



General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 December 2022

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda items 2 and 3

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by people in vulnerable situations

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 47/24, contains a summary of the panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by people in vulnerable situations, held on 28 June 2022.



I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 47/24, the Human Rights Council held a panel discussion on the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by people in vulnerable situations,¹ on 28 June 2022, at the fiftieth session of the Council.
2. The panel discussion was chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council. It was opened by a statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, followed by a video screening of testimonies about the adverse impact of climate change on people in vulnerable situation.
3. The panel discussion provided an opportunity for States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the adverse impact of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by people in vulnerable situations, as well as best practices and lessons learned in the promotion and protection of the rights of such persons. The panel discussion was made accessible to persons with disabilities through the provision of International Sign interpretation and real-time captioning.
4. The panellists included the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ian Fry, the Chair of the Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change and Chair of the Sudan Youth Organization on Climate Change, Nisreen Elsaim, the Secretary of the Council of the ICCA Consortium, Sara Oliveros López, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for International Environmental Law, Carroll Muffett.

II. Opening remarks

5. Opening the discussion, the High Commissioner stated that a safe and stable climate was an integral component of the right to a healthy environment and that the Human Rights Council, in its resolution 48/13, had recognized the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. She noted that, at the international meeting entitled “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity”, held in June 2022, the Secretary-General had called for all States to embrace the right to a healthy environment and to take immediate and ambitious action to address the climate crisis.
6. Climate change affected the human rights of everyone, everywhere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had estimated that at least 3.3 billion people were highly vulnerable to its impact. The Secretary-General had described that fact as an environmental and social justice crisis, where people in vulnerable situations were at higher risk of suffering the negative impact. The High Commissioner stated that persons in marginalized or vulnerable situations were more exposed to the negative impact of climate change, due to social and economic constructs combined with multiple forms of discrimination. That included Indigenous Peoples, local and rural communities, peasants, migrants, children, women and persons with disabilities.
7. She observed that, for many Indigenous Peoples, climate change jeopardized food security, traditional livelihoods, cultural practices and their right to self-determination. That risk was greater for those with insecure land and resource rights. In rural communities, climate change could restrict access to food, with a devastating impact for local communities and peasants. The impact on women and children in rural areas, who were more likely to be living in poverty or suffer from malnutrition, was particularly significant. She highlighted that climate change was expected to increase the frequency, intensity and severity of droughts, which from 2009 to 2019 affected over 100 million people, severely affecting their right to life, livelihoods and food security. Women were affected twice as much as men by drought, land degradation and deforestation, the effect of which were exacerbated by women’s unequal and limited opportunities to acquire access to or own land.

¹ The full video of the panel discussion is available at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1m/k1m5u7uvlv>.

8. She also noted that, in small island developing States, intensifying floods, typhoons, cyclones and hurricanes battered homes and communities, while sea level rise swallowed coastal land and contaminated the groundwater that people needed to survive, threatening the existence of some nations. Least developed countries and small island developing States together accounted for about 2 per cent of global emissions, while Group of 20 members were responsible for 80 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. She referred to the report of the Secretary-General on human rights and climate change, in which he had called for urgent emission reductions and scaled up adaptation to limit the impact of climate change on people in vulnerable situations and to build resilience. Climate action could only be fully effective when integrating the perspectives of people in vulnerable situations. Rural communities and Indigenous Peoples were key actors in the preservation of ecosystems that support carbon absorption, management and storage, which helps to mitigate climate change.

9. She noted the critical contribution of environmental human rights defenders to those efforts and the need to better protect them. The Secretary-General had recognized the contribution of persons in vulnerable situations to climate action. For example, the Seed Indigenous youth climate network had brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to protect their land, culture and communities from fossil fuel extraction and global heating. The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development's feminist participatory action research programme allowed for Indigenous women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons to document their experiences, responses and needs, in order to support those most affected by climate change in shaping climate policies. The Wampis Nation in the Peruvian Amazon was developing its own climate adaptation plan to limit climate harms and reduce forest degradation by 2030.

10. In closing, she referred to Human Rights Council resolution 47/24, in which the Council had called upon States to enhance international cooperation and assistance, including in financing, in support of developing countries that were particularly vulnerable to climate change. For the most vulnerable countries, climate finance in sufficient measures was key to building resilience and adaptive capacities. A human rights-based approach to climate finance entailed ensuring that such financing is accessible to those most in need, ring-fencing 50 per cent of all climate finance for adaptation and making it available in the form of grants rather than loans.

11. In a video screening of testimonies about the adverse impact of climate change on human rights, seven climate activists from around the world that participated in a video campaign by the Collective for Climate Rights highlighted how they and their communities had been affected by the impact of climate change. Marinel Ubaldo, from a coastal community in Eastern Samar in the Philippines, said that she saw that her community was at risk of being washed away by typhoons and sea level rise and its people deprived of their basic human rights. Ms. Ubaldo had lost friends, relatives, her house and her possessions, and she called upon first world countries to increase funding for loss and damage. Ivonne Yanez from Ecuador had witnessed how the glaciers in the Andes Mountains were melting, increasing risks to future drinking water supplies. She called for the recognition of the ecological debt of the industrialized countries in the global North to the countries in the global South.

12. Roland Ngam from South Africa shared how climate change had led to the loss of animals and drought in the region, noting that some farmers had stopped farming because it was too dry. He too called upon world leaders to respect their climate commitments. Marie Joanita Meltebury from Vanuatu stressed how communities in the South Pacific were living in a climate emergency that was often ignored by other countries. She highlighted how Pacific communities were committed to a climate-stable Pacific and used their traditional knowledge and customs to navigate the global climate catastrophe. She called for an end to all fossil fuel subsidies.

