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Contact: Meg Ward, Our Children's Trust, 503-341-8590, meg@ourchildrenstrust.org

Youth Recommend Science-Based Climate Standard to UN Committee on Rights of the Child

Youth Participate in "Children's Rights and the Environment" Day of Discussion

Geneva – Today, youth made a formal [submission](#) to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. With the support of Our Children's Trust (OCT), Earth Guardians, and the Global Initiative for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, youth are requesting the Committee set a science-based standard for governments around the world to meet in order to protect fundamental and inalienable human rights of young people and future generations.

Youth's submission is part of their participation in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Day of Discussion on "Children's Rights and the Environment." The conference's goals include clarifying the obligations of States regarding the rights of the child in relation to climate change and providing recommendations to States on how to ensure that child-sensitive policies, laws, and practices protect the environment and uphold the rights of children. Youth are calling for the world's governments to cease actions that are causing climate change and resulting in violations of children's rights as articulated in the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC).

Rekha Dhillon-Richardson, a 17-year-old plaintiff in a lawsuit supported by Our Children's Trust against the Pennsylvania state government, says that the Committee has the "chance to do something really meaningful and powerful. The most important thing this body can do is set a standard for protecting the rights of my generation and future generations from climate chaos." Dhillon-Richardson will be presenting at the Day of Discussion in Geneva about how children disproportionately suffer from climate change impacts and the urgent need for comprehensive science-based government action to prevent catastrophic climate destabilization. Dhillon-Richardson and six youth co-plaintiffs are currently appealing the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania's dismissal of their lawsuit, arguing that the government defendants have a constitutional obligation to protect the public natural resources that they rely on for their well-being and survival by adequately reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In their submission, youth provide a scientific standard for State obligations to children and future generations with respect to climate change. If adopted by the Committee, the standard would be "a touchstone for courts and political bodies of the world." The submission calls for global emission reductions to return global atmospheric CO₂ levels to below 350 ppm by 2100 and stabilize the long-term average global temperature increase at no higher than 1 °C.

Youth note in the submission that this scientific standard is necessary because "the non-binding emission reduction pledges made by States in the run up to the Paris Climate Agreement would likely result in an *increase* in emissions through 2030 and cause climate warming of around 2.7 °C, a temperature increase deemed catastrophic by experts, far above the 1 °C-maximum scientific standard of protection and climate stabilization identified by scientists." Thus, "the failure of States to cease supporting [greenhouse

gas] emitting industries and to implement comprehensive, science-based climate recovery plans represents an ongoing violation of nearly all of the rights possessed by children under the CRC. These threats [from increasing climate instability] will only intensify for future generations of children, who may never have a chance of realizing their CRC rights, unless States step in now to curtail emissions and restore natural sequestration services of plants and soil in line with the scientific standard of climate recovery.”

The world’s leading climate scientist, Dr. James Hansen, is submitting a declaration in support of the youth’s submission. In his [declaration](#), Dr. Hansen notes, “sovereign governments around the world are on the verge of collectively imposing an overwhelming burden – intergenerational injustice in the extreme – upon young people and future generations who stand to inherit a climate system that is not at all conducive to their well-being or survival, as guaranteed under the Convention [on the Rights of the Child], through no fault of their own.”

“All developed nation states should be doing no less than the global average emission reductions required to return atmospheric CO₂ to a safe level of below 350 ppm by 2100,” said Julia Olson, Executive Director and Chief Legal Counsel at Our Children’s Trust. “In fact, those who have caused the lion’s share of the problem and have the wealth to transition more quickly should be declining at a more rapid pace and providing technological and financial assistance to other countries.”

Dhillon-Richardson and Our Children’s Trust Board President Kelly Matheson will be presenting at the [Day of General Discussion: “Children’s Rights and the Environment,”](#) which takes place on 23 September 2016 - 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Room XIX, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

***Our Children's Trust** is a nonprofit organization, elevating the voice of youth, those with most to lose, to secure the legal right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate on behalf of present and future generations. We lead a global human rights and environmental justice campaign to implement enforceable science-based Climate Recovery Plans that will return atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration to levels below 350 ppm. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/*

***Earth Guardians** is a Colorado-based nonprofit organization with youth chapters on five continents, and multiple groups in the United States with thousands of members working together to protect the Earth, the water, the air, and the atmosphere, creating healthy sustainable communities globally. We inspire and empower young leaders, families, schools, organizations, cities, and government officials to make positive change locally, nationally, and globally to address the critical state of the Earth. www.earthguardians.org*

***The Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** is a non-profit organization using the human rights framework and mechanisms to catalyze social change through leveraging of strategic spaces. This is work that we undertake in close partnership with local partners and advocates from around the world. www.globalinitiative-escr.org*

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