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Written statement* submitted by the World Wide Fund for Nature International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[08 March 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Statement in support of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment.

Intervention of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in support of the work of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

Thank you Mr. President.

This intervention is made by WWF within the shared objectives of the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights.

WWF warmly welcomes the work of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment and the special focus in this report on the vital link between the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and human rights.

The size and scale of human impacts on the environment have grown exponentially since the mid-20th century. As the Special Rapporteur has outlined; humans now have so much impact on our Planet that scientists say that we are now in a new geological epoch – the Anthropocene – where we are the species shaping the planet's destiny and where nature and the services it provides to us are at tremendous risk of disruption.

The report clearly lays out many ways the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems directly and negatively impacts us all, and in particular the most vulnerable communities.

But the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the protection of the ecosystems our lives and well-being depend upon are still not adequately considered in public and private decisions. Public policy and investment decisions, for instance in infrastructure development, water management and agriculture and our high footprint consumption and production patterns undervalue biodiversity and the ecosystem services it underpins. This is behind the precipitous declines in BD we are seeing.

Slow onset disasters exacerbated by climate change, including drought and marine ecosystem degradation, have major impacts on the livelihoods and well-being of vulnerable communities that directly rely on land and marine resources for their food security and livelihoods. Migration driven by environmental degradation is on the rise.

The quality of human life and societies depends directly on how well we steward natural systems. The Special Rapporteurs report is an important marker for States and other actors that we must take urgent action to conserve and sustainably use the natural systems our planet provides, and that it is our duty to do so.

We recognize, and welcome, the call to Conservation Organisations to continue to increase our efforts to ensure a rights-based approach to Conservation. Conservation approaches have evolved dramatically over the last several decades and we are committed to working with local communities and indigenous actors to ensure that conservation actions not only do no harm or infringe upon rights, but also promote them.

Thank you.
