OVERVIEW AND OPENING ARGUMENTS

MAY 14, 2018 10:00-11:00

MS. REVEL POINTON: Good morning. It's a pleasure to present to you today for the first day of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on Human Rights Issues Around Fracking and Climate Change.

My name is Revel Pointon and I'm a solicitor here in Australia specializing in environmental law. I work for the Australian Legal Center Environmental the Defenders' Office who provides legal assistance to community to help them understand and use their rights effectively to protect their lands, their well-being and the environment that they care about.

And I'm joined here today by co-lead attorney Dr. Evan Hamman.

DR. EVAN HAMMAN: Thanks Revel.

So my name is Evan Hamman. I'm an environmental lawyer and law academic here located in Queensland, Australia. I write about environmental law including coal seam gas and land use activities in Australia. And Revel and I have worked in the past for NGOs and communities that are seeking to protect rights in relation to the environment.

So this week you're going to hear a lot about TREMAINE & CLEMENS, INC. EUGENE, OREGON (541)343-8833
human rights, both procedural and substantive human
rights and whether the extraction of gas and the
practices of fracking are impacting upon those human
rights.

We'd like you to consider the words of the
Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, Article 1, which
said almost 70-years ago today, all human beings are
born free and equal in dignity and rights. They're
endowed with reason and conscience and should act
towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood.

So we'd like you and the participants in this
Tribunal to keep these words in mind as you progress
through the week. By virtue of the fact that we have
both reason and conscience we should be able to make
decisions as human beings that respect each other as
well as the environment that we live in.

In addition to human rights the other
important factor this week which will be considered is
the rights to nature.

So several years ago the late Thomas Berry,
who is one of the founding fathers of the Rights Of
Nature Movement said as follows. "We see quite clearly
that what happens to the non-human also happens to the
human. What happens to the outer world happens to the
inner world. And if the outer world is diminished in
its grandeur then the emotional, imaginative and
intellectual, spiritual life of a human is also
diminished or extinguished.

'Without the soaring birds, the great forest,
the sounds and coloration of the insects, the free
flowing springs, the flowering fields and the sight of
clouds by day and stars at night we become impoverished
in all that makes us human.'.

So there is a deep connection between human
rights and rights of nature. We would like you to
remember this also throughout the week.

Finally many indigenous communities have
always understood this connection between human rights
and the operation of the natural world. Their rights
need particular consideration and the extraction of
fracking or the extraction of gas and the practices of
fracking can have severe impacts on their cultural ties.

MS. REVEL POINTON: In our opening
statement today we'll be going through some of the key
concepts and terms that the Tribunal should be aware of
when listening to the testimonials put before them.

We'll also be looking at some background
documents around each of the key issues to help you in
your deliberations and an overview of what you should
expect to hear this week.
We urge the Tribunal to keep in mind the words that we commence with, that by virtue of humans having reasons and conscience we have an obligation to better our humanity as well as the earth we rely on. And that includes the making decisions about where and how the extractive industry should be allowed to be undetected on our earth.

The Tribunal's purpose is to create a forum for reasoned moral debate around issues of importance to our society and our environment today. We are here to provide a space for those members of civil society and those members of our planet that don't often have the ability to have their voices and issues heard in the decisions that most affect them.

So we look forward to the input of civil society and the expertise of the various stakeholders we have in this Tribunal this week and look forward to the recommendations of the Tribunal.

Thanks very much.

DR. EVAN HAMMAN: Thank you.

[This is the opening statement from Dr. Evan Hamman and Ms. Revel Pointon. They are lawyers in Australia who have been asked to be co-lead attorneys for the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on Human Rights and Fracking and Climate Change.]
DR. EVAN HAMMAN: In recent years fracking and the extraction of unconventional gas and oil from beneath the ground, including beneath the ocean, has caused considerable angst for communities across the globe.

The science on which fracking is based is shaky at best. The industry, governments and communities are often left in the dark as to the environmental, social and economic risks that fracking and the extraction of unconventional oil and gas can cause on our livelihoods.

The uncertainty around fracking and misunderstandings around the science cause considerable angst amongst communities and it's understandable that protests and community outrage have occurred in places as far afield as Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and the other parts of the world.

