



GANHRI

COP26 - NHRI SYMPOSIUM

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN
BRIDGING THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP IN THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Summary of exchanges

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ACRONYMS

AIC - Asian Intergovernmental Commission

B&HR - Business and Human Rights

CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity

CDM - Clean Development Mechanism

CIEL - Centre of International Environmental Law

CNDH - Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos

COE - Council of Europe

COP - Conference of Parties

CRC - Committee on the Rights of the Child

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSO - Civil Society Organization

CTM - Carbon Trading Mechanism

ECHR - European Court of Human Rights

EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment

ENNHRI - European Network of National Human Rights Institutions

ETM - Emissions Trading Mechanism

FPIC - Free, Prior and Informed Consent

GANHRI - Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions

GCF - Green Climate Fund

GEF - Global Environment Facility

GHG - Greenhouse Gas Emissions

GIHR - German Institute for Human Rights

GST - Global Stock Take

HRBA - Human Rights-Based Approach

HRC - Human Rights Council

HRIA - Human Rights Impact Assessment

IACHR - Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

IFI - International Financial Institution

IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPO - Indigenous People's Organizations

KHRC - Kenya Human Rights Commission

LSE - London School of Economics

MSP - Member Scottish Parliament

NAP - National Adaptation Plans

NAF - National Adaptation Funds

NDC - Nationally Determined Contributions

NDF - Natural Disaster Fund

NPA - Natural Protected Areas

NPM - National Preventive Mechanism

NHRC - National Human Rights Commission

NHRI - National Human Rights Institution

NIHRC - Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

OPCAT - Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SBSTA - Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SHRC - Scottish Human Rights Commission

SIDS - Small Island Developing States

SR - Special Rapporteur

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

UNEA - United Nations Environment Assembly

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNGP - UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

WHC - World Heritage Committee

Introduction

1. A new 'wave' of human rights practice

Human rights must be at the heart of climate action. Upholding human rights and addressing climate change are intimately connected. It will be impossible to secure human rights without addressing the climate crisis; the climate crisis is also a global human rights crisis.

We are seeing a new 'wave' of global advocacy with children and young people spearheading action in response to the climate crisis, urging the immediacy for their lives and those of future generations. Children have brought before courts human rights arguments that underscore the extraterritorial obligations of states to protect their social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights and their development.

Worldwide response to climate change has seen people mobilizing and demanding immediate action in renewable energies, forest restoration, and seeking remedies for global environmental wrongs caused by climate change. In this context, NHRIs play a myriad of roles in highlighting the interface between human rights and climate change and are critical observers and monitors of state climate commitments at the national and international levels, holding them accountable for their human rights obligations.

This symposium addressed the crucial role of NHRIs in climate litigation, in supporting the increasingly important role of young people and education in climate and human rights advocacy, and on the crucial role of NHRIs in climate negotiations and the promotion of the right to a healthy environment

2. The Symposium

The NHRI Symposium was held online at the side-lines of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), which took place in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021.

The event was co-organised by Stirling University and the Global Alliance National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in collaboration with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC). The UN Environmental Program (UNEP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) were also partners and co-sponsors of this Symposium.

The Symposium aimed at providing a greater understanding of the climate regime to enhance NHRIs' capacity to promote and support human rights within climate policy and climate accountability. The event followed a highly interactive format which allowed and encouraged participants to share their experiences and good practices.

Seven different sessions were held over a three-day period (3-5 November 2021), with participants being given the opportunity to engage via an online platform between sessions.

Contributions were made from a range of NHRIs already active in this field, as well as other international experts.

During three days, over 130 representatives from NHRIs, regional networks, and other experts from academia and international organizations gathered online to gain a better understanding of the climate regime and the COP negotiation processes, to discuss how to take a human rights-based approach to influence the language of the climate negotiations to strengthen the linkages between climate and human rights and promote mechanisms that address loss and damage, compliance, and accountability.

