

PRESS RELEASE

Rights of Nature Initiative to be Considered by Chile's Constitutional Convention after Show of Public Support

Contact:

- Constanza Prieto Figelist, Earth Law Center, +1 (202) 621-3877, cpfigelist@earthlaw.org
- Camila Palma Millán, Defensa Ambiental, +56 9 7561 1413, camilanpalma@gmail.com

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SANTIAGO, CHILE — A citizens' initiative developed by NGOs [Earth Law Center](#) and [Defensa Ambiental](#), called [15,000 Hearts for the Earth - For the Recognition and Defense of the Rights of Nature](#), gained enough signatures to be discussed in Chile's Constitutional Convention, the body in charge of drafting Chile's new constitution.

The initiative calls for recognition of Nature as a subject of rights. It also identifies specific rights held by Nature, including the right to exist, to be preserved, to be protected, to exercise and regenerate its life cycles and its ecological functions, to integral restoration of its ecological balance, and to representation.

This initiative was one of 77 (out of 2,496 initiatives presented by different organizations) to reach the 15,000 signatures necessary to be analyzed as a constitutional proposal and debated in the respective commissions and plenary session of the Constitutional Convention.

“The current legal system fails to represent the intrinsic value of Nature, with laws and decision-makers typically only considering economic or human interests,” said Constanza Prieto Figelist, Latin American Legal Director at Earth Law Center. “This constitutional mandate would redefine and rebalance the relationship of government and citizens with the natural world by recognizing Nature as a legal entity with its own rights and interests.”

In addition to the Rights of Nature, the initiative proposes a series of robust environmental principles, such as the prevention principle, precautionary principle, and non-regression principle. According to advocates, these principles are important to interpret and implement the Rights of Nature and correct gaps in the protection and restoration of Nature. Finally, the initiative would establish the right of citizens to file actions demanding compliance with the Rights of Nature.

“Raising the Rights of Nature to the highest level of government means that all decisions made by public authorities must consider this framework. It also ensures that environmental protection becomes recognized as a national interest,” said Camila Palma, coordinator of the 15,000 Hearts for

the Earth campaign. "This is a historical process with deeply-engaged citizens, and I am certain that future generations will be appreciative."

Within the constitutional debate in Chile, environmental protections have been one of the most significant issues to citizens. The Rights of Nature will be considered as an emerging legal tool to better address the loss of biodiversity and climate change, which traditional environmental laws have failed to prevent. If adopted, the Rights of Nature will also inform policies on extractive activities, which are currently carried out without considering the natural limits of ecosystems and the environmental rights of present and future generations.

Proponents say that the Rights of Nature compliments legal frameworks of human rights and the right to live in a healthy environment. The Rights of Nature was first constitutionally recognized in 2008 by Ecuador, followed by national laws in Bolivia (2011) and Uganda (2019) and sub-national or court recognition in over 15 other countries.

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Earth Law Center (<https://www.earthlawcenter.org>) is a non-governmental organization based in the United States of America, Mexico, Canada, and Nigeria that promotes the application of the Rights of Nature at the local and international levels. The organization creates alliances with local organizations to recognize and promulgate laws that recognize the inherent rights of rivers, oceans, and coastal and terrestrial ecosystems.

NGO Defensa Ambiental (<https://www.ongdefensaambiental.cl>) is a non-profit organization whose objective is the promotion, protection, recovery of the environment, through the legal representation of those whose environmental rights are violated, providing comprehensive advice, education and environmental information to communities.