



# **SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP**

**NGO WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POSITION STATEMENT**

### **LET'S SAVE THE FUTURE**

**8 out of 10 people are neglecting  
the Earth, our own home, and the  
environment. It's time to do your part!**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:  
[www.shrg.net](http://www.shrg.net)**



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# ENVIRONMENTAL PLURALISM

In order for us to unearth the meaning and significance of pluralism, it is extremely important that we first turn our attention to considering the philosophy of universalism in ethics.

The SHRG believes that there is tendency, amongst the international environmental protection community and prominent international environmental organisations and agencies, such as the United Nations, towards universalising ethical values and attempting to form environmental protection Conventions, Treaties, Regulations and agreements based on a false assumption that there is one universal set of collective values. This type of so-called universalism is the idea that one size fits all or that one universal ideology of ethics can justifiably permeate all International Agreements and can therefore be directly applicable to all civilisations and cultures around the world. That this universalistic outlook is the key to solving all of the environmental issues that currently persist around the globe. However, the SHRG believes that what the above model fails to include is the fact that different people, cultures, civilisations and countries have different approaches, which also change over time, to political, economic, social policies based on historical and cultural influences that determine their governance or their individual approaches when it comes to tackling environmental issues.

Furthermore, modern environmental thinking is not the first time that human beings have thought about their relationship with the environment and other life forms. Therefore, in SHRGs opinion, we need to stop assuming that environmental threats have suddenly dawned on us and that humanity has lived in a state of blissful ignorance until the sudden advancement of modern technology, lifestyles and environmental science.



# ENVIRONMENTAL PLURALISM

Almost all cultures, civilizations and community belief systems have some concepts, rules and taboos that can inform us about the human relationship with the environment. This deep understanding, reverence and experience, reflects the consciousness of our evolving place in the environment. Through our affiliates [Repository of World Views of Nature](#) project, we can see how all indigenous peoples have sophisticated environmental protection concepts that date back to prehistory.

However, what has occurred through the dominance of colonial legacies is that many environmental organisations and agencies marginalize the wisdoms that cultures and beliefs carry about human relationships with nature and which were embedded in traditions, customs, festivals and outlooks. Therefore, in pursuit of imposing a universal rule of law and a colonial mentality as a philosophical basis to the political doctrine underpinning our global societies, dominant culture has displaced and disenfranchised peoples' own value systems that have served the close coexistence between nature and human societies since before the dawn of humankind.

Therefore, the SHRG believes that it is only when people rediscover the reverence for nature, biodiversity, and other life forms in their own way, through their own customs, beliefs and cultures that the human population as a whole will act with greater passion for the protection of our environment, take ownership of their development and move away from what is currently found under the prevailing utilitarian, legalistic and rationalistic approach.



# RECENT UN ENGAGEMENT

## United Nations Human Rights Councils 48th Regular Session

**(1)** On the 20th of September 2021 the SHRG made the following oral submission regarding climate change at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development. To watch the full video please click [here](#)

**(2)** On the 28th of September 2021 the SHRG made the following oral submission regarding the rights of indigenous peoples at the Annual Half-Day Panel Discussion on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. To watch the full video please click [here](#)

## 21st Session of the IGWG on the Right to Development

**(1)** On the 17th of May 2021 the SHRG made the following oral submission regarding climate change at the Interactive Dialogue with the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development (Agenda Item 4.2). To watch the full video please click [here](#)

## United Nations Economic and Social Councils High-level Segment

**(1)** Written Statement Re: Strengthening ECOSOC at its 75th Anniversary for Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic and Advancing the 2030 Agenda. To read the full text please click [here](#)

## United Nations Human Rights Councils 48th Regular Session

**(1)** Written Statement Re: a Plural Approach to Tackling Climate Change. To read the full text please click [here](#)



# RECENT SHRG EVENTS

## Interactive Panel Discussion Pluralistic Views of the Environment and Diversity

**Topics:** Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Implications of Different Worldviews of Nature on Reaching Agreement on Common Goals for the Mitigation of Climate Change

**Chair:** Dr Jasdev Rai (SHRGs Director)

**Hosts:** Cardiff University & the Sikh Human Rights Group

### **Panellists:**

Professor Hassan Kaya and his expert team from the DSI-NRF Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CIKS) (South Africa)