Participants discussed NHRI's opportunities to collaborate, taking part in joint, (inter-NHRI) inquiries, developing monitoring and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, platforms, and communities to share experiences and in exploring together entry points for NHRIs to influence and monitor national mechanisms and collaborate in bringing human rights language and state obligations to the international climate negotiations.

This event built upon GANHRI members' joint commitment at their 2020 Annual Conference to engage in human rights-based action on climate change, including through the creation of a GANHRI Caucus aimed at sharing NHRIs' experience at national, regional and global levels, and through engaging in climate change-related litigations.

At the closure of the event, and on the occasion of the COP26, GANHRI's members submitted an Open Letter to state parties to the UNFCCC attending COP26 in Glasgow urging them to raise their emission targets, to strengthen their adaptation efforts and enhance financial cooperation ensuring broad participation of non-state actors at the COP and most crucially, to respect, protect and fulfill human rights in the actions they undertake to address climate change.

2.1 Opening Remarks

The Symposium was opened with a welcome and introductory remarks from Shona Robinsons MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government), Jaqueline Kinghan (Commissioner from the Scottish Human Rights Commission) and Maria Gavouneli (GANHRI President and Greek National Commissioner for Human Rights).

To read a full summary of the Symposium follow the link [here](#)

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of the introductory session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of the introductory session follow the link [here](#)

3. Session 1: Introduction to the climate regime

Annalisa Savaresi, Associate Professor, International Environmental Law, University of Eastern Finland and University of Stirling

AIM: This session aimed to introduce delegates to the basic notions of the climate regime, the climate negotiations, and opportunities for civil society to engage with this

This first session described the origins and functions of the climate regime, looking at the main issues arising from its origins in 1992 to the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the climate treaties. It explained how three international treaties - the UN Climate Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and the Paris Agreement (2015) - the regime aims at facilitating international cooperation and coordination, with the objective to achieve climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The regime lays down obligations to provide information, cooperate in the sharing of clean technologies, and make financial resources available to vulnerable countries. The debate on the historical responsibility for the climate emergency has made it difficult to agree on these measures, thus reducing their effectiveness.

Annalisa Savaresi explained how the Paris Agreement is a greater leveler of parties' obligations concerning mitigation and the provision of information. It asked every state to reduce emissions and created a universal review process, moving its parties towards more obligations of conduct and less obligations of result.

As a consequence, the Paris Agreement has left a so-called accountability gap in international climate governance, by creating a soft review process of parties' compliance with their commitments, which that is yet to tested.

NHRIs can play in a significant role in bridging the accountability left by the Paris Agreement as they are closer to the decisions at the national and local level and better positioned to detect negative impacts on the enjoyment of human rights. NHRIs should also monitor that climate change response do not create further human rights impacts, abuses, and violations at the national level.

Presentation of Annalisa Savaresi [here](#)



To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this first session follow the link [here](#)
To read the [transcript](#) of this first session follow the link [here](#)

4. Session 2: Human Rights at the COP and climate negotiations

Sebastien Duyck, Senior attorney, Climate & Energy Program, Centre of International Environmental Law.

AIM: To give delegates an understanding of how human rights have been addressed at previous COPs and explore current issues under negotiation.

This session provided a background on the climate negotiations and the evolution of human rights and sustainable development compliance within the framework. Sebastien explained that there have been attempts to integrate human rights into climate negotiations since their inception, but initially the links between human rights and environmental governance were not well articulated. However, in the mid-2000s, there was a shift from an environmental focus to one of sustainable development, which encompassed a broader range of issues and allowed for questions of social inclusion and other narratives to emerge.

Sebastien Duyck explained the importance of what was happening at COP26 in Glasgow in terms of ensuring a dialogue existed between environmental rights and human rights, noting that there was high pressure for the COP to deliver new rules on Carbon Trading Mechanisms (CTMs) that implement the Paris Agreement. He outlined some of the impacts that Carbon Trading Mechanisms (such as offsetting and carbon markets) are currently having on the realization of human rights.

COP26 is a critical moment for the regime to deliver rules on carbon trading, to implement the Paris Agreement, and to lay the rules of dialogue between the environment and human rights. Sebastien also discussed the importance of grievance mechanisms, noting that the Kyoto Protocol had no valid entry points for communities to document violations caused by CTMs and a lack of incentives for project developers to comply with human rights.

