

**Media release – for immediate release**

World Future Council meets international law community

## **Crimes against Future Generations need to become taboo**

**Montreal/Hamburg, 29. Mai 2009.** How can we prevent and prosecute activities today that severely threaten the living conditions and health of those living in the future? This was the theme at the symposium of 120 international law experts in Montréal on May 28–29, where the World Future Council (WFC) presented its pioneering work on Crimes against Future Generations for discussion.

“We are today using international law in a heartless fashion, for we think only of those who are alive here and now and shut our eyes to the rest of the vast family of humanity who are yet to come. This forecloses to future generations their rights to the basic fundamentals of civilized existence: acknowledging them as holders of rights in the eyes of our law” says Judge C.G. Weeramantry, former Vice–President of the International Court of Justice and WFC Councillor.

In international declarations, the global community has already emphasised the duties of current generations to conserve the environment, to use natural resources with caution and to create a healthy environment for future generations. But the legal enforcement of these agreements is still very limited. “If the half–life of some of the radioactive elements that are being tinkered with deliberately when building nuclear weapons is 24.000 years, can any responsible legal system permit such acts to be committed, which will so grievously affect a thousand generations to come?” continues Weeramantry.

The consequences of many of our decisions and actions today endanger the health and livelihoods of future generations of life. Over–fishing our oceans or destroying our rainforests and local communities when oil–drilling, to name a few examples, breach fundamental human rights to health, food, and a safe environment.

“The fundamental rights of future generations need to be recognized in international justice. Investigating the concept of Crimes against Future Generations is a very important initiative to support this”, says Prof. Dr. Marie–Claire Cordonier Segger, WFC Councillor and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development Law hosting the symposium.

The Hamburg based World Future Council works to end this disregard of the long–term consequences of criminal acts: “It is not a matter of compensating for the damage. We work to raise the consciousness of humankind, so that knowingly destructive acts with damaging

consequences on living conditions in the future become taboo” explains the WFC Future Justice Programme Director, Dr. Maja Göpel. “This is the goal of the WFC program on Future Justice. It will involve a huge effort, but the level of engagement among this group of highly distinguished legal experts fills me with optimism!”

*The World Future Council brings the interests of future generations to the centre of policy making. Its 50 eminent members from around the globe have already successfully promoted change. The Council addresses challenges to our common future and provides decision-makers with effective policy solutions. In-depth research underpins advocacy work for international agreements, regional policy frameworks and national lawmaking and thus produces practical and tangible results.*

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