

## [The importance of the right to freedom of association in the extractive industry](#)

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A Council side-event was held on Thursday 18 June on Freedom of Association and Natural Resources, hosted by ISHR, FIDH, Civicus, OHCHR and the Norway Mission, with the Ecuadorian Mission also represented on the panel. It was Tweeted under the [#NatResHRD](#) hashtag and webcast live.

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The panellists were:

- **Maina Kiai** - UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association
- **Harriet E Berg** - Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN in Geneva
- **Luis Espinosa Salas** - Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the UN in Geneva
- **Juan G Auz** - Attorney and co-founder of Terra Mater
- **Noureddine Ahmine** - co-founder of the Network of Lawyers for the Defense of Human Rights

The event complemented the presentation of Kiai's thematic report to the Human Rights Council, which examines the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the context of natural resource exploitation (here in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#)).

Panellists at the event discussed the human rights challenges for the extractive industries, particularly how to hold corporations accountable for human rights violations, and ensure that States protect human rights defenders and communities from the deleterious effects of corporate activity.

Kiai reiterated his support for a binding treaty on business and human rights as a means to complement and strengthen the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. While Kiai called for increased scrutiny of corporations and governments, panellist Juan Auz, co-founder of Ecuadorian environmental rights NGO Terra Mater, deplored the Ecuadorian government for not only reprisals against and extrajudicial killings of environmental human rights defenders in Ecuador, but failing to secure the prior, free and informed consent of indigenous communities before initiating resource projects on their land.

Luis Salas of the Ecuadorian Mission spoke of Ecuador's close consultations with civil society in their efforts towards the elaboration of a binding treaty on transitional corporations, for which Ecuador has been a [proponent for almost two years](#). The debate about the compatibility of the proposed treaty with the extant Guiding Principles will continue as discussions around the treaty progress.

The overwhelming theme reiterated throughout was the critical importance of strengthening the rights to freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly laws and policies, which create the spaces within which human rights defenders can voice their concerns about corporate violations.