

GANHRI Statement
adopted at the GANHRI ANNUAL CONFERENCE on
Climate Change: The role of National Human Rights Institutions
held on 4 December 2020

1. Climate change and its impacts are one of the greatest challenges of the day, directly and indirectly impacting on the full enjoyment of human rights, including social, economic and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights, the right to development and the right to a healthy environment. We recognize the importance of protecting the environment and biodiversity for present and future generations and that protecting the environment and biodiversity means taking care of water, air, land, animals and plants. We are concerned that climate change disproportionately affects the most vulnerable reinforcing existing disparities and creating new economic and social inequalities. Moreover, we are concerned that the policy measures taken to combat, mitigate, and adapt to climate change may not be sufficient to reduce negative impacts on human rights, but might even exacerbate the situation for the most vulnerable people, if not developed and implemented based on human rights and environmental laws and standards.

2. A human rights-based approach leads to more sustainable and effective climate action and climate policies. We call on our states to ratify and implement international and regional human rights treaties, taking into account the recommendations and guidance from the UN Human Rights Council, UN Special Procedures and UN Treaty Bodies. We welcome that to date 194 States have signed and 189 are now Parties to the Paris Agreement, and call on all states to implement its provisions. The Paris Agreement is a significant step for the promotion of human rights-based and people-centered climate action as it explicitly refers to States' obligation to respect, promote and consider human rights protection when taking action to address climate change. The 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development is directed to all countries and can help to foster the meaningful implementation of the Paris Agreement.

3. We recognize the need for climate justice for all and in particular those communities that are most vulnerable and susceptible to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Climate justice means addressing the climate crisis with a human rights-based approach whilst also making progress towards a just transition to a zero-carbon economy. It ensures that decisions on climate change are participatory, non-discriminatory, transparent and accountable and that benefits, and burden of climate action are shared equitably. Climate justice requires that those most affected by climate change have access to effective remedies, including financial support. Efforts to address climate change must leave no one behind.
4. While States are the primary duty-bearers, we, as independent institutions of the State with a broad mandate and powers to promote and protect human rights, commit to playing an active role in promoting human rights-based climate action:

National Policies / Commitments

5. We commit to contributing to climate action efforts in line with human rights obligations and principles of non-discrimination and participation, by reporting to and advising government bodies as well as other stakeholders on a human rights-based approach to climate mitigation and adaptation measures.
6. We will promote and monitor the conduct of sound environmental, social and human rights risk and impact assessments prior to commencement of projects and the adoption of policy measures related to climate change and the environment.
7. We will ensure that human rights-based approach towards sustainable and effective climate action integrate the expertise of local communities and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. Moreover, a human rights-based approach to climate actions require meaningful, effective and active participation of all relevant stakeholders in the designing and implementation of national, regional and international climate policies, an objective that we will promote in all relevant policy fora.

8. We commit to integrating climate change and environmental perspective into our investigation of complaints and base our advocacy and policy advice on our findings. In addition, we commit to supporting rights-holders who are negatively impacted by either climate change or measures taken to address the impacts of climate change in order to facilitate effective access to remedy.

Global, international Commitments

9. Climate change is a global crisis which requires global coordinated action. We therefore recall our function to act as a bridge and to provide a platform for exchange between policymakers, civil society and other stakeholders, including population and groups most affected by climate change and environmental degradation.
10. We commit to engaging - including collectively through GANHRI and NHRI networks - in national, regional and international processes to promote human rights and enhanced ambition for climate action, such as with regard to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. We consider that given the urgency and the size of human rights impacts enhanced ambition to mitigate climate change is a human rights obligation as it was highlighted in the statement of several human rights treaty bodies in 2019.

Monitoring and reporting

11. We commit to promoting policy coherence by monitoring human rights implications of climate change including climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and by reporting findings to international and regional human rights mechanisms on the human rights compliance of government's climate action.
12. We commit to making monitoring results publicly available including to climate processes, thereby promoting a human rights-based approach to climate action at the UNFCCC and contributing to inclusive and participatory processes for monitoring and review under the Paris Agreement, such as NDC implementation and the global stocktake.

13. We highlight the need for disaggregated data. We will promote inclusive participation of those groups particularly at risk in data collection, such as women and girls, elderly people, children and youths, persons with disabilities, ethnic minority groups, internally displaced persons, migrants, indigenous peoples, and environmental human rights defenders.
14. We reaffirm our commitment to jointly and proactively engage in climate action processes to ensure the embedding of human rights therein, such as at the Conferences of Parties (COPs) and by building-up our monitoring capacities for review mechanisms under the Paris Agreement (e.g. global stocktake) , in bringing the topic of climate change into the discussion on business and human rights, and in taking up the often difficult situation of environmental human rights defenders that face various forms of violence and prosecution.

Cooperation

15. We will support and cooperate with existing environmental and climate initiatives as well as movements that comply with human rights standards and principles.
16. We will continue to work closely with other NHRIs and will engage through GANHRI as a platform for collaboration among, and a global voice of, NHRIs on this matter.
17. We call on the UN system in particular our partners at OHCHR, UNDP and UNEP to support NHRIs, GANHRI and regional networks in implementing this Statement, including through coordinated capacity building support to NHRIs, recognizing the Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights and commitment to supporting the rights of future generations.

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