

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 50th SESSION

### Panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by people in vulnerable situations

28 June 2022

In her opening remarks, **Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, highlighted, that social and economic constructs combined with multiple forms of discrimination make persons in vulnerable situations more exposed to the negative impacts of climate change. This includes indigenous peoples, local and rural communities, peasants, migrants, children, women, and persons with disabilities. In SIDS intensifying floods, typhoons, cyclones, and hurricanes are affecting communities while sea level rise is diminishing land area and contaminating the groundwater. It is key that climate finance is enhanced to protect the LDCs and the SIDS, who have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions as opposed to the G20. Moreover, integrating the perspectives of people in vulnerable situations such as rural communities or indigenous peoples is fundamental in the preservation of ecosystems that support carbon management and storage, helping to mitigate climate change. Similarly, the contribution of environmental human rights defenders is essential as is offering them effective protection. Finally, Ms. Bachelet mentioned that the participation of persons in vulnerable situations in climate marches, civil society organizations, grass-roots initiatives and climate litigation is critical for influencing positive change.

#### Panelists' Statements

**Mr. Ian Fry, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change** highlighted that 19.2 million people were newly displaced as a result of disasters linked to natural hazards, a majority of which were weather- and climate-related. This number is likely much higher when accounting for people compelled to move due to slow-onset events linked to climate change. In 2021 there were 59.1 million internally displaced people. Intersectional factors such as racism, sexism, and classism may combine, or overlap, to create extreme difficulties for persons in vulnerable situations. Mr. Fry expressed concern over gender and climate justice activists, especially women in remote rural areas who have no access to the necessary funding to support their projects. He urged to refocus national adaptation plans to recognise the needs of people in vulnerable situations and acknowledge that many solutions can be found at the local level. Here, he highlighted the need to acknowledge indigenous, youth's and children's voices and allow them to participate meaningfully in and influence decision-making. Major greenhouse gas emitting countries must take greater action to reduce their emissions and support a new finance facility for loss and damage. The corporate sector has a significant role to play and must take urgent action and responsibility for growing greenhouse gas emissions.

**Ms. Carroll Muffett, President & CEO of the Center for International Environmental Law** expressed concern over the negative impact of climate change falling disproportionately on the Global South and on those in vulnerable situations. The Philippines Commission on Human Rights, for instance, made evident that the human rights impacts of climate change in the Philippines are falling heavily on the poor, women, girls, children, indigenous communities, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Carbon Majors companies hold much of the responsibility. More efforts should be focused on mainstreaming human rights in climate action, including in decisions relating to climate finance and adaptation, not only within but between and among States. States parties to the UN Climate Agreements have obligations to mobilise climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building through international cooperation. Thus, there is a need for urgent scaling up of climate finance and a recognition that funds must flow with equal urgency to loss and damage and adaptation as they do to mitigation. Finally, it

is important that the terms for climate financing do not further exacerbate the existing structural inequalities of countries or add to their debt burdens.

**Ms. Nisreen Elsaim, Chair of the Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change and Chair of Sudan Youth Organization on Climate Change** expressed there should be a synergy between the outcomes of different UN agencies for a real collaborative effort to be achieved between the UN missions. She also expressed concern over the death of environmental defenders and remarked that countries cannot reach climate governance without good governance, as this is what secures that the execution of policies and strategies becomes included in the country's plan to face the damage of climate change. Finally, she urged the Council to speed up the third generation of rights, environmental rights, and climate change before the problem of climate change worsens beyond repair.

**Sra. Sara Oliveros López, indígena Nahua de México, Secretaria del Consejo ejecutivo del Consorcio TICCA** highlighted the role that indigenous peoples and local communities have in biodiversity conservation and in the immediate and effective responses to climate change. She mentioned the importance of strengthening the capacities and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. She further condemned the megaprojects affecting communities in Mexico such as the Mayan Train or the Transisthmian Corridor in Mexico and the permanence and consolidation of so-called "fortress conservation", to direct violence against the territories and their custodians. She stressed the importance to guarantee that the resources promised from the COP26 will reach the most affected people, highlighting that some of the resources for large NGOs are going to waste as some are being sued for human rights violations. Finally, Ms. Oliveros urged to recognise territories of life as allies in any strategy or measure of adaptation or mitigation of climate change.

#### Interactive Dialogue

Most of the countries acknowledged that is necessary to better protect and promote human rights, especially those of vulnerable groups, in the context of climate change. This includes safeguarding the rights of women and girls, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, persons in vulnerable situations and environmental defenders. Moreover, it is necessary to advance partnerships that can assist developing countries in this process, particularly in financing, technology transfer and capacity-building. Most speakers remarked that developing and least developed countries, continue to be disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change and their human rights. The **Philippines** urged to scale up action in mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance and, enhancing the finance facility, as well as capacity-building and technology transfer to the developing world. **Barbados (on behalf of a group of countries)** highlighted the need to focus on water scarcity, desertification, land degradation and drought. Additionally, Barbados remarked that Caribbean populations are in vulnerable situations due to circumstances of poverty and that urgent action is, therefore, required for adaptation and to safeguard human rights. A significant step in this direction would be the realisation of the pledge made by developed countries to provide 100 billion USD a year to help developing countries, including Small Island and low-lying coastal Developing States. **Maldives (on behalf of a group of countries)** mentioned that climate-induced displacement is a deeply distressing reality for the people living in SIDS as is the impact on the psychological and physical capacity of people affected by extreme weather events.

**Iraq** emphasised the importance of mitigating the shortage of water resources by stopping large-scale projects that are being built on transboundary rivers contributing significantly to water scarcity in downstream countries. **Venezuela** said that illegal UCMs represent a crime against humanity, directly and indirectly affecting the capacity of states to respond to the crisis generated by climate change, and to guarantee the rights of the most vulnerable groups in this context.



Many NGOs referred to the vulnerable situation of indigenous people and the need to protect and listen to them. They also highlighted the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective in development planning, funding, and disaster risk management, considering the perspectives of all women and girls including those with disabilities. Moreover, most speakers expressed, that developing countries have a right to assistance for mitigation, adaptation, and compensation for the harm they have suffered as a consequence of the significantly disproportionate contribution that developed countries have made to causing climate change. Country-specific cases were also mentioned, among them the need for the **Brazilian government** to adopt robust policies on socioenvironmental preservation recognising the consequences of environmental and climate racism; In Brazil, indigenous peoples suffer systematic attacks, at the same time that fires and deforestation reach historic levels, accompanied by a dismantling of environmental and indigenous governance; in the dry corridor in **Honduras** small-scale farmers and peasants have been displaced by hurricane Mitch to places that were more dangerous and were the first victims of hurricanes Iota and Eta.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (22 country delegations):

*Viet Nam, Djibouti (on behalf of a group of countries), Iceland (on behalf of a group of countries), Barbados (on behalf of a group of countries), Egypt (on behalf of a group of countries), European Union, Maldives (on behalf of a group of countries), Bangladesh (on behalf of a group of countries), Germany (on behalf of a group of countries), Marshall Islands (on behalf of a group of countries), Mauritius, Philippines, Morocco, Venezuela, Namibia, Maldives, Angola, Mali, Fiji, Sovereign Order of Malta, Gambia, Iraq.*

NGOs and other observers that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (7):

*UNPF, Conectas Direitos Humanos, Franciscans International (Joint Statement), Conselho Indigenista Missionário CIMI, Women's Federation for World Peace International (Joint Statement), International Commission of Jurists, International-Lawyers.Org.*

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#);