Dr Darryl Macer. Director of the Eubios Ethics Institute

Professor Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair



To watch the full recording please click [here](#)



# RECENT SHRG EVENTS

## Interactive Panel Discussion Indigenous Knowledge Systems

**Topic:** Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Cultural and Biological Diversity Conservation for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

**Chair:** Mr Carlos Arbuthnott (Human Rights Officer and Project Coordinator at the SHRG)

**Hosts:** The Sikh Human Rights Group and the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CIKS), University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

### Panellists:

Professor Hassan Kaya and his expert team from the DSI-NRF Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CIKS) (South Africa)

Dr Jasdev Rai. Director of the Sikh Human Rights Group



To watch the full recording please click [here](#)



# PODCASTS

## Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series 2021



Recorded live on the 13th of October 2021 this is the 9th podcast in Sikh Human Rights Groups 2021 Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series.

**Topic:** How to save our planet from humanmade destruction

**Panellist:** Professor Ilan Kelman

Professor Ilan Kelman, a Professor of Disasters and Health at University College London (UCL) and a Professor at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway.

His overall research interest is linking disasters and health, including the integration of climate change into disaster research and health research.

That covers three main areas:

- Disaster diplomacy and health diplomacy;
- Island sustainability involving safe and healthy communities in isolated locations; and
- Risk education for health and disasters.

To watch the full recording please click [here](#)



# PODCASTS

## Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series 2021



Recorded live on the 30th of September 2021 this is the 8th podcast in Sikh Human Rights Groups 2021 Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series.

**Topic:** How to save our oceans and marine life from man made destruction

**Panellist:** Professor Rick Stafford (Bournemouth University)

Whose research interests cover numerous topics. For instance, a large proportion of his work is currently focused on the politics and economics of environmental issues, especially climate and biodiversity loss. It shows that 'consumer choice' is an unrealistic argument for environmental solutions, and that developed countries can not afford to continue to pursue economic growth and successfully tackle these issues, yet the Global South, with appropriate support, could contribute through 'green growth', along with significant decreases in socio-economic inequality.

More recently his work has focused on green recovery plans in the UK but plans which are also applicable to many other developed countries, and how these can contribute to climate and biodiversity solutions.

Finally, he has also worked extensively with nature-based solutions, especially in the marine environment. For example, he is particularly interested in the relatively unexplored issues of overfishing and their contribution to climate change and/or their well understood contribution to biodiversity loss. For example, he has suggested that changes to fishing practices should be implemented to benefit local communities, whether deprived fishing villages in the UK or food security issues in Africa, and that doing this will help local economies, as well as the overall ecology of the ocean.

To watch the full recording please click [here](#)



# PODCASTS

## Environmental and Diversity Speaker Series 2021

**Additional podcasts include but are not limited to:**

**(1) Professor Jay Mistry (Royal Holloway University) (London)**

**Topic:** Addressing Climate Change Through the Lens of Environmental Geography

To watch the full recording please click [here](#)

**(2) Extinction Rebellion UK**

**Topic:** Addressing Climate Change with a Diversity of Religious, Cultural and Indigenous Views

To watch the full recording please click [here](#)

**(3) Mr Antoni Fernandes:** an award winning environmental and human rights activist. Who for the last 30 years has been actively involved in forest and river preservation in the Amazon Atlantic Rainforest in Brazil.

**Topic:** Addressing Climate Change through International Community Engagement and Support

To watch the full recording please click [here](#)

**(4) Friends of the Earth UK**

**Topic:** Addressing Climate Change through Local Community Engagement and Support

To watch the full recording please click [here](#)

**Please subscribe to our podcasts by visiting: [www.shrg.net](http://www.shrg.net)**



# AFFILIATE ORGANISATIONS



## **DSI-NRF Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

The Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CIKS) is a partnership of five higher education institutions in South Africa, with its hub at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban, South Africa. The CIKS is a strategic instrument for implementing the South African National IKS Policy (2004) and facilitates the integration of IKS in higher education as a key component of human capital development, social transformation and sustainable development. It is through its mandated areas of research, postgraduate training, information brokerage, networking, and community engagement that CIKS stimulates a paradigm shift in the advancement of the democracy of knowledge systems in the global pool of knowledge.