A large part of the problem is that we simply don't know the extent of the risk and the extent of the impacts of fracking and the extraction of oil and gas on a mass scale are having in our communities and the environment.

Fracking is often associated with other infrastructures as well, including pipelines, processing plants, port developments and increased development of...
the fossil fuel industry more generally.

One the most precious resources that we have
is water, both for drinking and for agriculture but also
for the environment. Fracking can cause unacceptable
risk to water supply including the contamination of
underground aquifers.

Recent experience has also showed that
fracking can impact upon geological formations beneath
the ground and even have a risk toward seismic
activities such as earthquakes.

The process of fracking, or otherwise called
hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting water with high
pressure and sometimes chemicals down into the rock
formations in order to release the gas. Its commonly
used, types of gas, like shale gas and sometimes for
coal seam gas which is also known as coal bed methane
where the gas is tightly held within the coal seams.

The major environmental risks associated with
fracking include contamination of the aquifers beneath
the ground, contamination of ground surface water, the
possibility that gas can escape and ignite and also the
possibility that the salty water which comes up from the
ground can impact upon the local cropping and land.

When the gas is released as a result of
reduction in the pressure there is often a large amount
of water which also comes to the surface. This water is
often incredibly salty and at times is stored in large
evaporation dams which is unsuitable for drinking or for
irrigation.

Associated infrastructure can also pose risks
to the environment and surrounding communities. The gas
often needs to be transported many hundreds of
kilometers to a place where it can be used for fuel
generation or for export. Clearing of vegetation,
laying of pipelines, possibility of erosion from this
can also cause impacts on communities and the local
environment.

In places like Australia an associated
development, which is liquefied natural gas processing
facilities, are being built on the coast of Australia in
order to ship a lot of the gas to overseas markets. In
some of these cases the processing facilities are being
built in world heritage areas, for example, Australia's
Great Barrier Reef.

It should not be forgotten that there are also
considerable risks to those people working with and
alongside gas and oil extraction activities. In
developing countries the regulatory frameworks and rules
of occupational health and safety are often
undeveloped. This can cause significance human rights
concerns for those people working on those projects.

Finally we shouldn't forget that fossil fuels, including gas, including oil, beneath the surface of the ground are also contributing to increased levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

We have a responsibility for future generations to keep the climate at a stable level.

Although gas is often touted as something which is far less dangerous than coal with around 50% of the emissions still, nonetheless, a fossil fuel and the extraction of the gas along with the associated infrastructure still contributing to climate change in a negative way.

MS. REVEL POINTON: During this week as judges you have been asked to apply the standards of International Human Rights Law and render an advisory opinion on the following four fundamental legal questions.

(1) Under what circumstances do fracking and other unconventional oil and gas extraction techniques breach substantive and procedural human rights protected by international law, as a matter of treaty or custom?

(2) Under what circumstances do fracking and other unconventional oil and gas extraction techniques warrant the issuance of either provisional measures, a
judgment enjoining further activity, remediation relief
or damages for causing environmental harm?

(3) What is the extent of responsibility and
liability of states and non-state actors for violations
of human rights and for environmental and climate harm
caused by these oil and gas extraction techniques.

(4) What is the extent of responsibility and
liability of states and non-state actors, both legal and
moral, for violations of the rights of nature related to
environmental and climate harm caused by these
unconventional oil and gas extraction techniques?

Fracking has a wide range of impacts.
Therefore, the issues have been broken into six sub-
cases through which the prosecution will be arguing.

Firstly, the human health case will address
the human rights dimensions of adverse impacts on all
dimensions of human, physical and mental health.

The climate impacts case will address all the
human rights and earth rights dimensions for both
present and future generations of fracking and climate
change including of governments' continued subsidizing
of fossil fuels.

The environmental, ecosystem, hydrologic and
seismicity cases will address the human rights and earth
rights dimensions of adverse environmental ecosystem and
wildlife impacts as well impacts on air, surface water, ground water and earthquakes.