He highlighted however that civil society has seen unprecedented restrictions to their participation and access to the negotiations at COP26. In the midst of a clear de-prioritization of public scrutiny from representatives of indigenous peoples and civil society, Sebastien Duyck explained the call on the COP26 to address the situation of communities suffering from these impacts and to develop a mechanism that supports Loss and Damage in communities that are already impacted. This was a priority issue for many at COP26, a critical element of this being a duty to regulate private actors (including financial actors).

The more CTMs are in place, the less urgent it becomes for the carbon and fossil-fuel industries to change their business model overnight and those mechanisms have a clear impact on communities if there are no safeguards in place, making it relevant from the human rights perspective.

NHRIs are critical in fostering a conversation on the importance of including loss and damage within the climate regime and with climate decision-makers struggling with human rights considerations. NHRIs are key in preparing the ground for delegates of the negotiating

team and supporting them in understanding the implications their positions have for human rights.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this second session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this second session follow the link [here](#)

A human rights-based approach to climate change and the role of NHRIs

David Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment and associate professor at the University of British Columbia.

The [UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment](#), Professor David Boyd reminded participants that we are living in a state of climate emergency. More frequent and intense extreme weather events, floods, droughts, and rising sea levels are also a global human rights crisis that falls disproportionately upon the shoulders of the poor and marginalized populations threatening their rights to life, to health, to water, their cultural rights and the right to a healthy environment among many others.

Human rights are a very strong catalyst for change and a powerful game-changer. In this context, one of the most powerful right-based approaches involves the right to a healthy environment. Recognizing the right to a healthy environment is expected to lead to better environmental performance, faster reductions in air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and higher levels of people with access to safe drinking water.

NHRIs play a critical role in engaging directly with governments to ensure that a human rights-based approach ([HRBA](#)) is applied to climate action and taken into account in the negotiations and commitments. NHRIs have a very relevant role in climate litigation and are experiencing an incredible surge in rights-based climate litigation across the world.

A human rights-based approach needs to be at the heart of climate action and all its mechanisms, and through the different mitigation and adaptation work, a way must be created by which the polluters that have caused the climate crisis to pay for the restoration and rebuilding of the homes, infrastructure, and overall damages in affected countries and communities.

Professor Boyd addressed the need to implement more effective compliance mechanisms, the critical role of young people in climate litigation, and the role of NHRIs in monitoring the impact of disasters on human rights and educating the public about the magnitude of their linkages to climate change.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this session follow the link [here](#)

5. Session 3: Influencing Policy

AIM: To explore ways in which NHRIs are currently using human rights to influence climate policy at the national level. This session was comprised of two breakout sessions

Breakout Room 1 - Influencing climate change-related policymaking: approaches, challenges and needs

Nina Eschke, Senior Researcher / Policy Adviser, German Institute for Human Rights (GIHR)

Sharing the experience of the GIHR in assisting the German negotiation team from COP24 to COP26, Nina Eschke elaborated on the essential role that NHRIs have in climate policy due to their closeness to national actors, and their unique position to influence and build capacity on integrating a HRBA into climate and environmental policies and negotiations.

Nina outlined a range of actions that the GIHR had taken, such as undertaking a preliminary hearing and compiling recommendations for the climate negotiations for various Ministries.

She also outlined some of the challenges facing NHRIs in this area.

As human rights experts are not specialized in climate policy, it was necessary for the GIHR to engage with new actors, many of them political. They also build alliances with climate and environmental communities.

Nina highlighted the reluctance of negotiators and decision-makers to include human rights language or explicitly mention human rights in their representations. To overcome this challenge, the GIHR had used language that referenced human rights principles such as participation, access to information, transparency, and socio-economic environmental safeguards, which was met with less resistance.

A lack of reliable data was also raised as a barrier to being able to influence decision makers. To overcome this, the GIHR had commissioned a study which looked at mitigation and adaptation measures within different sectors (such as housing, renewable energy and fisheries) to identify potential human rights risks.

