

## Alumni Taskforce - Taking stock of the Global State of Human Rights Conference, July 2023, Venice.

*The human mind can create concepts such as borders, which play a role in the world; but nature is not regulated by our rules (GC Alumnus).*

Wars and human rights violations have been present throughout the relatively short history of humankind, and we firmly believe that human rights-based actions offer the best chance to create a world free from such atrocities. However, for the first time, we are witnessing an unprecedented and unimaginable climate crisis. [“Every day, up to 150 species are lost.”](#) is the estimate of scientists at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The notion of human superiority over all things is unsustainable for today’s and future generations. We need to ask ourselves which legacy we want to leave behind.

In mid-July 2023, the 7 representatives of the Alumni Taskforce listened to and met with experts and inspiring individuals at the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Venice Global State of Human Rights Conference. This gathering included prominent figures from the UN, Council of Europe, EU, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and Right Livelihood. It was made clear that the climate crisis is inseparable from geopolitical, economic, and social crises, and climate action is intertwined with human rights action. Solutions already exist, just as many human rights mechanisms. However, they demand relentless advocacy and inclusion in every agenda. As the UN Secretary-General emphasized, [“Our world needs climate action on all fronts — everything, everywhere, all at once”](#). **This is where we, as a global alumni network, see our role.**

After our active participation in the conference and subsequent discussions, we reached the following conclusions:

1. We must **inspire action and involve as many young people as possible in the climate crisis discourse**. They are not just consumers of today but future decision-makers who will bear the consequences of inaction or slow action on the climate crisis. Young minds can breathe new life into the human rights discourse, rekindling its spirit by ‘recapturing imagination’ and bringing innovative approaches to old problems.
2. As Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated at the conference, **“We have to broaden the edges of the human rights field”**. **We must challenge the power of ignorance** and those who exploit it, forming strong bonds with civil society. We need new norms that unite people in confronting the status quo of the climate crisis, reinvigorating human rights as a force for protecting the planet.
3. It is essential to recognise environmental crimes, such as knowingly damaging ecosystems, infrastructure, and livelihoods, as well as actions leading to forced displacement, as crimes

against humanity. We lend our support to the **acknowledgment of ecocide as a crime against humanity** and actions focused on **climate litigation**.

4. We acknowledge the need to **view mother earth as more than just a resource to be owned. Instead, we should adopt a [trustee](#) mindset**, ensuring the preservation of our interconnected resources. In addition to enforcing existing laws and regulations, new ones should be enacted as we discover the interdependence between various disciplines.
5. The Conference's most potent message was to **never stop fighting**. Despite global pledges to address climate change, the business-as-usual model of economic growth persists. Existing laws and human rights mechanisms often lack strong implementation. Although environmental case law is advancing, execution remains slow and challenging. A focus on protecting human rights, rather than mere promotion, becomes vital at this point, as stated by conference speaker Vitit Muntarbhorn (UN Special Rapporteur on Cambodia). We must establish **effective monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms** like never before.

**As Global Campus Alumni, we commit to being an active force for learning and change.**

Our vision is clear: *a healthy, sustainable planet where present and future generations live in dignity and where human rights are respected.*

**We have since made the following commitments as Global Campus Alumni:**

- To strengthen connections among the 4000+ alumni and raise awareness about climate justice and the rights of future generations. We aim to strengthen collaboration among alumni networks worldwide, leveraging the knowledge, experience, and willingness to bring about change. Our diverse alumni are represented in governmental, non-governmental, UN agencies, international organisations, and academia, which gives us a unique opportunity to advocate more effectively for human rights.
- To mobilise our alumni as agents of change, empowering them to identify and address climate justice challenges at local, regional and global levels. To lead concrete actions that create meaningful impact; this can be achieved through capacity building, sharing experiences, and engaging with GC experts, Right Livelihood Laureates, and beyond.
- To build upon diversity, inspirations and successes in our alumni network to further climate justice and the rights of future generations, giving the space for alumni with diverse specialisations (music, painting, photography, etc), to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. We believe in the power of both individual and collective action.

As beautifully expressed in a [poem by Right Livelihood Laureate Nnimmo Bassey](#), together we refuse to be 'choked by convenience'.