



Tweede Kamer
DER STATEN-GENERAAL



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The role of the Dutch Parliament in protecting the right to a healthy environment

Concept note and programme

5 March 2025

Parliamentary Seminar

House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer)
Prinses Irenepad 1, The Hague, Netherlands

CONCEPT NOTE

1. GENERAL CONTEXT

Climate change is a critical emergency, driven by a lack of sustainable action. The Council of Europe has acknowledged this and the need for additional efforts at its 4th Summit in Reykjavik (16 May 2023). The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) also recognised this in its judgment of 9 April 2024, *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and others v. Switzerland*.

The challenge for the Council of Europe today is to achieve binding legal recognition of the right to a "healthy environment". The Organisation is the only regional system that does not have made this qualitative leap. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) is committed to supporting the Council of Europe's efforts by raising awareness among parliamentarians of their primary responsibility for the effective implementation of PACE resolutions promoting the right to a healthy environment. To this end, in 2022, the Assembly also established the Parliamentary Network for a healthy environment.

PACE encourages parliamentarians to raise awareness, adopt national legislation, and ensure government actions align with international environmental standards. It also supports the implementation of ECtHR rulings and of the conclusions and decisions of the European Committee on Social Rights.

By adopting national legislation, scrutinising the compatibility of the work of national governments with international standards and allocating adequate resources, national parliaments are key actors for advancing PACE agenda and better protecting human and social rights in Council of Europe (CoE) member States. As PACE is made up of delegates from all 46 member States, its achievements are ultimately those of national parliamentarians.

2. OBJECTIVE AND FORMAT

The overall aim of the event is to support the Dutch parliamentarians in their efforts to ensure an appropriate follow-up to the various measures called for in the PACE resolution 2545(2024) on "*Mainstreaming the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment with the Reykjavik process*". It is also aimed at presenting the experience of other countries and discussing impact of climate and environmental litigation on policy decision making.

The Resolution calls on the Council of Europe member States to:

"14.1 continue to reflect continuously at national level on the nature, content and implications of the right to a healthy environment so that, in the near future, this right will be recognised in law as an autonomous human right in each member State;

14.2 step up their efforts to promote, in all governance bodies, the legitimacy and added value of the Council of Europe playing a leading role in drawing up a binding legal instrument recognising an autonomous right to a healthy environment;

14.3 engage in innovative projects to transform environmental governance and in particular to:

14.3.1 encourage the introduction of effective citizen participation mechanisms at national level, such as citizens' assemblies on climate, to promote social acceptance of environmental policies;

14.3.2 provide a framework, structure and support for local initiatives targeting the populations most vulnerable to environmental problems, such as programmes designed to mobilise young people from working-class backgrounds;

14.3.3 support the creation of specialised environmental teams in all branches of governance.”

The meeting is organised by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in co-operation with the Dutch delegation to PACE (Griffie IB). Participants in the meeting will be mainly parliamentarians and staff members of the competent Committees of the Dutch Parliament as well as national lawyers and civil society's representatives. PACE parliamentarians and national and international experts also participate and contribute to the discussion. English will be the working language of the event.

PROGRAMME

8 :50 – 9 :00 AM **ENTERING PARLIAMENTARY BUILDING**

9 :00 – 9 :20 AM *Meeting with **Tom VAN DER LEE**, Second Vice-President of the House of Representatives*

SESSION I

PACE RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHT TO A CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

9 :30 – 11 :00 AM Meeting with the members of the Committees of Infrastructure & Water Management; Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Quality & Nature; Climate Policy & Green Growth; Housing & Spatial Planning; Health, Welfare & Sport; Interior; Foreign Trade and Development; and Economic Affairs of the House of Representatives

Chaired by Peter DE GROOT, Chair of the Committee of Infrastructure & Water

Aurora FLORIDIA, Chair of the PACE Parliamentary Network for a healthy environment
presentation of PACE resolution on “Mainstreaming the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment with the Reykjavik process”

Exchange of views with the participation of **Luz MARTÍNEZ SEIJO** (PACE member, Spain)
Edite ESTRELA (PACE member, Portugal) and **Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA** (PACE member, Ukraine)

11 :00 – 11 :30 AM *Coffee break*

SESSION II

IMPACT OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LITIGATION ON POLICY DECISION MAKING

11 :30 AM – 1 :00 PM *Facilitator: **Saskia KLUIT**, Dutch Senator, Chair of the PACE Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development*

Sumeyra ARSLAN, legal expert and representative of the European coalition for the right to a healthy environment

Open and informal discussions with **Dutch legal experts and representatives of civil society**

1 :00 – 2 :00 PM *Lunch offered by the Dutch Parliament*

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