



*Misión Permanente de la República Bolivariana de
Venezuela ante la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas y
demás Organismos Internacionales
con sede en Ginebra*

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The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and avails itself of this opportunity to refer to its communication dated February 17, 2021, related to the holding of the 28th session of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, in which it requests contributions from States on environmental justice, the climate crisis and people of African descent, and any positive measures they have adopted to protect the human rights of people of African descent, as well as any specific recommendations to promote the protection of the human rights of people of African descent, in this context.

In this regard, the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations based in Geneva has the honor to forward herewith the document provided by the Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs, containing information provided by the National Council for the Development of Afro-descendant Communities of Venezuela (CONADECAFRO, for its acronym in Spanish).

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations based in Geneva would like to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for submitting this information on this date for consideration by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva remains at the complete disposal of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide further information on this matter.

The Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, March 26, 2021

**Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva**

Contribution on good practices and measures adopted concerning the rights of Afro-descendants and environmental justice.

1.- The impacts of climate change are experienced unequally, with the most vulnerable: Those who suffer most acutely are also the least responsible for the crisis to date. In its most recent report for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reveals the absence of adaptation and vulnerability strategies in the region to face the hazards and risks of floods and droughts. For the IPCC, vulnerability is defined as the degree of susceptibility or inability of a system to cope with climate change's adverse effects and, in particular, climate variability and extreme events. Vulnerability will depend on the nature, magnitude, and speed of climate change to which a system is exposed and its sensitivity and adaptive capacity. In other words, it is the propensity or predisposition to be negatively affected by the presence of meteorological or climatic phenomena.

Likewise, the 2020 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) report states that there are 1.3 billion people in the world who live below the poverty line and are highly dependent on agriculture, forest and fishery resources, and biomass as a source of energy, which makes them a particularly vulnerable group to the effects of climate change. Water scarcity, generated by climate change, puts between 7 and 77 million people under stress in 2021. For its part, the IPCC agrees with the assessment of the 2020 Sustainable Development Goals report on vulnerability. It has been evident that the most impoverished communities are among the most vulnerable to these extreme events. Some of these vulnerabilities are caused by their location in the path of hurricanes, unstable land, precarious settlements, low-lying areas, and places prone to river flooding.

In this sense, the regions and communities inhabited by Afro-descendant peoples are considered among the most vulnerable and have a limited capacity for adaptation due to many co-factors. In Venezuela, Afro-Venezuelan communities are spread throughout the length and breadth of the national territory, and the areas of greatest concentration are already showing signs of environmental collapse. Since the beginning of the 21st century, persistent drought has been observed, which has caused not only hydric solid stress of the national society, among other elements. This hydroelectric network supplies almost the entire country, but also the deterioration of the rhythms of sowing, food cultivation, a decrease of resources and natural materials (fibers) for the elaboration of handicraft products of consumption and commercialization of these populations linked to their sources of income, affectations that from less to more impact, the tradition or dietary, cultural, economic and social dynamics of these populations.

This reality has led to the emergence of a movement of activists, led by young researchers and scholars of environmental issues, as well as government and political leaders who recently presented to the National Assembly a proposal for an **Organic Law on Climate Change**, which proposes to address the realities of vulnerable populations concerning the impacts that climate change has on them.

2.- The need for climate reparations resulting from the crimes generated by slavery, colonization, and their historical derivations, the consequences of which have been detrimental to Afro-descendant populations. Considering the framework of reparatory justice expressed throughout the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action (2001), as well as the facts of the devastation of the areas that were plundered in our country by processes of slavery, colonialism, and its derivations, at least three cases have been identified in which exhaustive historiographic research is carried out, which allows documenting and configuring the individual files and initiating the preparatory processes in each of the cases, namely: **Paraute (Zulia State); Cubagua - Margarita Island (Nueva Esparta State); Tuy River - Guaire - Paparo (Miranda State - Capital District)**. Even though these three cases are still under investigation, they represent a milestone in the history of environmental climate reparatory justice in the country since there is no known case to date in which the current inhabitants of the affected areas are being asked to vindicate the damages caused by the colonizers, owners of companies and other characterized actors.

Although these initiatives have several limitations that make it difficult to set up the files, even concerning the cases themselves to be presented with all their evidentiary elements before the corresponding international legal instances, it is, without a doubt, an effort that makes it possible

to study the environmental, cultural, historical and social processes of entire communities, raises awareness of the ecological and climatic reality, generates environmental awareness and forms future generations with a sense of rootedness and protection of their ecological values: They are communities that now see the possibility to rewrite their history, request indemnities or in the best case demand recognition and thus some compensation for the historical damages generated.

3.- Creation of the Working Group on reparations for eco-culturicide, climate change, and the environment. As a result of the Seminar on Reparations for Slavery and Colonization, held between April and December 2019, in Caracas, working groups were formed, among which is the **Working Group on Reparations for Eco-culturicide, Climate Change, and Environment**, whose purpose is to conduct a rigorous investigation, The purpose of this group is to conduct thorough research that documents the cases identified as environmental crimes generated as a consequence of the plundering, devastation, and dispossession of the natural wealth of the national territory from the VX century to the present, which suggests a rigorous effort of exploration both in the territory and in the historiography, as well as the combination of several areas of professional expertise.

This initiative, most of which is made up of young Afro-Venezuelans, has organized online discussions on the subject and made fundamental contributions to the draft Organic Law on Climate Change. It has also promoted the creation of the **Venezuelan Network of Youth in Climate Action (REDVEJUVAC)**, the first of its kind in the country, which has begun its activities by linking itself to the Global Climate Action Agenda and as an advisor to the Permanent Commission on Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change of the National Assembly.

The Working Group for Reparations for Eco-Culturicide, Climate Change and Environment has generated a first product, called ***Climate Justice, Systemic Racism and Hyperculturality in the Digital Age: on reparations for eco-culturicide, climate change and environment in a national and post-pandemic context***, whose content is an approach to climate reparations to address the injuries resulting from the Modern world-system. In the first place, we will try to make a historiographic tour on the management and environmental relationship with the human being in the West and its counterpart in the Global South, with specific views to the Venezuelan case, passing secondly to 1492 as a critical point of the systemic-climatic crisis and identifying the causes of the current phenomena, ending with a method of praxis, through which we can begin to draw what could be the guidelines for the proposal of climate reparations in Venezuela, highlighting the asymmetries produced by systemic racism and touching, in turn, the critical points on the approach to environmental justice along with the fundamental role of Afro-descendants in a post-pandemic, hyper cultural and hyper-digital context.