Climate change and Human rights: a Safe Climate

1. *Please provide examples of ways in which climate change is already having adverse impacts on the human rights of people within your State. Adversely affected rights could include, among others, the rights to life, health, water, adequate sanitation, food, culture, housing, property, self-determination, non-discrimination, a healthy and sustainable environment, and indigenous rights.*

The adverse effects of climate change on the human rights to life, health, water, food, etc., are sadly visible in a very painful way in recent years.

Extreme weather effects such as floods are manifested in greater frequency and intensity, causing not only material damages but also **human losses**. In 2017 a heavy rainfall in Mandra, in West Attica, resulted in the death of 24 people.

Extended periods of drought and heat periods cause more frequent forest fires. In 2018, 102 people died in Eastern Attica, in one of the most **deadly forest fires** of the 21st century worldwide.

The impact on **public health** from climate change includes, among others, deaths and hospitalizations due to heat waves; and potential shifts in the transmission ranges of vector-borne diseases such as West Nile virus, tick-borne encephalitis, etc. Last year, in Greece there were over 300 outbreaks of infection from West Nile virus and 41 people passed away.

Because of the warmer climate conditions, frequent episodes of transferred dust from Africa in the atmosphere are observed, which have a negative impact on the **health of people**, especially the most vulnerable, namely elderly and children.

**Water shortages** are already present, especially in some island regions, where the demand is mainly covered by desalination plants. These shortages are intensified in summer period due to tourism.

Extreme weather events, like hail and floods or the scarcity of water resources, have an unfavorable impact on the agricultural production and jeopardize not only the **farmers' living standards** but also **food security** in local, regional and national level.

2. *Given that “urgent, effective and ambitious action” to ensure a safe climate is essential to protecting a wide range of human rights, what are the specific obligations of States and businesses in terms of addressing the main drivers of climate change (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, industrial agriculture)?*

For addressing the main drivers of climate changes the States have to adopt the appropriate legislative framework for the **decarbonization** of all economic sectors.

The de-carbonization and the transition to a **sustainable** pattern of production and consumption have to be done in a fair and socially equitable manner and businesses and citizens have to be involved actively.

The vision should be to make the economy more climate-friendly and less energy-consuming at cost-efficient ways.

3. *Please provide examples of good practices in preventing, or eliminating the adverse impacts of climate change on human rights. Specific examples could include legislation, regulations, standards, policies, investments, and programmes in relation to climate change mitigation and/or adaptation. These examples may occur at the international, national, sub-national, or local level. Examples could involve:*

* *research and monitoring;*
* *guaranteeing procedural rights (e.g. access to climate change information, public participation in decision-making about climate change, access to justice and remedies)*
* *eliminating subsidies for fossil fuel production and use; climate change legislation, regulations, standards, and policies;*
* *initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from specific sectors (e.g. electricity generation, industry, government, transportation, agriculture, waste management);*
* *Laws, policies and programs to protect vulnerable populations from climate change;*

Greece prepared an integrated **National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)** according to the EU Energy Union Governance mechanism, which has been finalized in January 2019.

National targets for the next decade, specifically by 2030, are part of an ambitious long-term strategy aiming to minimize greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050. The main goals of the plan are:

• achieving specific national targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions,

• increasing Renewable Energy Sources' share in energy gross final energy consumption and,

• achieving energy savings in final energy consumption

Among the 2030 targets of NECP, certain key targets related to climate change mitigation are the reduction of non ETS GHG emissions by 16% and ETS GHG emissions by 43% (in relation to 2005), the increase of RES’ share in gross final energy consumption by 31% and the final energy consumption to be not more than 18.1 Mtoe.

The **Social Household Tariff**, which was introduced to protect vulnerable consumer groups with the purpose of providing discounts to the electricity consumed by beneficiaries, is one of the most important policy measures to combat energy poverty. A similar provision is also made, through the Solidarity Services Tariff, to legal entities of public law of a privileged nature, religious-charitable institutions and specially certified private non-profit bodies that provide social care services.

In 2017, EUR 10 million was earmarked as one-off special aid to support low-income consumers who have been disconnected from the electricity grid due to overdue debts, in order to meet their energy needs. The automatic transition of vulnerable household customers into the Universal Service regime was also introduced, without any interruption of their electricity supply in case the supplier terminates the Supply Agreement or the previous supplier submits to the respective operator an order to deactivate the supply due to overdue debts or non-compliance by the client with the terms of settlement of due debts.

From the year 2012 until today, the granting of a heating allowance to certain categories of low-income consumers of domestic heating oil has been instituted because of the increase in the final price of this particular fuel.

In addition, energy efficiency improvement programmes have already been launched at national level to combat energy poverty, and their contribution has been significant. To this end, the ‘Saving at home’ programme involves the implementation of interventions to improve the energy performance of residences that are proved to have low energy performance and belong to low-income owners who cannot fund on their own the energy upgrade of their residence.

