalysing climate action and therefore promoting and protecting the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (hereafter, right to a healthy environment).

In this vein, we propose to **fully integrate EHRDs rights in the roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels** with the aim to uphold a pace that is required to **catalyse climate justice for the most affected peoples and territories**. A phase-out fossil fuel roadmap should consider the central role they have in protecting life on Earth, safeguarding the climate and environment, thriving biodiversity and leading pathways to sustainability.⁷ Embedding this perspective in the roadmap enables holistic governance and rights-aligned approaches.

⁴ Global Witness (2025) *Documenting killings and disappearances of land and environmental defenders*. <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/documenting-killings-and-disappearances-of-land-and-environmental-defenders/>

⁵ Svampa, Maristella (2019). *Neo-extractivism in Latin America: Socio-environmental Conflicts, the Territorial Turn, and New Political Narratives*. Cambridge University Press, Elements in Politics and Society in Latin America.

⁶ Nasrallah, A. & Hällström, N. (2025). *Mapping of policy options for safeguarding rights, justice and the public good in the negotiation of a Fossil Fuel Treaty*. Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative.

⁷ Ituarte-Lima et al, 2024.

1.2 Biodiversity on the Road towards Existing a Fossil Fuel Economy

Because of their mutual reinforcement, the safeguarding of EHRDs rights goes hand in hand with the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity.⁸ The Convention on Biological Diversity from 1992 defined biological diversity as “the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and ecological complexes of which they are a part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”.⁹

In order to make possible the vision of thriving ecosystems, we thus support and suggest strengthening the inclusion of biodiversity into the rationale in the transition away from fossil fuels. Acknowledging the importance of a fossil fuel phase-out for the protection of nature, it is important to recognize in the same vein that some proposed solutions risk creating new extractive sites, which may in turn become targets of contestation and expose EHRDs to harm as well as put biodiversity under threat. Thus, we urge for an added focus on biodiversity on the pathway to an energy transition along the lines of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework stating that:

“Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all people, including for living well in balance and in harmony with Mother Earth. We depend on it for food, medicine, energy, clean air and water, security from natural disasters as well as recreation and cultural inspiration, and it supports all systems of life on Earth.”¹⁰

It is therefore vital for thriving ecosystems in a post fossil fuel era to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem protection into renewable energy and critical mineral laws and policies. Preventing new extractivist harms and ensuring a just, ecologically responsible transition, requires environmental and social impact assessments that consider systemic risks, cumulative impacts and Indigenous peoples and local communities’ knowledge and self-driven initiatives for sustainable pathways.

⁸ Ituarte-Lima, C., Nardi, M.A. and Varumo, L. (2023). Just pathways to sustainability: From environmental human rights defenders to biosphere defenders, *Environmental Policy and Law*, 53, pp. 347–366. doi:10.3233/EPL-239009.

⁹ United Nations (1992) *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>

¹⁰ Convention on Biological Diversity (2022) *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/>

1.3 The Right to a Healthy Environment: Interplay between Substantive and Procedural Elements in Just Transition Pathways

The seven substantive elements of the right to a healthy environment specify the interconnections between climate, biodiversity and the environment and their relevance for humans: safe climate, clean air, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, non-toxic environment, safe and sufficient water and healthy and sustainable food.¹¹ There are multiple roles that EHRDs play in protecting and promoting these substantive elements of their right to a healthy environment through their ancestral, traditional and scientific knowledge, their climate activism, their local-based economies, their low-impact consumption lifestyles and others. The procedural elements of the right to a healthy environment including access to information, public participation in environmental decision making, and effective justice including remedy are also central for fulfilling the seven substantive elements of the right to a healthy environment and EHRDs have already shown their key role in advancing sustainability pathways. There are already existing provisions within MEAs relevant for implementing these elements. Lessons from existing instruments show that explicit provisions require sustained advocacy and careful legal design for contributing to just transition pathways.

2. Recommendations on *how* to advance EHRDs Rights and Biodiversity Stewardship in the Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels

Grounded in this rationale, we propose recommendations that leverage existing international conventions and advisory opinions as authoritative guidance for a roadmap to phase-out fossil fuels that is just for both people and nature. These recommendations are not proposed in the abstract. They build on prior lawmaking concerning access to information, public participation, access to justice, biodiversity mainstreaming, protection of defenders' rights, environmental impact assessments, and the evolving content of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. They are also consistent with the clinic's amicus brief¹², which emphasizes that EHRDs should be approached not only as a marginalized group in need of

¹¹ United Nations Environment Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Development Programme (2022) *What is the right to a healthy environment? Information note*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-01/UNDP-UNEP-UNHCHR-What-is-the-Right-to-a-Healthy-Environment.pdf>.

