



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Title of Side Event: Rights of Nature: The missing connection to enhance and implement the SDGs on Water

March 24, 3:30 pm, UN HQ

Organized by: Earth Law Center

Partners:

1. Panama Government, Environment Ministry
2. Aruba Government
3. IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)
4. Global Alliance of Rights of Nature (GARN)
5. World Youth Parliament for Water
6. International Rivers (IR)
7. Federación Huaynakana Kamatahuara Kana
8. Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN)
9. The Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN)
10. Universidad de Murcia - Spain. Cátedra de Derechos Humanos y Derechos de la Naturaleza
11. Fundación Solón
12. The Leatherback Project
13. Royal Ontario Museum
14. International Association for Water Law (AIDA)

1. Background on the event (one paragraph)

The event explored why the Rights of Nature framework represents a powerful legal, non-anthropocentric, and holistic tool for water restoration and protection, community and Indigenous People's participation in ensuring water for climate, the environment, and their communities, addressing the global biodiversity loss and the effects of climate change. This Side Event was led and moderated by Natalia Greene (GARN), Monti Aguirre (International Rivers), and Constanza Prieto (Earth Law Center) and had a multidisciplinary panel integrated by: Milciades Concepción (Minister of the Environment of Panama), Ursell Arends (Minister of Transport, Integrity, Nature and Senior Citizen Affairs), Nathan Lujan (Royal Ontario Museum), Mariluz Canaquiri (Murayari, Federation of Kukama Indigenous Women), Josefina Tunki (Shuar Arutam People), and Tom Goldtooth (Indigenous Environmental Network). The event had broad public participation, with more than 60 people attending.

2. Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

A broad Alliance of civil society organizations in partnership with governments, Indigenous Peoples, members of the scientific community, and future generations delegations represent the large and growing Rights of Nature movement, committed to advocating, accelerating, and escalating the global adoption and implementation into legal systems of the Rights of Water Ecosystems (e.g., rivers, mangroves, ocean, and others) and in general, the Rights of Nature. The Alliance is seeking to advocate for governments to recognize water sources as a rights-bearing entity, as a tool to regain the lost balance with our planet and have a broad impact on the protection of the

Rights of Nature, aquatic ecosystems, and global water governance. The Alliance will provide additional support to leading campaigns in the five continents enacting Nature's Rights in constitutions, national statutes, local laws, and at the supranational level as a more effective way to conserve, restore and ensure water sources for the environment and communities.

Link commitment: <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/rights-nature-catalyst-implementation-sustainable-development-agenda-water>

3. Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The Rights of Nature as a water protection and governance paradigm change to address the global biodiversity loss and the effects of climate change. The Earth Law framework is a powerful legal, non-anthropocentric, and holistic tool for accelerating SDG achievement, water restoration and protection, and participation of Indigenous people and communities to ensure water for climate, the environment, and their communities.
- The importance of science for determining, including, and implementing in our legal framework standards and indicators that facilitated decision-makers to consider the intrinsic value of aquatic ecosystems, allowing to protect of ecosystems' health.
- The role of women and indigenous people's to protect the health and Rights of Rivers and other aquatic ecosystems and the environmental rights of present and future generations. Panelists expressed concern for the limited consideration of the traditional knowledge of Indigenous people in the UN Water Agenda.
- The criminalization and risks faced by environmental defenders and Indigenous People to safeguard the health and well-being of water sources on their lands and territories. Impossibility of protecting water sources and their health without ensuring protection and access to information and justice for environmental defenders. The community has a key role in implementing and defending environmental justice for aquatic ecosystems.
- Panama and Aruba shared their experiences and showed commitment to adopting and implementing the Rights of Nature. The Rights of Nature is a mechanism to change society's relationship with Nature, protect biodiversity, and accelerate SDGs on water.

4. Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Escalate Rights of Nature at the international framework. Promote the inclusion of an ecocentric perspective in international conventions and forums to adopt an Earth-centered perspective in negotiations and working documents, such as in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity that includes the integration of the non-anthropocentric value of Nature and urges States to consider adopting measures based on Rights of Nature for decision-making.
- Promote legislative and constitutional reform processes (federal, state, and local level) through open and inclusive participation mechanisms to recognize the intrinsic value of aquatic ecosystems and adopt a legal framework based on the Rights of Nature.
- In the UN Water Agenda, strengthen the link between respect for Indigenous People's rights and the effective governance of their lands and territories as crucial elements to ensure the health and well-being of water sources and aquatic ecosystems.
- Make the protection mechanisms for environmental defenders an essential component of the UN Water Agenda.
- Amplify the mechanisms for the effective participation of a broad number of stakeholders (scientists, civil society, private, etc.) in the debates and decision-making process on the protection and governance of aquatic ecosystems.