Under the energy efficiency obligation scheme, energy companies participating in this scheme can meet the energy-saving target by implementing technical and/or behavioral measures in vulnerable households.

Law 4513/2018 introduced the institutional framework for the establishment and operation of the **Energy Communities** with a view to promoting social and solidarity-based economy and innovation in the energy sector, tackling energy poverty, promoting energy sustainability and innovation, production, storage, self-consumption, distribution and supply of energy as well as improving local acceptance of RES and energy efficiency in end-use at local and regional level.

Moreover, in the context of providing incentives for the efficient operation of the Energy Communities, it provides for the installation of RES and CHP and Hybrid Plants by energy communities in order to meet the energy needs of their members and vulnerable consumers or citizens living below the poverty line within the Region where the seat of the energy community is located by applying virtual energy offsetting.

Additional measures include the elaboration of the **Energy Poverty Action Plan**, which comprises specific actions related to the improvement of energy efficiency in energy-poor households and other social policy or energy pricing measures, and the functioning of the **Energy Poverty Observatory**.

The improvement of the existing measures of the social tariff and the status of the Universal Service will be launched to only involve energy-vulnerable households.

At the same time, consideration will be given to the possibility of introducing the ‘**energy card**’ as a support measure for vulnerable electricity consumers, which will replace the other support measures for the consumption of energy goods and which will enable consumers to select themselves the way in which they will have their energy needs met.

With regard to climate change adaptation, Greece has already developed and adopted by means of Law 4414/2016, the **National Adaptation Strategy to** climate change, which sets out the general objectives, guiding principles and means of implementation of a modern, effective and developmental adaptation strategy within the framework set by the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, European Directives and international experience.

The National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change is a strategic document aimed at providing guidelines and as such, does not analyze in depth the necessary sectoral policies but includes indicative actions and adjustment measures for 15 sectoral policies: Agriculture, Forestry, Biodiversity-Ecosystems, Aquaculture, Fisheries, Water Resources, Coastal zones, Tourism, Energy, Infrastructure-Transport, Health, The built environment, Mining and quarrying, Cultural Heritage, Insurance Sector, without prioritizing measures and actions.

These issues will be the essence of the **Regional Adaptation Action Plan**, which specify the guidelines of the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change by defining the immediate adaptation priorities at regional/local level. That is, the Regional Plans for Adaptation to Climate Change will precisely define, based on the climatic conditions and vulnerability of each region, the policy areas and priority geographic units for taking measures, and will also specify these measures, as well as the financial instruments for the implementation of the measures, operators, stakeholders, etc. The Greek regions (13 in total) are currently in the process of elaborating their own Regional Plans for Adaptation to Climate Change.

An integrated climate change adaptation monitoring and evaluation framework to allow monitoring and evaluating progress in terms of climate change adaptation policy implementation and to provide the basis for the future reviews and revisions of the Greek NAS and the RAAPs will be developed by mid-2020, through the EU-funded LIFE-IP AdaptInGR project, coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

At local level, the City of Athens has developed a **Climate Action Plan** for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change with support from the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. The Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan outlines concrete steps for mitigating the **most vulnerable populations’ health risks** as well as the city’s economy and urban quality of life in the face of increasing temperatures, flash floods and bad air quality. The development of this plan is fundamental to the city’s resilience. The use of green and blue infrastructures in the city and the adoption of nature-based solutions for cooling the city are crucial measures with multiple co-benefits and a potentially very high resilience dividend.

For the climate-related risks e.g. forest fires, floods, windstorms, medicanes (cyclones in the Mediterranean), civil protection in Greece is organised as a coordinated resource system, national, regional and local authorities work together with local and public institutions and services. The **National Civil Protection Plan"Xenokrates"** (Ministerial Decision no. 1299/2003) sets the national framework for an overall effective risk management planning and provides for the development of hazard-specific plans at the local, regional and national levels. In accordance with “Xenokrates”, at national central level, the General Secretariat for Civil Protection issues National Plans for all kinds of natural and manmade disasters. Moreover, the General Secretariat for Civil Protection issues Circulars with guidelines on prevention, preparedness and response actions for specific kinds of disasters addressed to all competent authorities. As regards public information, it covers the whole disaster management cycle. The General Secretariat for Civil Protection has a cross-sectoral and all-hazards competence, while hazard-specific communication is provided by public authorities in their sphere of competences. The General Secretariat for Civil protection has published information on all kinds of natural and man-made disasters including guidelines for self-protection. They are also uploaded in Greek and foreign languages (English, Spanish, French, Albanian and Arabic) on the site of the General Secretariat for Civil Protection (www.civilprotection.gr). Several channels for public information are used, such as campaigns, TV and radio spots for specific disasters, publication of leaflets and brochures, electronic material, school visits etc.