



PALAIS DES NATIONS – 1211, GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

2 November 2022

Open-Letter from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on priorities for human rights-based climate action at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Excellency,

I am pleased to address you in relation to the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27). The outcomes of this process and negotiations will be critical to the effective enjoyment of human rights around the world, not least the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for all, called for in Our Common Agenda and recently recognized by the General Assembly.

The injustice wrought by climate change is catastrophic. Climate change related disasters are now, unfortunately, a regular occurrence in many regions, including recently in Pakistan, but also for millions in countries across Africa who are amongst those suffering climate change's greatest consequences - including faster than average rates of warming, droughts, food insecurity, water stress and extreme weather events - despite contributing the least to its causes. Climate change is no longer an abstract threat. It is a lived reality for too many. And it has a direct impact on the ability of current and future generations to enjoy their fundamental human rights.

The Paris Agreement makes the need for rights-based climate action clear. It calls for all States to respect, promote and consider their respective human rights obligations when taking climate action. This is not only a legal obligation, it is also good policy.

Against this background, I urge you to seize the opportunity of COP27 to take the following steps.

All Permanent Representatives of
Member States and Permanent Observers
of non-Member States to the United Nations Office at Geneva
and to the United Nations in New York



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1. Enhance climate ambition to protect human rights

Ambitious climate action supports the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights. Increasing the ambition of your national climate commitments in line with the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) is more vital than ever. The Paris Agreement's 1.5 degree Celsius target is at serious risk of slipping away and ultimately it is people, particularly those in vulnerable situations, who will be most impacted if we do not increase climate ambition now.

2. Guarantee meaningful and effective participation

Meaningful and effective participation is key to the success of the Paris Agreement as well as many COP decisions and agenda items. I urge you to ensure that climate decision-making, including at COP27, is transparent, inclusive and accountable, particularly to people most affected by climate change. The negotiation of an Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) action plan at COP27 offers a critical opportunity to facilitate meaningful participation in effective climate action, building on the rights to education, participation and access to information.

3. Address the human rights harms caused by climate change

The adverse effects of climate change can violate human rights, requiring access to justice and an effective remedy for those affected. Equitable, flexible and accountable mechanisms to address climate change-related loss and damage, now and in the future, are a climate justice imperative. In this regard, I urge a participatory and inclusive Glasgow Dialogue on Loss and Damage that produces concrete results, including resource mobilization, for the people most affected by climate change. It is also essential to ensure rights-based, inclusive action in the implementation of the new five-year work plan of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage and the operationalization of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage.

4. Mobilize resources for rights-based climate action

Given the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, I urge all States not just to fulfil their existing climate finance commitments, but to increase them – in line with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities, and the duty to cooperate under the Charter of the United Nations. Climate finance informed by a human rights-based approach will benefit the countries and people most affected by climate change; address mitigation,

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adaptation, and loss and damage; and avoid supporting projects that result in human rights abuses or exacerbate social and economic inequalities.

5. Ensure the centrality of human rights in climate decision-making

Participation, inclusiveness and transparency are critical to an effective global stocktake of our collective progress on climate action. I hope that the stocktake will serve as a catalyst for equitable and evidence-based decision-making to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, taking into account the human rights impacts of climate change and actions to address climate change, and integrating inputs from a wide range of sources including the people most affected.

I wish you successful negotiations at COP27, and look forward to our strengthened engagement to advance rights-based climate action at COP27, through Our Common Agenda, and beyond.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Türk'.

Volker Türk