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Environmental NGO's are not facing up to racial discrimination

A new report from Capacity Global suggests that environmental NGO's are ignoring evidence that indicates Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups in Europe are more likely to be impacted by environmental hazards and pollution than their white counterparts.

Working with a team of international lawyers, Capacity Global launch the groundbreaking report [1] 'Environmental Justice & Racial Discrimination in Europe' at an environmental justice seminar on April 24th (details below).

Commissioned in recognition of the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' [2], the report examines the research and policy gap between environmental protection and racial discrimination.

While acknowledging that the UK government is in a prime position to offer leadership on environmental justice issues within the European Union (EU), the report suggests environmental pollution and racial discrimination are rarely considered within an integrated framework.

This is an important consideration as the report describes how European immigrant and marginalised communities face a disproportionate rate of exposure to environmental hazards and pollution. Poor water and air quality, hazardous waste sites in residential areas and increased exposure to tidal flood zones are all named as key issues.

As a result of the report recommendations, Capacity Global, pioneers of environmental justice in the UK are calling for a major research initiative on environmental protection and racial discrimination in Europe.

In keeping with the report key findings, the event will host a discussion on the role Environmental NGO's can play in increasing awareness of discrimination and equality within the environmental sector. Particular emphasis will be placed on how to best integrate an equality agenda into an environmental remit.

The event will also explore the possible use of the European 'race equality directive' [3] when advancing environmental justice legal cases that neglect the interests of specific minority ethnic communities.

Seminar speakers will include Christophe Schwarte, co-author of the report and Lawyer for the Foundation for International Environmental Law & Development

(FIELD), Maria Adebawale, Founder and Director of Capacity Global and Constantin Cojocariu, Attorney for the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC).

Copies of the report will be available at the seminar.

Maria Adebawale, Founder and Director of Capacity Global, is available for interview on this issue.

Seminar / Launch Event:

Date: 24th April 2007 / Time: 10.30 - 12.30 / Free entrance.

Venue: British Medical Association (BMA), BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP.

For further information and interview requests, please contact:
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Notes for editors:

[1] Capacity Global works to ensure all people have equal access to a clean and healthy environment. Launched in 2001 the UK based organisation liaises with political decision makers, research institutes, community groups and legal advocates to raise awareness of and find solutions to environmental justice and equality issues.

[2] The European Commission designated 2007 the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' as part of a wider strategy to tackle discrimination, celebrate diversity and promote equal opportunities.

[3] The Racial Discrimination Directive was adopted by the European Union in 2000 to establish minimum standards across member states for combating racial or ethnic discrimination within the public and private sector.