

What is the issue?

Environmental Human Rights defenders, including Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, women and youth, continue to shape global discussions and actions to address the climate and biodiversity crisis. As front-line defenders against environmental degradation, their activism contributes significantly to environmental and climate justice, biodiversity conservation, and equally, establishes best practices for environmental conservation embodied through their cultural practices, traditional knowledge and ways of life.

¹ Global Witness Press Release, September 2022



office of the Special Rapporteur on Environmental human rights defenders. These aforementioned legal provisions underpin the scope of Target 21 in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Why is it important?

The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework aims to catalyze urgent and transformative action to live in

defenders are important change agents, at the frontline of the protection of nature and its contributions to human well-being.

The GBF should include measures to recognize, support and ensure the safety of environmental human rights defenders. More broadly, its implementation should follow a human rights-based approach. Human rights such as the right to a clean and healthy environment, and specific rights, including the rights of environmental human rights defenders, must be included in the GBF, and within the monitoring framework, to ensure implementation.

What should be done?

Increased safety and access to justice for environmental human rights defenders

The GBF should explicitly commit parties to improve the safety of environmental human rights defenders through access to justice, and effective and timely remedies in cases where Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities face threats, criminalization and/or any form of violence.

Target 21 should therefore ensure the protection and access to justice of environmental human rights defenders.

Indicators under Target 21 should include:

To measure the safety of environmental human rights defenders: an indicator on the yearly number of violations against environmental human rights defenders, disaggregated by gender and by lethal and non-lethal attacks, and/or a binary indicator based on SDG 16.10.1 measuring the number of countries tracking the number of (lethal and non-lethal) attacks on environmental human rights defenders;

To measure improvements in protection: a binary indicator on the number of countries who