The public participation case will include the human rights dimensions of public participation, or the lack thereof, in decision making about unconventional oil and gas exploration, extraction and policy making.

The fuels infrastructure case will address the human rights and earth rights dimensions of exploration, drilling, fracking, extraction and delivery processes as well as of the infrastructure needed for transport, storage and exported products and waste generally.

For example, pipelines, storage facilities, waste treatments facilities, waste water disposal, LNG terminals, compressor stations, et cetera.

Finally the social costs case will address the human rights dimensions of social and cultural impacts on individuals, families and communities.

As set out by Tom Kerns in his 2017 article, An International Tribunal on the Human Rights Impacts of Fracking, Structural Grounding and Purposes, the following legal test should be applied by the Tribunal in hearing the evidence and developing any recommendations in your decision. These tests are representative of those of a human rights court.

As to the question of standing every
 individual person is considered to have legal standing
in international human rights courts. Therefore, there
is no restriction as to who could be before the
Tribunal.

As to standards of proof needing to be tested, standards of proof in international human rights courts favor the plaintiff over the state to balance the fact that the plaintiffs are often disadvantaged in the evidence they can access to support their case.

As to the burden of proof, the burden of proof in human rights courts is on the state, in such an action, rather than on the plaintiff even though the state would be the defendant normally.

We will now provide a background as to where human rights norms can be found that can be applied by the Tribunal.

Human rights norms can be found in a variety of international human rights instruments including those comprising the International Bill of Rights, being the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, The International Convention on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights.

Human rights can also be found and provided for through state or regional constitutions, charters or by
laws.

Human rights can be substantive rights. For example, the rights to life, liberty, law or reputation consider to exist for its own sake and to constitute part of the normal legal order of society.

Or they can be procedural rights which are rights that exist to provide a means to enforce substantive rights through legal and governance processes.

Examples of substantive human rights that are likely to be raised before the Tribunal this week include the right to life. The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The right to a healthy environment. Right of self-determination. The right for indigenous peoples to enjoy their own culture. And the right to safe and healthy working conditions.

Examples of procedural human rights that may be raised before the Tribunal this week include the right to an effective legal remedy. The right to access information and public participation. The right to equal access to the public service. The right to equal protection of the law. And the right to legal protection against arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy and family in the home.
The main focus of the PPT is on human rights as a Human Rights Tribunal. However, time will also be given to consider the rights of nature itself through a full day of the Tribunal's hearings. The rights of nature, or earth jurisprudence, recognizes that our earth or environmental values or ecosystems also have inherent rights which should be recognized and honored, just as we honor the rights of human.

We recognize the holistic systems of our planet that all ecosystems on earth are now very deeply intertwined and therefore what is good for human beings must also been balanced against what is good for other species and what is good for the whole planet.

While there is a human right to a healthy environment the case addressing fracking's impact on ecosystems will be argue primarily from the earth charter perspective that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value, regardless of its worth to human beings.

Some constitutions also include reference to the rights of nature. This is not a new concept for many indigenous cultures around the world for whom the rights of nature are embedded into their world views and traditions of living in harmony with nature and with acknowledgment of the deep connection between all life.
For the purposes of the Tribunal the rights of nature features such as water resources, rivers, ground water basins, et cetera, and ecosystems that depend on will be considered and investigated amongst other things.

There are a variety of documents that we recommend to the Tribunal for providing a helpful background to key matters that may assist the Tribunal's deliberations. A Compendium of Scientific, Medical and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking around unconventional gas and oil extraction has been produced by the Physicians for Social Responsibility and Concerned Health Professional of New York. This is the 5th edition and was produced in March of this year.

The compendium provides a compilation of several hundred scientific, medical and media findings that detail evidence for the risks and harms associated with fracking. The compendium focuses on topics most closely related to the public health and safety impacts on unconventional gas and oil drilling and fracking.

The Fifth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2013 and the expected forthcoming updates for 2018-2019 can provide a useful reference point for climate change related issues to do with unconventional gas and oil.
The IPPC set up in 1988 is a highly respected and renowned international body set up by the world metrological organization and the United Nations Environment Program. It was set up to assess the science related to climate change to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impact of future risks and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Their assessment reports present projections of future climate change based on different scenarios and the risk that climate change poses and discusses the implications of response options.

