**Climate change: An affront on human dignity**

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**Overview**

According to the [Climate Change Vulnerability Index for 2015](http://maplecroft.com/portfolio/new-analysis/2014/10/29/climate-change-and-lack-food-security-multiply-risks-conflict-and-civil-unrest-32-countries-maplecroft/), seven (7) of the ten countries most at risk from climate change are in Africa. These are South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Central Africa Republic (C.A.R), Chad and Sierra Leonne.

Despite limitations and inherent uncertainties, much of the available research indicates that Africa as a whole is likely on average to become warmer and drier in coming decades, and can expect rates of temperature increase somewhat greater than the global average.

**Human rights**

The responsibility for climate change, its impacts and the capacity to adapt to it are unequal. Climate change deepens every existing social inequality!

* **Limited Resources vis a viz National security**

Climate change impacts have the potential to exacerbate national security issues and increase the number of international conflicts. Conflicts often occur over the use of already limited natural resources, fertile ground and water. Dr Zulfiquer Ahmed Amin referring to a UN report notes that the emerging water crisis endangers every aspect of human society; economic, social, ecological, and political. The report predicts that access to water may be the single biggest cause of conflict and war in Africa in the next 25 years. And in a catch 22 situation, conflicts keep populations away from engaging in any meaningful food production, thus exacerbating the problem.

* **Socio-economic impacts**

A Poverty Risk and Disaster Reduction report noted that it is often the *cumulative impact of frequent but small and unspectacular disasters* that cause the most losses, particularly for the poor.

Over the past 25 years; weather-related disasters, such as floods and droughts, have doubled, resulting in Africa having a higher mortality rate from droughts than any other region. 2016 and 2017 El Niño coupled with the highest temperatures “caught many officials by surprise”, because although El Niño was forecast, the weather event normally brings more rain to the region, not less. In 2016 alone; “36 million people faced hunger across southern and eastern Africa”. A UN report.

* **Food security:**

Majority of people in Africa are dependent on subsistence farming and yet most governments have no national agricultural plans and individuals are left on their own to battle severe climate change impact weathers. On the other hand Industrial agriculture as opposed to ecological farming is eating away major resources as it “consumes fossil fuels, water at an unsustainable rate and topsoil degradation in addition to contributing to numerous forms of environmental degradation”.

Meanwhile a group of 20 leading agronomists, health, nutrition and social scientists has concluded that “There is growing evidence that [agro-ecological] systems keep carbon in the ground, support biodiversity, rebuild soil fertility and sustain yields over time, providing a basis for secure farm livelihoods.” Greenpeace Africa’s Food for Life campaign in East Africa is rooting for ecological farming as a way to battle Climate Change.

* **African Forests; especially the Sacred Congo Basin forest**

Deforestation in the Congo Basin, the world’s second largest intact forest is a driver of climate change, poverty and species lose. In addition destruction through logging and industrial agriculture has a negative impact on local and indigenous communities whose cultures, homes and livelihoods are compromised. The forest is home to thousands of plant and animal species, bringing forth the urgency for its protection. A recent discovery by the University of Leeds has confirmed that the world’s largest tropical peatland on an area larger than England; exists deep in the heart of the Congo Basin forest making the region one of the most carbon-rich ecosystems on Earth.

Allocation of forest for industrial agriculture or logging concessions not only interferes with these rich ecosystems but equally affects local communities who depend entirely on the forest for livelihood (food, medicine, shelter and income). Intact forest will mitigate Climate Change as well as protect forest communities and reduce migration.

**Migration**

Migration is historically well established as a human adaptive response to inimical conditions with known examples from Africa.

The likely benefits of migrating to urban environments are questionable given that around 43% of urban dwellers in Africa live in poverty and this rises to 50% in some of the countries considered most at risk from climate change.

Migration is known to have disproportionate impacts upon women under many of the climate change scenarios projected for Africa. As lands become degraded, women left behind tend to assume an increased work load and more responsibilities.

**Africa deserves Climate Justice**

Despite the fact that the African continent has contributed the least to anthropogenic factors causing climate change; Africa is the worst hit, yet its greenhouse emissions are only 4% of the world’s total.

Africa should meaningfully participate in and become a key beneficiary of Climate Action as well as have access to effective remedies.

Greenpeace Global is working towards achieving a Billions Acts of Courage contagious enough to save our planet! 200 million of them in the next three (3) years. Greenpeace Africa’s strategy is to contribute 10 million African Acts of Courage towards this number; where we “fashion a way to coexist with nature in a mutually inter-dependent way for centuries to come.”

The Climate Justice struggle is a marathon that requires total stakeholder support. This planet needs a *collective courage and commitment* that has not been seen in any past struggles of the world.

We in Africa are standing to be counted; we urge the Human Rights Council and its members to focus mitigation strategies on the most vulnerable people by having Africa central to “Fair, Ambitious and Binding” climate action deals.