



MEDIA CONTACTS:

Emily Donovan, co-founder, Clean Cape Fear
esdonovan@gmail.com; cell: 704-491-6635

Claudia Polsky, Director, UC Berkeley Environmental Law Clinic
cpolsky@law.berkeley.edu; cell: 510-260-5540

February 21, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

***UN Human Rights Council Experts Call Out Chemours & DuPont
for Extensive PFAS Contamination in the United States***

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council today [issued a press statement](#) calling out American chemical companies, Chemours and DuPont, for “disregarding the rights and wellbeing” of residents in North Carolina, who have been unknowingly exposed to extreme levels of toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) for decades. The UN statement was spurred by a [communication to the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights](#) filed in April 2023 by the North Carolina community action group Clean Cape Fear in collaboration with the UC Berkeley Environmental Law Clinic.

UN experts expressed particular concern about Chemours’ desire to expand PFAS production in North Carolina, given the area’s extensive PFAS contamination.

“We still have residents in our region who do not have access to clean, safe drinking water, and Chemours continues to refuse to pay for drinking water alternatives for certain residents,” said Emily Donovan, co-founder of Clean Cape Fear. “The burden is falling on harmed communities to pay for the cleanup. Meanwhile, we’re finding PFAS along our beaches, in locally grown produce, locally caught fish. It’s also in our air and rainwater. It’s nearly impossible to protect ourselves from all the existing PFAS contamination. Now, Chemours wants to expand production and make more PFAS when it can’t even clean up the existing mess it made.”

The UN press statement also elevated alarm at transnational shipments of PFAS waste from a Chemours facility in the Netherlands to the Chemours facility in Fayetteville, North Carolina—which would again increase PFAS exposure risk in a heavily exposed community—stating these were in apparent violation of international law. The statement also called out U.S. health and environmental regulators, and the U.S. Environmental Agency specifically, for not doing more to protect affected communities in North Carolina from “business-related human

rights abuses.”

“The legacy of Chemours and DuPont’s human rights violations has violated the sanctity of our bodies and prevented families from taking proactive measures to protect their health from PFAS, says Dr. Kyle Horton, MD, leadership team member of Clean Cape Fear and CEO of the nonprofit On Your Side Health. “We remain decades behind in understanding the health harms from Chemours-specific PFAS because of its corporate deception. It is our sincere hope that the UN discussion will prompt action and transparency that will enable both families and healthcare providers to take evidence-based measures to protect us from PFAS harms to our health.”

Additional themes of the U.N.’s statement are that corporate restructuring, through which DuPont has endeavored to distance itself from the impacts of its decades of PFAS pollution and deception by spinning off new companies to hold its PFAS liabilities, making it harder for communities to seek effective remedies and justice.

A final and important theme of the UN release was its connection of toxics exposure and climate change mitigation. The statement emphasized a recent UN report urging nations to fight climate change with detoxification strategies informed by human rights, such that they avoid hazardous chemicals in building new green technologies.

UN experts recommend that the PFAS violations occurring in the United States, as well as growing global concerns regarding PFAS pollution, be discussed at next week’s UN Environment Assembly meeting in Nairobi.

###

Clean Cape Fear works to restore and protect the local drinking water, air, soil, and food supply from PFAS contamination. Co-founders Donovan, Jessica Cannon, and Peterson, along with local activists, formed Clean Cape Fear around a dining room table in 2017 after protests erupted in their community over Chemours’ slow response to public questions regarding extreme levels of GenX and other PFAS in local tap water. Using reporting from The New York Times and The Intercept, Clean Cape Fear members pieced together the similarities between their story and the PFAS debacle in Parkersburg, W.Va. that prompted the docudrama *Dark Waters*.

The UC Berkeley Environmental Law Clinic trains students to enhance environmental health and justice by deploying the law to protect those least politically empowered. The Clinic also works to ensure that the life experiences of its clients’ members inform the highly technical regulatory space in which health-consequential decisions are made.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

Emily Donovan, co-founder, Clean Cape Fear
esdonovan@gmail.com, cell: 704-491-6635

Claudia Polsky, founding director, UC Berkeley Environmental Law Clinic
cpolsky@berkeley.edu; office: 510-642-5398; cell: 510-260-5540

#END#