We would now like to introduce the Tribunal to various documents that provide helpful background to the human rights norms and laws as related to the issues and consideration by the tribunal.

Firstly, the Declaration On Human Rights And Climate Change produced by the Global Network for the Study of Human Rights and the Environment in May 2016 provides a useful overview of agreed human rights issues arising from climate change.

Two human rights assessments have been undertaken in New York in 2011 and in the UK in 2014 which looked directly at the human rights issues arising from fracking for natural gas and other unconventional
gas developments. These are sure to be of use to the
Tribunal in their deliberations given their relevance to
the topic in question.

UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the
Environment, John Knox, has produced a report of his
five years of working in this role, Framework Principles
on Human Rights and the Environment: The main human
rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe,
clean healthy and sustainable environment. A very
useful report indeed.

Sister Aine O'Connor from the Mercy Global
Action Group has produced a rights-based guide to
advocacy directly on human rights law and fracking. The
guide aims to contribute to the debate on fracking by
outlining how international human rights law can empower
and reposition people in communities as rights holders
providing an extensive overview of accountability
mechanisms to address threats of harm from fracking.

Further helpful background documents for the
Tribunal include an outline of indigenous rights issues
provided in the indigenous peoples afro-descendant
communities and natural resources, human rights
protection in the context of extraction, exploitation
and development activities report by the Inter-American
Commission on Human Rights produced in 2015.
An overview has been given of rights of nature issues in fighting for our shared future, protecting both human rights and nature's rights in the 2016 update produced by the Earth Law Center. Also the United Nations Tool Kit on the Right to Health may be helpful for the Tribunal.

We will now provide an overview of the testimony and evidence that will be put before the Tribunal in the coming week.

For the rest of day you will hear about various pre-tribunals that have been held in preparation for this Tribunal hearing.

Firstly, you'll here from Rick Sahli who will present on the pre-tribunals held in Athens and Youngstown, Ohio in the summer of 2017.

These tribunals were held in an effort to gather and correlate data to submit to the UN Human Rights Council charging the State of Ohio and the US federal government with human rights violations through their unchecked allowance of the oil and gas industry to operate when their actions are directly infringing upon the citizens rights, health and the environment.

You will then hear from Shay Dougall and Benedict Coyne of Australia who will be presenting on outcomes and issues raised in the Australian pre-t
tribunal.

On Tuesday the morning will start with presentations on the Rights of Nature by the Earth Law Alliance's, Lisa Mead. The submissions around Rights Of Nature will be arguing the unconventional oil and gas extraction violates the rights of nature to exist, thrive, regenerate and evolve and that both state and non-state actors are responsible, accountable and liable for these violations.

Whereas other submissions and testimonials before the Tribunal will be focusing on the human rights and impacts of climate change and fracking these submissions will focus mainly on the harms to nature and climate.

Nathalie Eddy and Bruce Baizel will then provide presentations from Earth Works who work closely with communities directly impacted by fracking and oil and gas extraction in the United States.

In their submissions they will focus on the first two questions at the fore. They will argue that the precautionary principle needs better and stronger application in current and future gas and oil development, and that the burden of proof should be shifted to the industry to demonstrate whether harm is being caused.
After lunch you will hear from Robin Bronen who will provide testimony as to climate forced migration in Alaska. Robin will present on the demand for and difficulty in climate forced communities relocation, arguing that the continued increase in greenhouse emissions is forcing those who have least contributed to the climate crisis to make the extremely difficult decision to leave the homes where they have lived for millennia.

Robin will be followed by Ceal Smith and Eunice Brower from Alaska Climate Action Network who will continue consideration of issues in Alaska from fracking in the native village of Nuiqsut.

Raymond Cusson, representing the issues arising from hydraulic fracturing on the west coast of Newfoundland, Canada, has unfortunately had to cancel his personal testimony to the Tribunal this week but his written submissions stand and we encourage the judges to review these important submissions.

