

Letter by NGOs concerned with the Human Rights Council's Action on Climate Change

Geneva, Switzerland, 28 February 2011

Your Excellency,

We respectfully request your attention to the issue of climate change and human rights, an issue that is of vital importance for the human rights of hundreds of millions of the most vulnerable people in the world.

In 2008 (Res. 7/23) and 2009 (Res. 10/4), the Human Rights Council considered the human rights consequence of climate change. Additionally, in March 2009 the High Commissioner for Human Rights produced a study and later that year the Council held a special panel on climate change. It is vital that this important work serve as the foundation for further study and action concerning the consequences of the adverse impacts of climate change for human rights. There is an urgent need to elaborate the work done by the Council on climate change for the important UNFCCC meeting that will be held in Durban, South Africa in December 2011. The most effective way of doing this is to establish a Special Procedure on climate change and human rights, such as a special rapporteur, to consider the important issues of climate change that affect human rights.

The resolution being tabled at the 16th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council on the relationship between the environment and human rights, does not build on the previous work of the Council in relation to climate change. Instead it reverts back to the general issue of environment and human rights that has been on the United Nations' agenda for decades and on which several resolutions have been adopted. While another resolution on the environment and human rights is welcomed, we are very much concerned that this resolution does not adequately address the urgent issue of climate change. Moreover, there is no mention of a Special Procedure in the proposed resolution.

In recent months numerous civil society organizations, including the undersigned, have called for the establishment of a Special Procedure on climate change and human rights at the Council's Social Forum in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 2010. This call was reiterated at the World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2011. We urge you to hear our call. Our planet and the lives of hundreds of millions of vulnerable people are at stake and need you to act.

We strongly urge you to publicly call for the creation of a Special Procedure on climate change and human rights who reports to the Human Rights Council in a resolution to be adopted at the 17th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council in June 2011.

Thank you for your attention to the voices of civil society.

Signatories listed in alphabetical order:

ANPED

Both ENDS

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

Catholic Center of Geneva

Center for Law Information (Indonesia)

Centro de Derechos Humanos y Ambiente (Argentina)

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

Edmund Rice International

FANCA

Franciscans International

Friends of the Earth England, Wales & Northern Ireland

International Environment Forum

International Peace Research Association

International Presentation Association

International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations

International-Lawyers.Org

Lutheran World Federation

Nord-Sud XXI/ North-South-XXI

Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance

PROSALUS

Planetary Association for Clean Energy (Canada)

Samata - India

Sisters of Charity Federation

Solon Foundation

Stand Up For Your Rights

UNESCO Etxea

WaterLex

World Council of Churches

Worldwide Organization of Women