Essentially, the CIKS promotes the recognition of the multiplicity of knowledge systems in the global knowledge economy, which are cultural, place-based, and complementary, in order to mitigate against the dominance of one knowledge system in the global knowledge economy. As a knowledge system on its own merit, Indigenous Knowledge has its own worldviews, epistemologies, research methodologies, and value systems that enrich understanding and management of the environment and climate issues. Therefore, its promotion enables South Africa and Africa as a whole, to enter the global knowledge economy on its own terms rather than those dictated by others.



## **DSI-NRF Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

The inclusion of IK holders and practitioners in knowledge production, management and protection, makes knowledge production, innovation, and human capital development more relevant to sustainable community livelihood and development. It breaks barriers between local communities, academia, industry, business, and Government. It builds an active citizenry through the mobilisation of community-based knowledge systems in the knowledge economy and sustainable development process. The CIKS welcomes your partnership to build an active citizenry through IKS for improved quality of life.

### **Examples of the CIKS Work:**

**Research:** As an instrument for implementing the National IKS Policy (2004), the CIKS endeavours to create a paradigm shift in knowledge production (research), by promoting indigenous ways of knowing (epistemology), value systems and participatory approaches in IKS research methodology and process. In this effort, the CIKS has established a number of multi-and transdisciplinary national and international Flagship Research Platforms involving IKS researchers and postgraduate students across disciplines and community knowledge holders from across communities of competencies. This has enabled the CIKS to promote IKS research beyond the Humanities to include researchers and postgraduate students from Natural, Applied and Health Sciences.

**IKS-Based Climate Information Service and Knowledge Management:** A research platform for interfacing conventional weather and IKS-based climate (change) information services that are culturally, ecologically and linguistically specific. Making conventional weather information services more culturally and ecologically relevant and accessible to local communities.



## **DSI-NRF Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

**Cultural Heritage and Natural Resource Conservation:** An instrument for facilitating community participation in contemporary natural resource conservation through indigenous ecological knowledge systems. Increased and improved local community participation in natural resource management and associated conflicts.

### **Sikh Human Rights Groups Involvement**

The Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) is dedicated to promoting its affiliates invaluable work at a national, international and at a truly global level. Therefore, in recent years we have promoted the CIKS projects and findings at the United Nations. Most recently we drew the UN Human Rights Councils attention to CIKS findings that most African communities respect the constructive role of women in climate issues, land management and general community decisions. Modernity may have encouraged marginalisation of traditional African cultures and led to inequalities and the exclusion of women. However, this is changing as African value systems resurface.

For more information on the invaluable work that Professor Hassan Kaya and his colleagues have done in the past and are currently doing to promote indigenous knowledge systems and pluralistic views of the environment and diversity please watch our [podcast](#) or alternatively please visit:

[www.shrg.net/videos](http://www.shrg.net/videos)

Alternatively please visit the CIKS website:

[www.ciks.org.za](http://www.ciks.org.za)



## The Eubios Ethics Institute

The Eubios Ethics Institute is a non-profit organisation that aims to stimulate the international discussion of ethical issues, and how we may use technology in ways consistent with a 'good life' (equ-bios). It aims at an integrated and cross-cultural approach to bioethics, and has a global network of members and partners.

The Eubios Ethics Institute (EEI) was founded by Dr Darryl Macer (who currently sits on SHRGs Board of Governors) in 1990 in Christchurch, New Zealand and in Tsukuba Science City, Japan. It was one of the first bioethics centres to be founded in Asia in 1990. In 2005 Bangkok, Thailand was added as a third location. The **Eubios Journal of Asian and International Bioethics** (EJAIB) is now in its 31st year of open access publication.

Since 1990 the Eubios Ethics Institute has cooperated with many individuals and groups, including UNESCO and UNU, Asian Bioethics Association, American University of Sovereign Nations (AUSN), youth networks, in its ongoing endeavour to empower people to be free thinkers when it comes to changing the world, motivating youth in every country to be global leaders, and honing the skills of human rights and environmental professionals.



**(Dr Darryl Macer)**



## The Eubios Ethics Institute

The Eubios Ethics Institute is determined to encourage practical activities built upon the results of research to implement policy, consistent with the goals and needs of various communities around the world. Their website was created to disseminate information and now contains thousands of files.