Finally, Nina Eschke talked about the lack of tools from which to monitor and report the impact of the implementation of climate policy on human rights. The importance of the toolkit currently being developed by GANHRI was noted, as were opportunities for NHRIs to exchange knowledge, learning, resources, and best practices. GANHRI's Caucus was said to be a good place to do this.

The session closed with discussions on advocacy, on NHRIs collaboration in the context of business and human rights, and on practical advice about how to deal with the criminalization of human rights defenders and how to use human rights language in the context of mitigation and adaptation mechanisms.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this third session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this third session follow the link [here](#)

Breakout Room 2 - Climate mitigation, energy transition and human rights: what can NHRIs do?

Elin Wrzoncki, Department Director, Human Rights and Business, Danish Institute for Human Rights.

James Mwenda, Senior Human Rights Officer, Kenya National Human Rights Commission.

Tamar Gvaramadze, First Deputy, Public Defender of Georgia.

This session highlighted cases of how mitigation measures, undertaken to respond to the climate crisis, can sometimes harm human rights. It also underlined the role NHRIs in Kenya and Georgia have in protecting human rights in the context of these climate mitigation measures.

In Kenya, the National Human Rights Commission has conducted investigations and public inquiries, provided advice to state agencies, undertaken public awareness campaigns and given training on HRBA to deal with measures linked to evictions and displacement of people and communities, as well as to the loss of livelihoods and livestock due to environmental degradation and loss of cultural and religious sites.

In Georgia, the Ombudsperson of Georgia prepares reports to the Parliament on an annual basis supported by the mandate of the Georgian constitution. One of these reports was a special report on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA system) concerning hydroelectric projects and looking at three key issues:

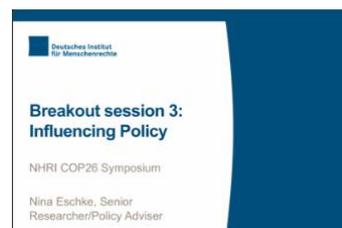
- the right of access to information,
- the right to participate in decision-making,
- and the quality of decision making.

As a state-based non-judicial mechanism, the NHRI can investigate private public service providers and is authorized to deal with complaints against them and monitor and conduct oversight of state actors as well as provide human rights training and awareness-raising.

Presentation [DIHR](#)



Presentation [GIHR](#)



To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this third session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this third session follow the link [here](#)

6. Session 4 - Development of inter-NHRI inquiry panels for transboundary and extraterritorial human rights issues

AIM: To explore the merits of developing an Inter-NHRI Inquiry Panel model. This is in the absence of an international judicial mechanism equipped to deal with Extra-Territorial Obligations.

Roberto Eugenio T. Cadiz, Commissioner, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines.

States have the primary obligation to address human rights challenges and have a variety of options for providing access to remedies, primarily through the courts. However, courts can be too expensive and usually involve lengthy processes, so non-judicial mechanisms can also be an important route for accessing justice.

Commissioner Cadiz elaborated on the transboundary and extraterritorial elements of all human rights concerns including environmental and climate change issues arguing that NHRIs are an ideal mechanism for providing access to justice and remedies. Unlike governments, NHRIs are not constrained by diplomatic, territorial, or jurisdictional considerations, and are more accessible, and able to respond quickly.

On the international mechanisms for conducting inquiries and investigations on human rights violations and abuses, Commissioner Cadiz presented the case of the amicus curiae brief filed against the so-called 'carbon majors' (the major producers of fossil fuel). He highlighted that although most of the respondents in the petition were not doing business in the Philippines, the central issue raised was the impact of climate change on the people of the Philippines, which meant the NHRI had jurisdiction on the subject matter. Climate change was the justification to conduct a global inquiry.

As the Commission is an NHRI and not a court, this could not be seen as a litigation case, so it was framed as a global dialogue process, with hearings held in Manila, New York, and London. The importance of ensuring sufficient resources (via European Union funding) was emphasized, as well as effective collaboration with regional and sub-regional bodies, GANHRI, and academic institutions. The importance of developing protocols for engaging in inter-NHRI collaborative investigations and inquiries was acknowledged.

