28th session of the Human Rights Council
Full-day discussion on human rights and climate change

Background

- As a small organic farmer from Zimbabwe, in Africa, and as a General Coordinator of La Via Campesina, the international peasant movement representing over 200 million diverse peasant families, I have witnessed how climate change has affected the realisation and enjoyment of full human rights (the right to: life, adequate food, the highest attainable standard of health, adequate housing, self-determination, development and safe drinking water and sanitation), particularly in developing countries.
- Our countries at some point in history, particularly before the full bloom capitalism, were hopeful of achieving and according a decent living to most of their citizens. For example in the 60s and 70s, Africa produced enough food for both domestic consumption and export; self-determination achieved disposing of colonial governments, housing was, to some extent, adequate, education and health were priorities and free.
- All these developmental gains, I have watched them being reversed under ESAP during neoliberalism.
- Enjoyment and Realisation of human rights was marketized and commodified. Corporates, instead of governments, were the new providers and guarantors of human rights through the MARKET. A few rich and the working class were able to access them.
- Corporates polluted the earth (through greenhouse gas emissions) thus the climate crisis we face today in their effort to mass produce and outdo each other using unsustainable methods (land grabbing, excessive exploitation of mineral resources, over relied on fossil energy, and destruction of nature)

Challenges posed by climate change to the realization of all human rights for all, including the right to development, in particular for those in vulnerable situations

The realisation of human rights has been affected in various ways as the developed countries place a big burden on the developing countries in their false attempt to solve the climate crisis.

- Developed countries influence and shape policies which are not favourable to developing countries, such as the “foreign investments conditions related to trade” leading to land, water and forest grabbing and privatisation of public services (health, education etc).
- These policies also promote export crop production instead of food leading to hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. The governments of developing countries also shift resources from supporting activities that ensure realisation of human rights (from health, education and support to peasant agriculture) to creating “conducive investment environment” to attract foreign investors
• Land grabs for agro fuels: green fuels meant to replace fossil fuels. In the wake of the current global climate crisis, numerous investors have gone out in search of “virgin” arable land to produce feedstock for agro-fuels, as pressure to cut on fossil based fuels mounts. Such huge new demands for land force hundreds of thousands of peasants off their fields and water supplies, and destroying their livelihoods in most developing countries in Africa such as Mozambique, Tanzania, Sudan, Ethiopia, Madagascar, etc.

• Taking Forests for REDD and carbon sinks. Land is being taken from local people, denying them access to various forest based livelihoods, medicinal plants, foods and water resources. This has increased inequality both socially and economically and thus poverty has increased. Indigenous people who rely on diverse forest foods for a balanced diet are thus affected nutritionally.

• The forests conservation crusade for REDDs and eco-tourism in the name of climate change are fraught with contradictions as they only serve the interests of carbon market traders and trophy hunters, while some permitting timber logging. Such actions, instead of being conservationist, create conditions for further overexploitation of these resources by the rich few and are thus unsustainable, and increase inequality and poverty among peasants.

How climate change has had an adverse impact on States’ efforts progressively to realize the right to food and related policies, lessons learned and good practices;
Climate change has had an adverse impact on developing states’ effort to ensure realisation of full human rights in a number of ways:

• The state has had to continually revise its policies and shift essential financial and human resources from crucial public services such as health, education and agrarian support to confront the new challenges brought about by climate change and thus restraining the state capacity.

• This has slowed the progress on realisation of human rights particularly health, shelter, education, water and sanitation in developing countries.

• In extreme cases, food insecurity caused by droughts or floods as a result climate change has literally paralysed some developing states such that human rights gains have been reversed to deplorable levels

• This has made some states vulnerable external influence thus losing self-determination and sovereignty over the issues of human rights. This has caused developing states to open to “investors or assistance” which does not support human rights.

• Climate change in the context of globalisation has led states to abrogate their responsibility towards full realisation and enjoyment of human rights. For corporate impunities under the guise of green economy (climate change solution) have increased and states have turned a blind eye to such bad practises such as land, water and forest grabbing which led evictions millions of poor people and condemned to a life in the slums without access to clean water and sanitation, no shelter, no education and health facilities etc.
Ways forward, including measures and best practices to promote and protect human rights that can be adopted by States in addressing the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights

- The instigator of abrogation of human rights is the CORPORATE WORLD particularly now under globalisation within the context of climate change. If we tame and regulate the corporate world, we will have significantly promoted and protected human rights.

- We thus need a system change if we are to promote and protect human rights. The current corporate-profit driven model has shown us that it DOES NOT WORK BUT ONLY CREATE MORE CHALLENGES. We need to move away from the current model of production based on fossil energy use, toxic chemicals and promotes land, water and forest grabbing by corporates\TNCs.

- We need to promote sustainable peasant production methods based food sovereignty principles. We adopt practices such as agroecology and many other traditional farming ways which have ensure the right to food and supported development for all over the centuries.

- Thus we need to support the UN Declaration of the rights of peasants' process until the end and enforce it. This includes support and adopting an instrument to deal with corporate impunity.

- We need a PEOPLE ORIENTED POLICIES at global, regional, national and local levels.

- WE SHOULD EMPOWER\BUILD THE CAPACITY OF THE PEOPLE TO SELF DETERMINE THEIR COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THEIR LOCAL CONTEXT. The current policies support the corporate world and a few rich persons who only care about how to make an extra dollar, not the lives of people and their enjoyment of human rights.

- ADOPTION OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY BY THE STATE IS A STARTING POINT EMPOWER THE PEOPLE TO ENJOYING AND REALISING FULL HUMAN RIGHTS

- FOOD SOVEREIGNTY TAMES AND REGULATES THE CORPORATE WORLD AND ADDRESSES CLIMATE CHANGE!!!