The EEI is open to collaboration and consultation on the full range of topics in peace and understanding, applied ethics, youth empowerment, bioethics research, environmental ethics, and in the past have been involved in contracted research for a wide variety of areas including bioethics education across more than twenty countries of the world, community engagement for genetically modified organisms, community engagement for the Haplotype Mapping (HapMap) project in human genetics, informed consent, and public attitudes to life, science and technology. Projects have been undertaken in every continent. Recent books include **Legacies of Love, Peace and Hope: How Education can Overcome Hatred** (a response to the terrorist attacks in mosques in Christchurch), and a forthcoming book on **Planetary Health**.

### **Some Recent Eubios Ethics Institute Conferences Include:**

- Monthly International Public Health and Bioethics Ambassador Conferences;
- The Power of Youth to Overcome Hate: 17th Youth Peace Ambassador and Bioethics Training Workshop (YPA17) 14-21 July 2019, Southwest USA;
- Ethical Disaster Resilience for our Global Community: Tenth Youth Looking Beyond Disaster (LBD10) Training Workshop, 12-15 April 2019, BETIM, Istanbul, Turkey; and
- Many, many more, the details of which can be found on their [website](#).



## Sikh Human Rights Groups Involvement

Following the 2010 publication by UNESCO of **Universalism and Ethical Values for the Environment**, co-authored by Dr Jasdev Singh Rai (Director, SHRG) and Dr Darryl Macer (Director, EEI) and two other colleagues, it was decided by the SHRG, UNESCO and the Eubios Ethics Institute to create the **Repository of Worldviews of Nature**. Understanding and respecting the different views of nature that we have can also enhance the achievement of Sustainable Development, and they are integrated across all the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, the **Repository of Worldviews of Nature** project seeks to explore and integrate indigenous and traditional knowledge, ideas, philosophies and practices that have stood the test of time into achieving the SDGs. Regular joint workshops between the SHRG and the EEI have been held since 2012.

For more information on the Eubios Ethics Institute and the Repository of Worldviews of Nature project please watch our [podcast](#) with Dr Darryl Macer or alternatively please visit:

[www.shrg.net/videos](http://www.shrg.net/videos)

Alternatively please visit the Eubios Ethics Institutes website at:

[www.eubios.info](http://www.eubios.info)





## **Nishan-E-Sikhi (Punjab, India)**

The Sikh Dharam and other Indian Dharmas have well developed concepts of human relationships to all life, the environment and inanimate objects too. These concepts have proven useful for thousands of years in intricate ecosystems but unfortunately they broke down in the 20th century. Nishan-E-Sikhi runs several projects based on Dharmic concepts of Sikhi integrated with modern technology. The projects range from tree planting, environmental protection, education and career development. Their environmental mission is to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through a Dharmic route and to encourage others to do the same.

The institution is run by Baba Sewa Singh with a management team that coordinates tree planting, environmental projects, awareness about climate change, water preservation, poverty reduction, schools, career development institutions and community voluntary work. Each of the projects are managed by individuals either on a voluntary basis or in sectors such as education, by professional staff.





## Examples of their work:

The institution hold seminars and workshops, runs schools with scholarships for children from less economically advantaged backgrounds and runs a plant nursery. These are all with a view to promoting biodiversity at every stage of human development.

The institution also engages villages in its ongoing initiative to plant tree saplings in strategic places, nurture them and maintain them. Over **700,000 trees** have been planted to date. Once again all with a view to promoting biodiversity at every level of society.

Therefore, the institution encourages experts, academics and practitioners to run courses and seminars. It also teaches villagers about climate change, sustainable farming and the benefits of planting trees.

## Sikh Human Rights Groups Involvement

Similar to our involvement with all of our affiliates we help Nishan-E-Sikhi to obtain access to prominent international environmental organisations and agencies such as the United Nations. We also help them to establish links and information flows with other similar international projects around the world.

To learn more about the invaluable that work that the Nishan-E-Sikhi project is currently undertaking watch our [podcast](#) or alternatively please visit their website:

[www.nishan-e-sikhi.org](http://www.nishan-e-sikhi.org)





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