Raymond does have insight as into how small communities in the oil dependent Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador organized community resistance to fracking in an attempt to protect their communities, their human rights and the increased potential impacts on climate change.
You will then hear from Amanda Kennedy from Australia who will be presenting on issues around Australian state and federal laws regulating unconventional gas and oil extraction from the perspective of procedural human rights.

You will then hear from Lakshmi Fjord and Irene Leech who will be presenting on the Charlottesville peoples pre-tribunal in Virginia U.S.A.

In October 2017 a day long tribunal was held to collect testimonies about the human and environmental impacts of two interstate fracked gas pipelines already under construction through parts of Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina.

This will be followed by Andy Gheorghiu presenting from Food And Water Watch and Food And Water Europe.

After lunch Dr. Michelle Maloney of the Australian Earth Law Alliance will present further on the rights of nature. Michelle will continue to present on the need for rights of nature and not just human rights to be better protected from the impacts of the unconventional gas industry.

Declan Doherty, also from Australia's Environmental Defender's Office in Western Australia, will present submissions from the experience of WA where
an inquiry has been commissioned by the WA government to investigate the risks of fracking. This is ongoing.

Declan will focus on the first legal question being the circumstances in which fracking activities and the risk they pose to the natural environment, health, communities and aboriginal heritage breach substantive and procedural human rights protected by international law.

Vanessa Brown from Vermont 350 will end the day with some discussion around philosophies of Druids and unconventional oil and gas, amongst other submissions.

350 Vermont is a non-profit organization that organizes, educates and supports people in Vermont to work together towards climate justice, resisting fossil fuels, building momentum for alternatives and transforming our communities toward justice and resilience.

On Thursday Simona Perry will start by presenting her field research, being evidence also submitted on behalf of local communities and families across the USA over nine years. These families have had their human rights violated as a result of fracking and other unconventional oil and gas developments, including infrastructure developments and associated climate
change impacts.

Over the past nine years social, environmental and community health scientists have been closely documenting the consequences of these activities on local communities through various scientific perspectives which Simona will present on.

This will be followed by Megan Hunter presenting on the Fresh Water Accountability Project, a nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve and protect fresh water supplies through education and community action. And it's dedicated to promoting health and well-being while protecting the environment.

Since its origins Freshwater has served as a community advocate helping individuals and communities impacted by fracking to organize, educate and participate in environmental decisions that effect them.

Allie Rosenbluth, who represents Rogue Climate based in Jackson County in Southern Oregon, Rogue Climate works in the many of the rural communities impacted by the proposed Pacific Connector Fracked Gas Pipeline and Jordon Cove LNG export terminal.

Jody McCaffree will follow with a presentation also on Jordon Cove with the Citizen Environmental and Human Rights Assessment of exporting hydraulic fractured gas.
Daniel Taillant will follow from the Center for Human Rights and the Environment on the issues of human rights violations and climate change, inducing invisible methane and deadly volatile organic compounds and other pollutants emitted by the oil and gas sector, which can be identified with infrared technology.

The afternoon will then provide time for attorneys and judges to answer questions posed by the judges and to engage in general discussion.

On Friday the morning will start with Maura Stephens providing testimony from Coalition To Protect New York. The coalition formed in 2010 by a group of central New York individuals in grassroots organizations in response to the growing threat of unconventional shale gas activities to the health, environment, communities and ways of life.

Maura's submissions discuss the evolution of community understanding, concern and activation in response to the issues they were facing from increasing unconventional gas activities being proposed around them.

I will then return to appear before you to present closing submissions for the Tribunal. As judges you will then have the opportunity to consider and provide any recommendations and/or statements that you consider relevant.
might choose to offer in resolution of this Permanent Peoples' Tribunal hearing.

DR. EVAN HAMMAN: This concludes our opening address. Revel and I were greatly honored to be able to provide this information to you and thank you for listening.

We would like to finish with the words of Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a point where we first started. All human beings are born free and equal. They are endowed with reason and conscience. They are, therefore, able to reason through logical arguments and also share compassion to our fellow human beings, those in the environment that we rely on for survival, and hope that you take these words through with you throughout the week.

Thank you.

[youtube.com/watch?v=wS8GQqJJyvo]