

• STOP ECOCIDE FOUNDATION •

16th February 2022

Statement, CCPCJ Expert Discussions

Good afternoon, Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Shirleen Chin.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today as a representative of the **Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, a member of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime and on behalf of Stop Ecocide Foundation.**

I think we can all agree that the rate at which “environmental crimes” have grown **is not** commensurate with the number of penalties imposed or prosecutions. Meanwhile we are faced with the interlinked global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss which share a root cause in the severe damage and destruction of ecosystems, rapidly coming to be known as “ecocide”.

Treaties that aim to limit and prevent harm to the environment have been less effective than we’d hope. This is why criminal law may have an important part to play. The growing global awareness of, and engagement with, the initiative to **criminalise ecocide** is a promising and fast-evolving development.

At the heart of this movement, positioned at the intersection of legal developments, diplomatic traction and public narrative, Stop Ecocide International advocates specifically for the inclusion of ecocide as a standalone 5th crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In June of last year, a panel of legal experts from around the world revealed a definition of ecocide, which is concise yet balanced: *“**Ecocide**” means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts*”. The definition has been described by Vice-President of the European Commission Franz Timmermans as an “excellent starting point” for discussion at state level, and indeed state engagement is already notable, particularly amongst the world’s most climate-vulnerable nations (Vanuatu, Samoa, Bangladesh) but also in Europe (Belgium, France).

If ecocide were introduced, a practical route is created to prosecute individuals who in committing crimes that affect the environment are often involved in **several** kinds of organised crime. But importantly, the introduction of ecocide will provide a sobering check and guardrail for CEOs and decision makers contemplating major extractive projects which significantly endanger ecosystems.

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Your Excellencies, Colleagues: In the world of legal and global environmental advocacy, it is important to know which intergovernmental platforms exist, or should exist, to effectively influence change. Only by understanding the rationale behind treaties, the political dynamics involved and provisions for better implementation can one improve compliance and enforcement of treaties. In this context, and in acknowledgement of the scale of damage being suffered by the planet's vital ecosystems, the ecocide initiative aims to **strengthen existing treaties** by strongly sanctioning acts threatening the worst breaches of such treaties, as well as acts which are wantonly and severely destructive.

Key to the success of a strategic initiative such as this is **cooperation**; through the creation of alliances, activation of stakeholders and facilitation of healthy discussions, not just to create more awareness but to strategically progress. Stop Ecocide International, and our Foundation as a member of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention & Criminal Justice, takes this **collaborative approach** seriously. It is hoped that the present forum is well-suited to continuing the evolution of this important global conversation, so deeply relevant to the themes being addressed in these expert discussions.

I look forward to your thoughts, and I thank you for your attention.



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Registered foundation number: 76532054 **Tax identity number:** 860661337