



Tuesday, May 21, 2019
Sami Kanaan, Mayor of Geneva

*Palais Eynard – Hôtel municipal
Rue de la Croix-Rouge 4
1204 Genève*

GENEVA DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEA

With the current international focus on the long-term sustainable use and protection of our seas, the cleaning up of the marine environment, the increased awareness for need of protection of maritime ecology and bio-diversity, awareness of the essential need for sustainable global fisheries, awareness of the plight of migrants and refugees undertaking perilous sea crossings to achieve better lives and escape war, famine, drought and unemployment, of acts of piracy, and of the scale and scope of commercial supply chains engaged in the global daily supply of goods and services by and at sea, and all the while States are driving greater levels of international influence through assertions of greater ocean governance; the time has come to explicitly address the concept and issue of human rights at sea .

The Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea (“the Declaration”), drafted in this City and being further developed here with the input of a wide range of important agencies, NGOs and individual specialists, is a significant document for our times. The oceans are quite rightly the focus of international attention today and this document deals with issues that up to now have been given very much less attention than they deserve.

Our City is enthusiastic about this initiative and proud of the fact that our Graduate Institute and Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights have hosted its drafting and development. The Declaration is a profoundly important instrument that aims to ensure accountability and compliance with human rights standards at sea – on the 70% of the Earth’s surface that is covered in salt water and which is beyond the territorial jurisdiction of any state.

The Declaration, conceived and introduced by the UK charity ‘Human Rights at Sea’, has the aim to ensure compliance with international human rights at sea, particularly in areas beyond territorial jurisdiction.

The concept of the Declaration is to deliver a soft law instrument which captures the concept of ‘human rights at sea’ and the founding principle that ‘human rights apply at sea as they do on land’ for all persons living, working, transiting, or engaged in any other type of activity at sea, reflecting internationally recognised fundamental human rights stemming from established international conventions and instruments.

The City of Geneva, as a global economic hub, the home of the UN and a leading flag State, has an intimate and vested interest in the assurance and protection of human rights on both land and at sea.

I am honoured as Mayor to be able formally to endorse the Geneva Declaration on Human Rights at Sea on behalf of the City of Geneva. I feel sure it will come in future years to be seen as a seminal initiative in the quest for human rights for all people, wherever they may be.

On behalf of the City of Geneva, the Office of the Mayor of Geneva formally endorses and supports the ongoing development and finalisation of the Declaration.

Sami Kanaan

Mayor of Geneva

David Hammond

Director Human Rights at Sea

21.05.2019