A lively discussion about the development of an Inter-NHRI inquiry highlighted the importance of developing an educational component as an essential element of the development of those mechanisms. There are two ways available:

- First, for NHRIs to pick the recommendations and select the one applicable to advocate within their states, convincing decision-makers to implement these recommendations,

- And second, to introduce these elements in public schools and to develop climate change and human rights lessons in law schools, laying the ground for collaboration to develop better laws in that area.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this fourth session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this fourth session follow the link [here](#)

7. Session 5. Remedies – judicial mechanisms

AIM: To share experiences and challenges of NHRIs in engaging with climate litigation before national and international courts. This session comprised of two breakout sessions

Breakout Room 1 - The role of National Human Rights Institutions in fulfilling the accountability gap in climate emergencies

Jorge Manuel Hori Fojaco, área director of the sixth Inspector general's office, comisión nacional de los derechos humanos México

In this session, Jorge Manuel Hori illustrated how the protection of fundamental rights in Mexico has firstly, considered the adverse effects of climate change and, secondly, referred to the fulfillment of obligations to mitigate and adapt to climate change. He illustrated this by referring to six legal cases which dealt with the adverse effects of climate change and the obligations to mitigate and adapt as part of the right to a healthy environment, the right to life, and the right to adequate housing.

Discussions around the six cases highlighted the fact that all the recommendations were accepted by the authorities with some progress made in their implementation (e.g., by the closing of a polluting plant or by the establishment of responsibility for the violation of the human right to life due to climate change).

At the constitutional level, in Mexico, there is an express chapter on Human Rights, a catalogue where the human right to a healthy environment is expressly established alongside mechanisms for the protection and defense of human rights. In the non-judisdictional sphere, it establishes complete competence for the NHRI and the respective courts in the jurisdictional sphere. So, this straightforward design at the constitutional level allows NHRIs to carry out this type of intervention.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this fifth session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this fifth session follow the link [here](#)

Presentation CNDH Mexico [here](#)



Breakout Room 2 - The role of NHRIs in climate litigation before national and international courts

Jenny Sandvig, Chief Policy Director, Norwegian National Human Rights Institution.

This session illustrated how the last five to ten years have seen a "new era" of climate litigation with high-profile cases where national courts are increasingly recognizing existing human rights obligations under both domestic and international law apply to the problem of climate change.

Jenny Sandvig discussed the basis for NHRIs' engagement and cooperation with courts in respect of the Paris Principles and identified four types of roles that NHRIs can adopt in court cases, depending on their specific mandate. In this regard, NHRIs can initiate court cases on their own behalf, intervene in court cases in support of a private plaintiff, submit independent third party or "amicus curiae" briefs in cases without joining as a party, and provide assistance to a party without joining as a party to the case.

Describing the case of the Norwegian NHRI, Jenny Sandvig explained that the most effective way to engage with national and international courts on climate change is to submit amicus briefs as an independent third party. At the global level, she noted that the role of NHRIs in climate litigation as supported by the statement adopted by GANHRI in December 2020, where NHRIs committed to engaging individually and collectively in national, regional, and international processes to promote human rights and enhance climate action.

The discussions highlighted that although NHRIs are uniquely positioned to provide advice to courts because of their systemic approach and independence, a climate human rights case is very expensive and resource intensive. It usually requires incorporating both scientific and legal analysis in their human rights assessments and thus, it requires partnering with other NHRIs and with other various bodies like regional scientific boards, institutions, and specialized laboratories.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this fifth session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this fifth session follow the link [here](#)

8. Session 6: Facilitating NHR Engagement on Climate Change Action - Consultation on the Practical Guidance Tool for Monitoring and Reporting

AIM: To share experiences and challenges, and identify and prioritize NHRs' needs and interests present in the Practical Guidance tool for monitoring and reporting to be developed by GANHRI

Peter Splinter, GANHRI Senior Consultant

This session described the approach of the practical guidance tool for monitoring and reporting and elaborated on the online survey addressed to GANHRI members who work already on climate change and other environmental issues. Most of the NHRs mentioned challenges in the lack of required knowledge and expertise, the resource constraints, and the lack of a mandate to work on human rights and climate change.

