



Greek National Commission for Human Rights

**Contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
with regard to the Human Rights Council resolution 47/24 entitled
"Human Rights and Climate Change"**



December 2021



The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection and the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). It was established in accordance with the UN Paris Principles and is governed by Law 4780/2021. Its members are persons appointed by forty-two institutions whose activities cover the field of human rights (independent authorities, universities, third level trade unions, NGOs, political parties and the Administration).

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) warmly welcomes the initiative of the UN Secretary General to consult Member States and other relevant stakeholders in order to prepare and submit to its fiftieth session a report on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights of people in vulnerable situations.

The GNCHR, which was established by Law 2667/1998 in accordance with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles), is governed by Law 4780/2021 and was accredited with *A-status* by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), is the independent advisory body to the State on matters pertaining to human rights protection and the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). The GNCHR mandate covers the whole spectrum of human rights in terms of *ratione materiae* and, since its establishment, the GNCHR has dealt with a broad range of human rights issues. Therefore, the GNCHR would like to make the following contribution¹ to the UN Secretary-General in view of his report on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights of people in vulnerable situations:

1. Please describe the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.

In the vast majority of climate parameters and geographical areas, the impacts of climate change in Greece will be negative, although they will not always be of the same intensity and are not equally reflected in all parameters or regions of the country. The country is gradually acquiring a warmer and drier climate, with extreme weather events that will be more intense, more frequent and of longer duration.

According to the estimates, by 2050:

- Rainfall will decrease by between 10% and 30%.
- High fire risk days will increase from 15% (55 days) to 70% (255 days).

Overall at country level in the Optimistic scenario: temperature will increase by about 2 °C by mid-century, by up to 2.5 °C in the Medium scenario and by about 3.4 °C in the Pessimistic scenario in mainland Greece.

All of the above will impact Greece as we know it with implications for the enjoyment of basic human rights concerning housing, access to natural resources (eg. water), work, income and

¹ The present contribution was elaborated by Greenpeace Greece, which according the new GNCHR legal framework (Law 4780/2021 on "National Accessibility Authority, National Commission for Human Rights and National Bioethics and Technoethics Committee") is Member of the GNCHR.

safety. Below some indicative impacts on the countryside (where most of the agricultural and livestock production is localised), the cities as well as

The Agricultural and Livestock Sector

In all cases and for many crops the growing period will be extended. In some areas the growth potential of some crops will be extended or changed (for example, increased temperatures will benefit cotton).

Under all scenarios, rainfall in all regions decreases, soil moisture decreases, drought increases in all regions and days with very high temperatures increase. For example, in Larissa and Thessaloniki, it is estimated that crops will also be severely affected by extreme events.

In particular the regions of Thessaly, central Macedonia and the Peloponnese will suffer a reduction in agricultural production. Most crops and livestock production will be negatively affected mainly in Heraklion, Crete, Ilia, Corinthia and Larissa. Vineyards will be negatively affected in the south of the country and will only temporarily benefit in the north of the country. However, in the longer term, the increase in the number of warm days combined with the decrease in rainfall will cancel out the favourable conditions, as increased irrigation of crops will also be required. If the increase in the average planetary temperature above 1.5 degrees Celsius is exceeded, then wheat cultivation will be a major problem in Greece. All of the above means that crops will have to be significantly diversified to better adapt to the new climatic conditions in each region. Targeted drainage of agricultural land (which reduces soil erosion and the effects of flooding) will have to be carried out.

One can come to the conclusion that the costs of crop diversification and drainage projects, actions for better water management and irrigation efficiency (many parts of the country are already facing a serious problem) will increase production costs.

Cities

Cities will be hotter and more vulnerable. Average urban temperatures will rise everywhere, but more so in Patras, Kalamata and Athens. In the most pessimistic scenario, the average temperature increase in the summer months in Patras and Kalamata will reach more than 3°C. In Athens it will exceed 2°C whichever scenario comes true. In areas such as Athens, Thessaloniki and Larissa the days on which the maximum temperature exceeds 37 °C will increase greatly. "Tropical nights" (nights when the temperature does not fall below 20°C) will increase greatly. In cities in western Greece such as Patras and Ioannina there will be a large increase in high rainfall days, increasing the risk of flooding.

