

EDUCACIÓN
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Y GRATUITA



UNIVERSIDAD
NACIONAL
DE LA PLATA



BASIC DOCUMENT TO LAUNCH THE CAMPAIGN

DECLARE ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY



To the International Criminal Court:

Oude Waalsdorperweg 10, 2597 AK Den Haag,

Netherlands

PREAMBLE

Following the World Conference held in Assisi from 16 to 18 October 2025 “**Towards a Universal Economy based on Human Rights**”, which saw the participation of over 30 speakers from different parts of the world, organized by the UNESCO Chair in *Economic Systems and Human Rights*, of the National University of La Plata, in collaboration with the Umbria Region, the Municipality of Assisi, the Umbria Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Economics of the University of Perugia, where issues related to the relationship between human rights and economics were debated, including the phenomenon of the disposal of toxic waste buried in various parts of the world, which has a destructive impact on the environment and local communities.

GIVEN THAT

Environmental crime is a global criminal activity that includes trafficking in protected species, illegal pollution, illegal logging, and toxic waste trafficking.

Environmental crime has an estimated financial impact of between \$110 billion and \$281 billion annually and is expanding at a rate of 5–7% annually, ranking as the third largest criminal activity in the world, after drug trafficking and counterfeiting.

GIVEN THAT

Among the main types of crime we can list:

- Trafficking in protected species: Such as the illegal trade in animals and plants, such as elephant tusks, rhino horns and valuable timber, which leads to a threat of extinction.
- Illegal logging: Such as the unauthorized cutting of trees, often linked to organized crime, which contributes to deforestation and land degradation.

- Trafficking of toxic waste and radioactive material: Such as the illegal trade in hazardous waste, which leads to their illicit disposal in landfills or unauthorized sites, which involves a permanent criminal system linked to the management of hazardous substances.
- Illegal Mining: Such as the illegal extraction of precious metals which can cause deforestation, land degradation and pollution, as well as human rights violations.



GIVEN THAT

Although there is no unequivocal legal definition of "ecocide" as an international crime, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has emphasized the need to recognize ecocide as a crime to protect humanity and strengthen environmental justice.

Environmental crimes can be considered, in fact, crimes against humanity since ecological destruction **violates fundamental human rights**, such as the right to a healthy environment, and causes consequences such as poverty, displacement and conflict, which directly affect civilian populations.

GIVEN THAT

The laws regulating environmental crimes are evolving, with the introduction of more stringent criminal provisions and the pursuit of harmonization at the European level. EU Directive 2024/1203 establishes new crimes and more severe penalties aimed at strengthening the repression of environmental crimes, including those involving legal entities.

Some countries are introducing effective and proportionate criminal sanctions, providing for fines of up to 5% of worldwide turnover or up to €40 million for the most serious crimes.

Other sanctions may include environmental restoration, compensation for damages, exclusion from public funding, or withdrawal of permits.

GIVEN THAT

EU Member States must comply with these new rules by 21 May 2026; they must adopt a national strategy to combat environmental crime by 21 May 2027.

GIVEN THAT

The crime of ecocide is not yet a universally recognized international crime, but its legal framework is evolving rapidly both globally and regionally.

GIVEN THAT

Currently, ecocide is not included among the four international crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression) for which the International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction.

GIVEN THAT

Organizations such as Stop Ecocide International have proposed amending the Rome Statute to include ecocide as a fifth crime.

Recent initiatives in 2024, by some island states such as Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa have formally submitted a proposal to the ICC to include ecocide in its statute.

Laws and practices to strengthen environmental protection and punish ecocide have existed for years in some countries.

GIVEN THAT

In times of war, the only current protection is Article 8(2)(b)(iv) of the Rome Statute, which prohibits intentional attacks that cause "serious, long-lasting and widespread" damage to the environment, but only in the context of armed conflict.

ECOCIDE AS CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY IS PROMOTED WITH THE FOLLOWING TEXT WHICH ALSO RELATES IT TO THE HYBRID WARS BEING WAGED TODAY AND HUMAN RIGHTS RESPECT:

“Whoever carries out, including States, legal persons or associations, any of the following unlawful or arbitrary acts, with the knowledge and intention of disturbing or destroying, in whole or in part, an ecosystem, understood as a geographical area in which plants, animals and organisms, as well as atmospheric conditions and the landscape interact, foreseeing, even if only and solely, the high probability of causing serious, widespread and irreparable damage, as not repairable through natural recovery within a reasonable period of time, thus affecting the safety of the ecosystem itself and, above all, harming and/or endangering the life and health of people who could be affected, in violation of fundamental human rights such as:

(a) the use of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, bacteriological, chemical or of any other type or kind;

b) the use of chemical herbicides to defoliate and clear natural forests for military, industrial or profit-making purposes;

(c) the use of bombs, missiles, drones and artillery in quantities, densities or sizes that compromise soil quality or increase the possibility of diseases dangerous to humans, animals and crops;

d) the use of 'bulldozing' equipment to destroy large tracts of forest for any purpose, including agricultural;

(e) the use of techniques designed to increase or decrease rainfall or otherwise modify the climate as a weapon of war or to displace entire populations or ethnic groups for the purpose of genocide by starving them and thus modifying or eliminating the agricultural productivity of the land and ecosystem concerned;

(f) the removal of human beings or animals from their habitual places of birth and residence in order to accelerate the pursuit of military or profit-making objectives;

g) the massive and irreversible pollution of the atmosphere, soil and subsoil (so-called “filling”), of the sea, rivers, lakes (so-called “dumping”), with any kind of toxic and/or

radioactive waste or material (especially “high activity”, so-called “long-lived”, category I, as defined in art. 4 of Legislative Decree 17.3.1995, no. 230, without excluding categories II and III), for military or industrial or speculative purposes and/or objectives typical of organised crime (so-called “ecomafia”).

Unless the act constitutes a more serious crime, the following is punishable: 1) by not less than 12 years and not more than 20 years for the danger caused to the ecosystem with the knowledge of a substantial probability of causing serious, widespread, and long-lasting damage to the environment and, therefore, serious impacts on human life, the natural, cultural, or economic resources of the affected communities; 2) by life imprisonment, only in the event of the death of one or more persons, as a direct consequence of one or more of the unlawful and arbitrary conduct described above; or by a sentence of 10 to 20 years of imprisonment, in the event of serious or very serious personal injury caused and suffered by one or more exposed and affected persons.

PROMOTERS

UNESCO Chair in “Economic Systems and Human Rights”, Argentina

A promotional committee is being defined

MEMBERS

It is expected to involve national and international public institutions, Regions and Municipalities of various countries

It is expected to involve civil society organizations from different countries

Professors belonging to the UNESCO Chair from over 20 universities around the world, including Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, 1980 Nobel Peace Prize winner

International teachers, including Stefano Zamagni who has already joined

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ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

timetable starting from January 2026

Activity	First semester	Second semester	Notes
Construction of the final document and promotion committee, coordinated by the UNESCO Chair	X		
Launch of the Campaign	X		A launch is expected in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, with the Justice and Environment Commissions, where progress is already being made, for April-May 2026.
Definition of a Campaign web page in at least three languages	X		
Collecting membership and signatures (institutionalists, organizations, citizens, etc.)	X	X	
Definition of possible social and political testimonials		X	
Organization of permanent meetings and seminars in different parts of the world through the UNESCO Chair network		X	The UNESCO Chair has a network of 20 universities in different parts of the world
Submission of the Petition to the International Criminal Court		X	