Peter Splinter explained that a big part of the 'wishlist' for support from the practical guidance coming from member NHRs referred to the desire to build a community of practice and learn from what other GANHRI members have done and can do in environmental protection, climate change, and human rights. In this sense, the practical guidance should facilitate sharing experiences and lessons as an essential element.

As explained by Peter Splinter, there are currently two core elements to human rights work on climate change.

- The first is about how climate change affects the realization of human rights and how to engage governments, businesses, and others to do more to mitigate climate change.
- The second involves ensuring that those measures are carried out consistently with human rights obligations and responsibilities.

In line with these elements, the guidance should look at different aspects of climate action and the opportunities it provides to NHRs to play a role and to contribute to the discussion, the standard-setting, the collection of best practices, and dynamic experience-sharing on human rights in climate change.

The main element of the practical guidance referred to the discussion of procedural human rights, particularly in mitigation and adaptation activities. Through this 'concepts and approaches' element, NHRs are expected to translate the HRBA into practical measures that can be supported, advocated, monitored, and reported.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this sixth session follow the link [here](#)
To read the [transcript](#) of this sixth session follow the link [here](#)

9. Session 7: NHRIs work on climate change: an interactive exhibition on diverse NHRI Practices

AIM: Explore the various issues, practices, and ways forward on responding to climate change and its human rights implications. This session comprised of two breakout sessions.

Breakout Room 1 - Education and Climate Awareness Raising

Amina Bouayach, Chairperson, National Human Rights Council of Morocco

Climate change is the most critical obstacle to human rights and human rights are closely linked with the fight against climate change and the success of the SDGs. As the Human Rights Council emphasized, climate change stands as the most critical obstacle to human rights in our time.

In this session, the CNDH presented its experience with the Moroccan youth, its legal strategy, and its approach to help students take ownership of the culture of human rights and the importance of climate change impacts on their lives.

The CNDH focused on the 'effectiveness of rights' taking into account all social, economic, cultural and environmental rights that prevent the enjoyment of human rights. It recommended to the new leader of the Moroccan government to formulate policies and plans taking into consideration four fundamental rights: health, education, culture, and environment, which are also the foundation of the 2030 Agenda and at the core of the implementation of the 2015 Merida Declaration.

The approach to education had its basis on the fact that education is an essential tool to share knowledge about the vulnerable people and the support they need, but also for integrating HRBA into climate change issues.

To read the summary of discussions of this seventh session follow the link here

To read the transcript of this seventh session follow the link here

Breakout Room 2 - Floods and Fires, Climate and Human Rights Cases

Dijana Kesonja, Deputy Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia.

This session illustrated the work of the office of the Croatian Ombudsperson in climate change response, particularly on the floods and the fires experienced by Croatia in the latest decade.

Dijana Kesonja described the human rights monitoring work, the support to victims, and the knowledge-sharing events her office held with other government instances to argue for changes in the normative framework, the level of financial investment into effective and

sustainable protection mechanisms in emergencies, and a systematic approach to education about climate change and human rights.

In the Deputy Ombudswoman's view, it was essential to provide enough information to victims, such as on the institutions they can complain to and those they can approach with questions. Victims need to be provided with free legal aid and continuous psychological support. Also, cooperation between stakeholders can be improved.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this seventh session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this seventh session follow the link [here](#)

Session 7, Room A, Ombudswoman Croatia



Breakout Room 3 - Youth, climate change and human rights

Claire Martin, Director of Communications, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Jason McKeown, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Dr. Don Duncan, Lecturer in Broadcast Practice, Queen's University Belfast.

Baoyan Zhang, Master's Graduate, Queen's University Belfast

Climate issues in Northern Ireland are expanding with time, and students wanted to explore how small behaviours have a significant impact on the environment and how a healthy environment is a human right that future generations can also enjoy.