By the middle of the century, cooling needs will double in all regions of the country, while heating needs will decrease. However, energy needs as a whole are expected to be significantly higher incurring extra costs for households thus affecting the poorer and most vulnerable ones.

A reduction in air temperature in Athens by even 1 °C leads to a reduction in energy consumption for cooling by 4.1%, photochemical air pollutants by about 7-8% and mortality (especially when the temperature is above 40 °C) from lung and heart diseases by 8%."

Coastal areas

Sea levels are estimated to rise by 20cm to 1m by 2100. The islands most likely to be affected by this change are Lemnos, Rhodes, Crete, Corfu, Samos, Rhodes, Crete, Corfu and Samos. The deltas of major rivers such as the Axiosriver are expected to become sea bays due to sea level change.

Due to sea level rise, popular beaches in Greece will be threatened with extinction, affecting the landscape morphology, important coastal ecosystem, local economies and tourism. For example, the coastal front of Attica will be affected while, for example, the peninsula of Vouliagmeni may become inundated forming an island. Another example is the beach of Ormos in Mykonos, while on the same island marinas, piers and ports will have to be shielded from rising sea levels.

Increased water supply problems on the islands are expected while energy consumption for cooling is expected to be doubled.

In total, 3.5% of the country's land area is expected to be lost to sea level rise in the coming decades, a large proportion of which will be in coastal and island areas.

These changes may entail costs equivalent to 2% of the country's GDP.

2. Please describe any specific policy, legislation, practice or strategy that your Government has undertaken, in compliance with applicable international human rights law, to promote an approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as loss and damage that ensures the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. Please also note and identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments including their means of implementation.

Such initiatives, that we are aware of, are:

- [Action Plan to combat energy poverty](#) (in Greek)
- Integrated spatial investments: a plan for the reconstruction of North Evia after wildfires destroyed big part of the island and the natural resources generating income for the local population.
- Probably some parts of the National Plan for Green and Just Recovery
- Creation of the Ministry for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection
- Announcement of the Greek Climate law

3. Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected people in vulnerable situations, taking into

account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e. discrimination based on a combination of multiple grounds, including disability, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, nationality and migration status).

No relevant data available on our behalf

4. Please describe any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations.

Research institutes around the country monitoring climate change parameters and impacts, all coordinated by the National Observatory of Athens Relevant info should also be reflected in relevant progress reports by the relevant Research Committee under the auspices of the Bank of Greece.

5. Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.

Legal challenges on climate grounds globally have effected some change in the climate ambition of nations, regions and corporations. So far, no such litigation has taken place in Greece. However, [six young people from Portugal](#) have taken 33 countries (including Greece) to the European Court of Human Rights for failing to do their part to avert climate catastrophe.

6. Please include examples and good practices that highlight international and multilateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented through close consultation with and active involvement of people in vulnerable situations.

Regional plans for the fair and just transition of the lignite mining areas offer a rare example of participation of local population in the future of the area (after the decision for lignite phase out)

7. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations.

Public participation is very limited if at all. Transition plans of lignite mining areas offer one of the rare examples of their involvement. Without being perfect, that was a step forward. On the other hand, plans for green energy lack public participation.

Effective and ambitious energy efficiency policies

Ambitious policies combating energy poverty

Promotion of energy democracy through social energy initiatives e.g. energy communities

A more ambitious climate law with binding provisions that will ensure:

- effective protection of human rights,
- access to information,
- enhancing participation in climate policies at local, regional and national level,
- increasing transparency
- Integrating climate goals into all sectors of government and policy
- Establishing mechanisms of accountability for climate inaction which at the moment are non-existent in Greece.