

## **Statement to the Independent Expert on human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment**

**March 2013**

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) welcomes the report of the Independent Expert, in particular the attention given to procedural rights. We agree that effective public participation in decision-making can contribute towards achieving substantive rights and 'more transparent, better informed and more responsive' environmental policy.

We are pleased that the specific situation of Indigenous peoples is noted when discussing participatory rights and approaches. We hope that good practice from consultation with Indigenous peoples can be used to facilitate participation by other groups that also depend on their environment for their lives and livelihoods. These include fishing communities and small farmers, who feed the majority of the world's population and are therefore critical for world food security. Furthermore, we encourage the Independent Expert to consider ways of effectively consulting with marginalised groups such as women, the poorest and those facing stigma or oppression. These groups are likely to be excluded from decision-making processes even when the public is able to input into environmental policy, often meaning that their rights, needs and vulnerabilities are not recognised.

We would also like to draw your attention to the role that peacebuilding approaches can play in fulfilling procedural rights. Peacebuilding approaches can:

- Build capacity among vulnerable groups to empower them to participate effectively.
- Allow for public participation by bringing together different social groups and stakeholders to input into decision-making, including businesses, government and communities.
- Raise awareness among policymakers and others of the aspects of environmental policy that are often at risk from being overlooked, such as the impact of resource management practices on destructive conflict, including structural violence.

**Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) has the following questions for the Independent Expert:**

Do you have any plans to consider the role that peacebuilding approaches can play in realising procedural rights and therefore in helping to achieve both substantive rights and effective environmental policy?

Have you considered looking at how groups such as small farmers, rural communities and marginalised sections of society can effectively participate in consultation and decision-making processes that relate to their environment?