**Intervention of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the COP22 NHRI Special Event on 6 November 2016:**

*What role can NHRIs play in monitoring the implementation of sustainable development goals and commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change*

Thank you Mr. Aljamali for the introduction and many thanks as well to the National Human Rights Council of Morocco, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, the European Union and the other co-sponsors of this event.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is honoured to have been invited to cosponsor this event and it is my pleasure to introduce this panel on “How to integrate the human rights dimension in the negotiations of the Conference of Parties on Climate Change?”

For some, this question has literally been the work of decades. At this, just my second Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, I am very conscious of the need to carefully choose my words lest I stand corrected.

I’d like to begin with some reflection on last year. In 2015, the world ushered in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda articulates a new and explicitly rights-based vision for development, one that recognizes the connections between human rights, sustainable development and the environment and that promises to reduce inequalities and leave no one behind. It is clear from the Agenda, which includes a goal on climate change, that there can be no sustainable development without addressing climate change. This is why the Agreement reached at COP21 in Paris last year was so important.

In Paris, human rights language was central to the negotiations. Human rights language was in the operative text of the Paris Agreement until the second to last day of the negotiations. Although this language was removed, similar language in the Preamble remained and became part of the first universal, binding climate agreement. This is no small feat.

Further, it is not just the words “human rights” that matter. The Agreement also calls for protecting the rights of migrants, indigenous peoples children and others in vulnerable situations, it calls for gender equality, women’s empowerment and gender responsive-policies, it calls for transparency and accountability, it calls for a just transition and intergenerational equity. In this sense, it is a text with deep human rights implications throughout.

At their most fundamental level, the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC exist to ensure effective climate mitigation and adaptation measures for the benefit of all humankind. With regard to mitigation, OHCHR pushed hard, not just for human rights language, but also for an ambitious climate target of 1.5 degrees that would limit negative human rights impacts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Not too long ago, a target of 1.5 degrees and the words “human rights” were not on the table at the UNFCCC. Now, State commitments to try for 1.5 and to respect, promote and consider all human rights, including the right to development, are at the core of the Paris Agreement. So, are we done? Not quite. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized last week in his press release hailing the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, the hard work of implementing the agreement still lies ahead.

Before I share with you some ideas for this work, it bears remembering that the alternative is not an option: rising tides, submerged towns, cities, even entire islands, an undersea world bereft of life-sustaining reefs, literally drained of color, tens of millions of people on the move searching for the means to survive, death by disasters slow and sudden alike. This is the future nobody wants. Nonetheless, we are all rushing, open-eyed and full-throttle straight toward it.

National commitments to action fall far short of the stated ambition of the Paris Agreement. We are not on track for 1.5 degrees or even 2.0 degrees, both of which, I must add, will have substantial negative human rights impacts. We are headed for a roiling boil, each year hotter than the one before it.

Friends and colleagues,

To right our path, we must take urgent, effective climate action that benefits all people. Failure to take such action breaches State human rights obligations. The human rights framework ensures moral, ethical and legal accountability for climate commitments. It calls for climate action that benefits both people and planet. For this framework to take hold, there must be both political will and adequate understanding of the links between human rights and climate change. Human rights must become part of the climate solution.

At COP21, strong multi-stakeholder advocacy by civil society and principled negotiating by human rights champions overcame substantial opposition to ensure an Agreement that included human rights. NHRIS can play an important role in maintaining this momentum, by raising awareness at home, submitting parallel reports on human rights and climate change to the UNFCCC and to human rights mechanisms, providing technical advice to their governments and parliaments, supporting the integration of human rights in national climate policies and communications, and even, as is the case right now with the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, providing a platform for the airing of climate grievances.

I was pleased today to have the chief negotiator of Costa Rica to the UNFCCC join us. Costa Rica hosts the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action, a pledge with 33 State signatories from across the world, including Morocco, that have committed to integrate human rights in climate action and bring together their human rights and climate communities.

Several other climate negotiators are here today at the invitation of OHCHR and the National Human Rights Council of Morocco. But we could do more. The Pledge is a tool and it could be a useful one for NHRIs. I encourage the NHRIs here, regardless of whether or not your State has signed the Pledge, to reach out to your climate delegations, to speak with the negotiators and to offer your support. Better integrating human rights in climate action can be as simple as explaining it well to the right person.

This is what OHCHR tries to do. We provide technical advice on how to integrate human rights at the UNFCCC. We produce studies that link climate change to human rights impacts and to corresponding obligations. We create spaces to bring together the climate and human rights communities.

In October, OHCHR in collaboration with the Mary Robinson Foundation and the Geneva Pledge, held a two day expert meeting on human rights and climate change. The meeting explored the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, children, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, the poor, migrants and others in vulnerable situations. It also considered the role of human rights mechanisms, including NHRIs, in addressing climate change and the path forward for integrating human rights in climate action. It brought together representatives of over 50 States, including climate negotiators, numerous international organizations and civil society. One outcome of this meeting, a summary of recommendations, will be launched at an event on human rights and climate change during the second week of the COP.

These recommendations pinpoints key entry points for integrating human rights in UNFCCC processes including proposals for mechanisms to keep human rights on the Agenda, things like a working group, a designated focal point, a programme of work, or a workshop. They also include proposals to integrate human rights considerations throughout measurement, review and verification processes established by the Paris Agreement and in national communications including nationally determined contributions.

Other recommendations included a call for further development of the loss and damage system at the UNFCCC; establishment of strong social and environmental safeguards for the Sustainable Development Mechanism; business responsibility in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Human Rights; improved international cooperation; strengthening the Lima Work Programme on gender; ensuring transparency and the meaningful participation of stakeholders in UNFCCC processes; and improving coherence and coordination between the climate and human rights regimes.

Human rights mechanisms have a role to play too. In its work, OHCHR supports the treaty-bodies, the Human Rights Council and its special procedures, and NHRIS. Recently, we have seen a growing awareness of climate change amongst these mechanisms. Multiple special procedures mandate-holders, including the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, have addressed climate in their work; treaty-bodies including, for example, the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women have taken steps to explore this theme; the Human Rights Council has renewed the now annual resolution on human rights and climate change; and this important gathering of NHRIs highlights that, they also are on board.

The task ahead is to follow-up and ensure that this work feeds in to relevant processes at the UNFCCC. On many of the subjects I have referenced, OHCHR has made specific inputs to the UNFCCC over the past several months. For a more detailed roadmap on integrating human rights at the UNFCCC, I would encourage you to view these submissions which cover the Paris Agreement, the Nairobi Work Programme on adaptation, the Lima Work Programme on gender, the Paris Committee on Capacity-Building and modalities for the Sustainable Development Mechanism.

But OHCHR cannot act alone. Our work will be for naught unless States, civil society and other stakeholders take up the cause and advocate rights-based action. NHRIs can be part of and help lead this call to action, here at the UNFCCC, and at home. I urge you to do so.