



Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations in Geneva

OHCHR Expert Meeting on Climate Change and Human Rights

HOSTED BY THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Introduction remarks and reflections

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SALUTATIONS

I am honored to be part of this *Expert Meeting on Climate Change and Human Rights*. We have heard the views from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Mary Robinson Foundation; and the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action would also like to contribute to this rich dialogue and thank you all for this opportunity.

We see this two-day event as a milestone in the long-travelled road that has successfully established conceptual, ethical, policy and operational links between the environment, climate change and the enjoyment and protection of all human rights for all.

And it is a very timely occasion as we prepare ourselves for the first Convention of the Parties after the Paris Agreement, which has been so far ratified by 63 states accounting for 52.11% of global emissions.

It is the first time in history that an environmental binding instrument states and acknowledges the need to address climate change, while respecting, promoting and considering the respective obligations on human rights.

After such recognition, starting the implementation phase of the agreement, the Geneva Pledge proudly hosted, only a few days ago, a dialogue on this same issue between the UNFCCC Executive Secretary Ms. Patricia Espinosa and the High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Zeid Al Ra'ad, here at the Palais des Nations.

As the UNFCCC maximum authority stated, it is our **mandate** to implement the Paris Agreement Preamble and to ensure that people enjoy the right to health, to food, to

education as well as other civil, social and political rights. As stated by the latest survey by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs¹: ‘ the people at greater risk from climate hazards are the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalized who, in many cases, have been excluded from socioeconomic progress’. The High Commissioner also highlighted that it is time for ‘rights based climate action’ as climate solutions must be rooted in human rights and will require goals and targets with high ambition and accountability. At the global level, it will mean strong steps must be taken to ensure carbon neutrality, and to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius or less.

At this juncture, what next in this road towards “rights based climate action? In this context, let me formulate the following questions: what can we do? what is next step for the implementation of these righteous pledges? if the recognition of the link between human rights, environment and climate change in the human rights arena took us over a decade to build, how can we mainstream the same understanding in the UNFCCC sphere and in the implementation of the climate change policies?

I suggest we join efforts to educate policy makers, scientists, businessmen and civil society leaders at every opportunity we have. We need to take advantage of any forum, high level or technical encounter to elevate the discussion of the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations to the complexity of the climate change challenge.

Although some dimensions of this discussion between human rights and the environment and climate change, remain to be further deepened, this mutual recognition of the symbiotic relation between UNFCCC, human rights, the environment and the sustainable development goals; has taken us to the policy level in both the human rights and the climate change hemispheres.

Nonetheless, we recognize this is a long-term process and at this juncture, the Geneva Pledge signatories stand ready to continue helping in fostering the a transparent, open and mutual beneficial dialogue. We stand ready to exchange knowledge and experience and we have asked for the assistance of the Office in informing us in this process. We believe this is a long journey that will have no graduation day but permanent tasks and

¹ [World Economic and Social Survey 2016: Climate Change Resilience – an Opportunity for Reducing Inequalities](#)

challenges for which we hope to have better knowledge and preparation as our journey progresses.

And this is precisely where the organizations represented here today can make a difference by taking an innovative approach; leveraging the dialogue and the coordination, both at the international and national levels as we move to enable meaningful collaboration between our national human rights institutions, environmental protection and climate change policy-making structures. And we are ready to further reflect on practical means to pursue that engagement.

Dear friends,

The 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals constitute a pivotal instrument to transform our world for the better. New policy paradigms were born to help make a shift in the way we do business. We are now obliged to move from the silos to the comprehensive and holistic approaches, to discover new operational mechanisms that bring us closer together, in our work and in our dreams.

As we move on to implement these dreams, we hope that everyday, countries from all regions of the world will join in promoting respect for human rights while tackling climate change.

Many thanks to all.