¹² Ituarte-Lima C and others, *Amicus Brief on Environmental Human Rights Defenders submitted to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States with respect to the Climate Change Crisis* (amicus brief, 31 March 2026). Available at: https://media.licdn.com/dms/document/media/v2/D4E1FAQEV9F3Iiymljg/feedshare-document-pdf-analyzed/B4EZ1tReJ4IQAY-/0/1775654791962?e=1776297600&v=beta&t=5FwL1_qf-wnYO2tb9pS4ltpc3HUPIAgFFWu4p2ZZv5A

protection, but also as agents of change actively contributing to biodiversity, climate action, and sustainability pathways.

2.1 Incorporating EHRD Rights

Moving beyond consultation to establish a legally guaranteed and informed participatory role for EHRDs should be understood as a natural extension of existing treaty practice and language rather than as a novel legal practice. This recommendation is anchored in Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration¹³ and in the Preamble and operative architecture of the Escazú Agreement, whose structure links access to information, public participation and access to justice, and in Article 9 imposes a duty to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for defenders in environmental matters¹⁴. At the same time, this should not be framed as only a Latin American contribution.

The same logic is supported more broadly by the Aarhus Convention, especially Article 3(8), which protects persons from penalization, persecution or harassment for exercising environmental participation rights¹⁵. Both systems have also moved beyond principle to institutional practice: under Decision VII/9, the Aarhus Convention established a rapid-response mechanism through a Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders¹⁶, while the Escazú Parties adopted in 2024 an Action Plan to advance implementation of Article 9¹⁷. States should develop proactive measures to enable EHRDs to participate in an effective, meaningful, open and inclusive way throughout environmental decision-making from the local to the international level.

Inter-American case law reinforces the urgency of moving from principles to the realisation of EHRDs' rights. In *Kawas-Fernández v Honduras*¹⁸, the Court addressed the killing of an environmental defender and the State's failure to investigate effectively. In *Escaleras Mejía*

¹³ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* UN Doc A/CONF.151/26 (Vol I) (1992)

¹⁴ *Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (adopted 4 March 2018, entered into force 22 April 2021)* UN Doc CTC-XXVII-18, preamble, arts 5–9.

¹⁵ *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (adopted 25 June 1998, entered into force 30 October 2001)* 2161 UNTS 447, art 3(8).

¹⁶ Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, 'Decision VII/9 on a Rapid Response Mechanism to Deal with Cases Related to Article 3(8) of the Convention' UN Doc ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1 (21 October 2021)

¹⁷ Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Escazú Agreement, 'Decision III/2: Plan de Acción sobre Defensoras y Defensores de los Derechos Humanos en Asuntos Ambientales en América Latina y el Caribe' in *Decisiones adoptadas* (24 April 2024)

¹⁸ *Kawas Fernández v Honduras* (Merits, Reparations and Costs) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 196 (3 April 2009)

et al. v Honduras¹⁹, it dealt with the killing of environmentalist Carlos Escaleras Mejía and the lack of an effective judicial response. These cases show that the absence of explicit protection for defenders is not only a normative gap but one that has produced concrete failures of prevention, protection and accountability. This is consistent with the clinic brief's²⁰ emphasis on States' positive duties to protect and prevent violations against EHRDs, including where private actors are involved.

Specifically, we urge to explicitly refer to timely access to information and meaningful public participation across all decision-making processes related to fossil fuel non-proliferation, phase-out planning, and the implementation of just transition mechanisms. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework strengthens this through Target 22²¹, which links biodiversity governance to participation, access to justice, and the protection of environmental human rights defenders. The Cartagena Protocol²², while more specific, also offers a useful governance model built around precaution, risk assessment, risk management, information-sharing, and public awareness and participation²³.

This matters because climate change is not only about reducing fossil fuel emissions: it is also about governing transitions in a way that protects ecosystems, biodiversity, and the communities and defenders whose rights are tied to them. This is also consistent with *La Oroya Community v Peru*, where the Inter-American Court addressed severe environmental harm together with failures of public participation, access to information, and protection against threats and harassment²⁴. In this sense, recognition of EHRDs and biodiversity safeguards are not separate objectives, but mutually reinforcing and complementary ones: EHRDs are essential to biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, and more effective biodiversity and climate governance can reduce risks to defenders.

Anchored in Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration and the Preamble to the Escazú Agreement, we recommend the FFNPT moves beyond passive consultation to establish a legally guaranteed voice for EHRDs. This necessitates mandatory, informed participation in national plans and transitional policies. Specifically, we urge the roadmap to recognise the

¹⁹ *Escaleras Mejía et al v Honduras* (Merits, Reparations and Costs) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 361 (26 September 2018)

²⁰ *Iuarte-Lima C and others, Amicus Brief on Environmental Human Rights Defenders submitted to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States with respect to the Climate Change Crisis* (amicus brief, 31 March 2026)

²¹ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 'Decision 15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework' UN Doc CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (19 December 2022) annex, Target 22.

²² Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted 29 January 2000, entered into force 11 September 2003) 2226 UNTS 208

²³ Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted 29 January 2000, entered into force 11 September 2003) 2226 UNTS 208

²⁴ *Case of the Inhabitants of La Oroya v Peru* (Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 511 (27 November 2023)

right of defenders to meaningful public participation across all decision-making processes related to fossil fuel non-proliferation, phase-out planning, and the implementation of just transition mechanisms.

Furthermore, we recommend that State Parties to formally recognize and elevate the indispensable role of EHRDs - not merely as stakeholders, but as right-holders and essential catalysts for environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable practices throughout the transition away from fossil fuels.

Grounded in this rationale, and building on the Kunming Montreal GBF and the Escazú Agreement, we suggest including language along the following lines in the framing of the roadmap:

Recognizing EHRDs not merely as actors facing threats, but also as agents of change and central participants in shaping just sustainability pathways.

“Recognizing also the important work of the public and of human rights defenders in environmental matters for strengthening democracy, access rights and sustainable development and their fundamental contributions in this regard”.²⁵

*“Alarmed by the continued loss of biodiversity and the threat that this poses to nature and human well-being”*²⁶

For the COP 30 Presidency’s Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels, we recommend including explicit reference to EHRD and Nature to fulfill the ambition to ensure **a just, orderly and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels**. We therefore suggest to include the following State commitments in the roadmap:

Guarantee a safe, participatory and enabling environment for Environmental Human Rights Defenders *inter alia* groups, movements, activists and scientists, and individuals from children to grandparents – who are taking action to defend their human right, and the human right of future generations to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment²⁷, including water, air, land, flora and fauna.

²⁵ Escazú Agreement, Preamble.

²⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity, Conference of the Parties, Decision 15/4, *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, adopted 19 December 2022, Preamble.

²⁷ Forst, M. (2024) *State repression of environmental protest and civil disobedience: A major threat to human rights and democracy*. Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Available at: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/UNSR_EnvDefenders_Aarhus_Position_Paper_Civil_Disobedience_EN.pdf.

Recognize the role of EHRDs in environmental protection and sustainable practices during the transition away from fossil fuels.

Building on Art. 9 of the Escazú agreement, we propose the **roadmap** to commit to:

implement measures to protect EHRDs from harassment, threats, discrimination, and violence related to their work.²⁸

“..guarantee a safe and enabling environment for persons, groups and organizations that promote and defend human rights in environmental matters, so that they are able to act free from threat, restriction and insecurity.”²⁹

“...take adequate and effective measures to recognize, protect and promote all the rights of human rights defenders in environmental matters, including their right to life, personal integrity, freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, and free movement, as well as their ability to exercise their access rights, taking into account its international obligations in the field of human rights, its constitutional principles and the basic concepts of its legal system.”³⁰

“...take appropriate, effective and timely measures to prevent, investigate and punish attacks, threats or intimidations that human rights defenders in environmental matters may suffer while exercising the rights set out in the present Agreement.”³¹

2.2 Maintreaming Biodiversity

Recognising that fossil fuel phase-out is important protecting nature and also recognizing that some proposed solutions risk creating new extractive sites, we urge for an added focus on biodiversity on the pathway to an energy transition along the lines of the Kunming Montreal GBF stating that:

“Biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all people, including for living well in balance and in harmony with Mother Earth. We depend on it for food, medicine, energy,

²⁸ Escazú Agreement, Art. 9(2).

²⁹ Art. 9(1) Escazú Agreement.

³⁰ Art. 9(2) Escazú Agreement.

³¹ Art. 9(3) Escazú Agreement.

clean air and water, security from natural disasters as well as recreation and cultural inspiration, and it supports all systems of life on Earth.”³²

Embedding biodiversity and systemic risk safeguards should likewise be framed as a proposal grounded in existing treaty obligations and implementation frameworks. The Convention on Biological Diversity already requires States to integrate biodiversity into sectoral and cross-sectoral planning and to use impact assessment and public participation in decisions that may significantly affect biodiversity, especially through Articles 6 and 14³³. This is also supported by *Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku v Ecuador*³⁴, where the Inter-American Court addressed oil activities authorized in Indigenous territory without prior consultation, underscoring the importance of prior consultation and impact assessment in extractive contexts. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework strengthens this through Target 14 on mainstreaming biodiversity across policy and planning³⁵. Together, these instruments support a roadmap in which biodiversity protection is not external to the transition away from fossil fuels, but part of its legal architecture.

