

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Paris, 13 June 2023

2023 HUMAN RIGHTS PRIZE OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Dear Sir or Madam,

Applications are now open for the 2023 “Liberté-Égalité-Fraternité” Human Rights Prize of the French Republic, awarded by the Prime Minister of the French Government.

This Prize, created in 1988, is awarded in recognition and support for the completion of individual or collective projects carried out in the field, in France or abroad, regardless of nationality or borders, to promote and protect human rights.

1 – 2023 theme

Non-governmental organizations and individual candidates, regardless of nationality or borders, should submit an application corresponding to the theme for 2023. This application should contain activities or a project to be implemented in France or abroad.

Theme: Environment and water access campaigners

Following in the footsteps of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations in 2021, the UN General Assembly declared, in a resolution adopted in July 2022, access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment to be a universal human right.

The enshrinement of a right to a healthy environment lends legitimacy to the actions of environment defenders, whose status was defined in Resolution A/RES/53/144 (1998) of the General Assembly adopting the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Yet United Nations reports show that the defenders most in danger are those defending the right to a healthy environment. Their protection should therefore be a particular focus. This realization of the need to organize the protection of environmental defenders led to the appointment in 2022 of the first Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

This enshrinement of the right to a healthy environment echoes moreover the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 by the Member States of the United Nations. The Member States committed to achieving 17 goals by 2030, including access to clean water and sanitation (SDG6) and conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (SDG14).

There are many water-related issues such as health, scarcity, usage conflicts, pollution and access to basic resources. According to the United Nations, billions of people, especially in rural areas, still have no access to drinking water and sanitation, and financing is insufficient. One person in three worldwide has no access to drinking water, while two in five do not have facilities to wash their hands with soap and water. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the link between disease prevention and control, on the one hand, and access to sanitation and water on the other. Some 1,000 children die every day of easily preventable diseases because of a lack of sanitation and hygiene. Water contamination due to the lack of or shortcomings in sanitation systems and the dispersion of pharmaceuticals, chemicals, pesticides, microplastics and nanomaterials requires a considerable increase in investment in facilities to treat drinking water. More than two billion people drink contaminated water.

Access to water has become a fundamental issue in the context of water stress linked to disruption of the water cycle related to human activities. The United Nations estimate that the planet faces a global water crisis, and evaluate the shortfall in freshwater by 2030 at 40%. More than 80% of wastewater from human activities is returned to rivers or the sea without any processing. Some 70% of all water extracted from rivers, lakes and aquifers is used for irrigation. Water scarcity affects more than 40% of people worldwide, and that proportion is set to rise in future. More than 1.7 billion people currently live in river basins where water use is greater than the available quantity.

There is also a gender dimension to these issues. According to the United Nations, women and girls are responsible for collecting water in 80% of households without access to water on-premises.

Access to water and sanitation is also fundamental in displacement. It has even become a means of pressure used by certain States to stop migrants stopping at certain points in their territory.

Applications will be accepted from individuals and non-governmental organizations with one or more field projects aimed, notably, at

- Promoting the work of environmental defenders or ensuring their protection;
- Promoting effective access to quality drinking water and effective sanitation;
- Monitoring of water resources in the long term, with the potential to foster better distribution of usages in line with resources.

Projects incorporating a gender perspective or aimed at ensuring the access of vulnerable or disadvantaged persons to their rights will be favoured, with a focus on fighting exclusion.

2 – Award ceremony

The five prize winners will be invited to Paris for the official ceremony. They will receive a medal and share a total sum of €70,000, awarded by the CNCDH and to be used to implement their projects. They may introduce themselves as 2023 laureates of the Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

Five runners-up will be awarded a “special mention” medal by the French ambassador in their country of origin. Runners-up will not receive any financial endowment.

3 – Rules

Applications must comply with the prize rules.

The prize rules are available upon request. They can also be found on the CNCDH website: <http://www.cncdh.fr/fr/prix/prix-des-droits-de-lhomme>.

4 – Application

The application must be written in French and include:

- a) A letter of application presented and signed by the president or legal representative of the NGO concerned, or by the individual candidate;
- b) The application form, which is attached to this call for applications and can be downloaded from the CNCDH website: <https://www.cncdh.fr/actualite/prix-des-droits-de-lhomme-2023-ouverture-des-candidatures>
This form should present, in detail, the actions conducted by the association or individual.
- c) A presentation of the NGO (statutes, operations, etc.), where appropriate.
- d) The postal address and bank details of the NGO or individual candidate.

Candidates must send their complete application **by the deadline of 15 October 2023** to the Secretariat-General of the CNCDH:

- CNCDH – For the attention of Cécile RIOU-BATISTA, TSA 40 720 – 20 avenue de Ségur, 75007 PARIS – France
- or by email to: prixdesdroitsdelhomme@cncdh.fr

Once the panel has announced the results, the 2023 Prize will be awarded in Paris by the Prime Minister, or another French minister, around 10 December 2023.

Please circulate this call for applications widely.

Yours faithfully,

Magali Lafourcade
Secretary-General of the CNCDH