The presentation from the [Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission \(NIHRC\)](#) and the [Queen's University Belfast project](#) was about two animations on youth, climate change, and human rights titled 'Nia' and 'Dakota.' The animations raise awareness on climate change and how it links to human rights among young people. The project is a channel for students to voice their views on how climate change has impacted their human rights.

'Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful' uses the animations as part of their training for headteachers and team leaders at local schools. The animations were filtered down to being shown in classrooms to students. So far, the project has been far-reaching, and the NIHRC and Queen's University of Belfast is committed to keeping promoting the animations further.

To read the [summary of discussions](#) of this seventh session follow the link [here](#)

To read the [transcript](#) of this seventh session follow the link [here](#)

Closing Remarks - Climate Change and Human Rights: Future agenda and the

Monica Iyer, *Human Rights Officer, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

For OHCHR, the triple human rights crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution is one of the greatest human rights challenges of our era. The human rights impact of the adverse effects of climate change gave rise to state obligations to take mitigation action that addressed the human rights impact of climate change, especially for those most vulnerable. It also required avenues of accountability and redress for climate change-related loss and damage, including non-economic loss and damage.

Within this climatic and human rights crisis context, the UN system is committed explicitly to enhancing the partnership with NHRIs. Together with UNDP, UNEP, and GANHRI, OHCHR is actively working under the umbrella of the '[Call to Action](#)' to develop guidance for NHRIs' engagement in relevant climate and human rights processes at the national and international levels and to build their capacities.

For United Nations country teams and OHCHR, UNEP, and UNDP field presences, NHRIs are invaluable partners. NHRIs played a crucial role in the implementation and monitoring of climate commitments and translating those commitments into action. NHRIs can also support the incorporation of human rights in [NDCs](#) and participatory processes to develop, revise, and monitor NDCs, NAPs, and other climate laws and policies relevant to implementing equitable human rights-based approaches to climate change, including loss and damage and climate change-related migration.

Sarah Rattray, *Global Policy Specialist for Human Rights, United Nations Development Programme Crisis Bureau*

Climate change is a threat multiplier. It exacerbates tensions, broadens structural inequalities, forces people into increasingly vulnerable situations, and exposes them to deep inequalities in the distribution of wealth, resources, the delivery of essential services, and the promotion of human rights.

This was an opportunity to underscore the human rights elements of the Climate Change crisis and to reaffirm the solidarity of the multilateral approaches that are required to address these challenges both from the human rights perspective of the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and all the other various environmental agreements at regional and global levels.

UNDP is committed to working with the rest of the UN system under the auspices of the 'Call to Action' and the SDGs to support the role of NHRIs and welcomed the start of global and regional approaches on litigation, youth, education, and policymaking on climate change and to have strong NHRIs that can address all these challenges.

Soo-Young Hwang, Legal officer, UN Environment Programme

Throughout this symposium, we saw the impact of the HRC resolution that recognized the right to healthy environment for the first time at the global level, the convergence between human rights and the environment, and the importance of this resolution in linking environmental obligations to states' human rights obligations.

UNEP benefits significantly from the partnerships with NHRIs, with UNDP, and OHCHR. The UN recognized that working with NHRIs on the ground is crucial to carry forward this important work advancing the right to a healthy environment for all. UNEP, together with the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment are planning to develop a handbook on the implementation of the right to a healthy environment aimed at providing clarity on the scope of the correct and effective ways of implementing the right for all stakeholders including NHRIs.

More clarification is needed about how actors, including NHRIs, can help to implement the right and explore replication of good practices. UNEP looks forward to continued collaboration with UN entities and GANHRI to realize the right to a healthy environment a reality for all.

To read the summary of this closing remarks follow the link [here](#)
To read the transcript of this seventh session follow the link [here](#)

Acknowledgements

The Symposium, aiming to define the role of national human rights institutions in bridging the accountability gap in the climate emergency would not have been possible without the cooperation and coordination of multiple strong-willed human rights entities.

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