The Paris Agreement itself refers in Article 5 to conserving and enhancing sinks and reservoirs, including forests³⁶, while the Ramsar Convention supports the conservation and wise use of wetlands through Article 3³⁷. Together, these instruments reinforce a basic proposition: a credible transition must protect biodiversity, forests, wetlands, oceans and other carbon sinks, rather than sacrificing them in the name of climate ambition. At the marine level, the ITLOS Advisory Opinion of 21 May 2024 held that anthropogenic greenhouse-gas emissions constitute pollution of the marine environment under UNCLOS and that States have obligations to prevent, reduce and control that pollution, reinforcing the need to protect oceans and marine ecosystems as part of climate governance³⁸.

Strengthening a focus on biodiversity along the pathway to an energy transition is therefore necessary to prevent the replication of harmful extractive practices. As the Kunming Montreal GBF states, “biodiversity is fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic

³² Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Section A (Background), para 1

³³ Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted 5 June 1992, entered into force 29 December 1993) 1760 UNTS 79

³⁴ *Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku v Ecuador* (Merits and Reparations) Inter-American Court of Human Rights Series C No 245 (27 June 2012)

³⁵ *Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, ‘Decision 15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework’ UN Doc CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (19 December 2022) annex, Target 14.*

³⁶ Paris Agreement (adopted 12 December 2015, entered into force 4 November 2016) UN Doc FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1

³⁷ *Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (adopted 2 February 1971, entered into force 21 December 1975) 996 UNTS 245, art 3(1).*

³⁸ *Request for an Advisory Opinion submitted by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (Advisory Opinion) (Case No 31, ITLOS, 21 May 2024) para 179.*

prosperity for all people ... and it supports all systems of life on Earth.”³⁹ This is especially important because transition pathways can reproduce environmental injustice if they are not carefully governed. The Fosen judgment is instructive⁴⁰, as the Norwegian Supreme Court held that wind power licences violated Article 27 of the ICCPR, showing that even renewable energy projects can violate rights if transition governance ignores Indigenous land use, culture and participation. This is precisely why biodiversity safeguards, participation guarantees and rights-based impact assessment should be built into the design of the roadmap from the outset.

2.3 Catalysing the right to a healthy environment

One framework that already embraces a theory of change is the Kunming Montreal GBF, which recognizes that urgent policy action is required globally, regionally and nationally to achieve sustainable development so that the drivers of undesirable change exacerbating biodiversity loss are reduced and reversed, allowing for the recovery of ecosystems and the realization of the CBD’s vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050. It also seeks to “ensure the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation and participation in decision-making, and access to justice and information related to biodiversity ... and ensure the full protection of environmental human rights defenders.” These provisions are valuable not only for biodiversity governance as such, but because they show how defender protection, participation and ecosystem integrity can be mainstreamed together rather than treated as isolated concerns.

This integrated reading is now strongly reinforced by the ICJ’s 23 July 2025 climate advisory opinion⁴¹, which treated the CBD, UNCCD and UNCLOS as among the most directly relevant applicable law for climate change and affirmed that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a precondition for the enjoyment of many human rights. At the human rights level, *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v Switzerland* further confirms that inadequate climate action can engage human rights obligations, with the European Court finding violations of Article 8 and access to court⁴². These developments strengthen the argument that the roadmap should be drafted and interpreted systemically, drawing not only from climate-specific instruments, but also from biodiversity, marine, wetlands and human rights law.

³⁹ *Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, ‘Decision 15/4: Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework’ UN Doc CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 (19 December 2022) annex, s A para 1.*

⁴⁰ *Statnett SF and Fosen Vind DA v Sør-Fosen sijte and Nord-Fosen siida* (HR-2021-1975-S, Supreme Court of Norway, 11 October 2021)

⁴¹ *Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change* (Advisory Opinion) [2025] ICJ Rep, 23 July 2025.

⁴² *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v Switzerland* App no 53600/20 (ECtHR, 9 April 2024)

For that reason, making explicit the recognition of EHRDs rights and biodiversity safeguards are not separate objectives, but mutually reinforcing and complementary ones. EHRDs are essential to the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, while healthy ecosystems, effective climate and biodiversity governance and better procedural guarantees can reduce the risks faced by defenders.

3 Conclusions

The global transition away from fossil fuels, underscored in the Belem Declaration, presents both significant opportunities and systemic risks. Rapid renewable energy expansion and critical mineral extraction, if ungoverned, may replicate extractivist harms under the banner of “green energy” or “sustainable development.” Frontline communities and EHRDs face new threats, making it urgent to incorporate biodiversity and environmental human rights into the roadmap for transition to a non-fossil fuel economy. Embedding language on EHRD, biodiversity and the right to a healthy environment in the Roadmap building on existing MEAs, international human rights treaties and authoritative interpretations of Advisory Opinions on Climate Change can set a precedent for integrating human rights, environmental, and climate objectives in transitioning to fossil fuel free economy, advancing multilateral cooperation and accelerating a just, ecologically responsible transitions.