13. Norma Brunetto from Italy noted that her country was on the borderline of a climatic hotspot and experiencing the rise of extreme weather phenomena all over its territory. She demanded that policymakers in Italy and all over the world create mitigation and adaptation plans, in line with the recommendations of the scientific community, which recognized that climate justice was also social justice. Merryl Habchy from Lebanon was concerned about increasing temperatures negatively affecting the agricultural sector, which was one of the

greatest economic resources for the people in her country. She recalled how a wildfire in northern Lebanon in August 2020 had forced many people to leave their homes. Margaret Taylor from New Zealand stressed that homes in her community, including her own house, and even entire islands, were at risk of submersion due to climate change. She called upon world leaders to follow the leadership of leaders in the Pacific region and young activists, who had been brave, resolute and resilient, to be ambitious in the goals that they set and generous in the climate finance that they offered and to phase out use of fossil fuels. She stated that 1.5 degrees would give the Pacific region a fighting chance and urged world leaders to deliver on that target.

III. Panel discussion

14. The President of the Human Rights Council opened the panel discussion and invited the panellists to make their statements.

A. Contributions of the panellists

15. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change noted that, in 2018, an estimated 19.2 million people had been displaced as a result of disasters linked to natural hazards, the majority of which had been weather- and climate-related. The number was likely much higher when people moving due to slow-onset events were taken into account. In 2019, 24.9 million displacements had taken place, across 140 countries and territories, and 30 million people had been displaced by extreme weather events that had been worsened by climate change, in 2020.

16. He noted that the number of climate-induced human displacements was growing and that, while the two were often linked, more people were displaced by climate change than armed conflict. He noted that the United Nations humanitarian appeals for extreme weather disasters had risen by over 800 per cent between 2000 and 2021. Since 2017, donors had met 54 per cent of those appeals on average, leaving an estimated shortfall of between \$28 billion and \$33 billion. The growing tide of people displaced by climate change impact was an intolerable human rights tragedy.

17. He said that many people faced multiple forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism and classism and that those factors might combine, or overlap, to create extreme difficulties that put some people at disproportionate risk from the adverse impact of climate change. He referred to his meeting with gender and climate justice activists in the Women and Gender Constituency. A young woman from Uganda was working at the community level to provide clean energy and healthy food for women. Women in Cameroon were working to resolve differences between the French- and English-speaking communities and to overcome deep-seated patrimonies that had hindered action to address the impact of climate change. He took note of the limited resources available and the challenges faced by women in remote rural areas to access to funding, urging for a refocusing of national adaptation plans to recognize the needs of people in vulnerable situations and focus on local level solutions.

18. He highlighted the need to listen to people in vulnerable situations. For example, the Anglican Consultative Council had noted that, while Indigenous voices were increasingly being recognized in climate discussions, their ability to participate meaningfully in and influence decision-making remained limited. That was also the case for children and young people. He stressed that opportunities needed to be found for children and young people in vulnerable communities to share their experiences and lessons learned, such as through information-sharing platforms.

19. He stressed that major greenhouse gas emitting countries needed to take much greater action to reduce their emissions, noting the pushback by many of them against a new financial facility for loss and damage at the fifty-sixth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He highlighted that supporting people to recover from the impact of climate change averted

tensions and reduced the likelihood of armed conflict, and he encouraged supporting a new finance facility for loss and damage.

20. He concluded by highlighting the role of the corporate sector, noting that the Secretary-General had spoken about the role of fossil fuel companies and the banks that financed them, calling on businesses to change. He stressed that businesses needed to develop a corporate model that was more respectful of people's rights, noting that business accountability was one of the themes that he would address in exercise of his mandate. He said that not taking urgent action and responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions would harm more people, leading to more efforts to hold businesses accountable.

21. Ms. Elsaid noted how the air that we breathed, our food, our water and our health depended on a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. She referred to the Human Rights Council resolution adopted in October 2021, in which the Council recognized the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, as well as the resolution establishing the mandate of Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. Those resolutions further affirmed the connections between climate change and human rights.

22. She expressed disappointment at the failure of States parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to include explicit human rights references in the outcomes of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention, – not even under action for climate empowerment or gender, or at the global stocktake, which had taken place after the adoption of those Human Rights Council resolutions. She highlighted the contrast between the progressive steps taken by the Human Rights Council compared with the Conference of the Parties and other bodies and the need for synergies in the outcomes of various United Nations agencies.

23. She was concerned at the findings of the non-governmental organization Global Witness, according to which, on average, more than four people died every week while defending the environment, noting that that constituted a human rights violation. The enjoyment of the right to life, as well as a decent, peaceful and healthy life, would be impeded by climate change, if the right measures were not taken immediately. Climate change affected all human rights, while its effects varied from region to region and according to the situations of vulnerability in which people found themselves. She noted the impossibility of talking about climate action without talking about human rights, including freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, which were factors that brought visibility to the vulnerability and needs of climate-affected communities.

24. She noted that sustainable climate governance could not be achieved without good governance. The combination of strong institutions, political will, strategies and stakeholder engagement would have a positive effect on both the climate change sector and the human rights sector. She concluded by urging the Human Rights Council to accelerate action related to the third generation of rights, environmental rights and climate change before the problem of climate change worsened beyond repair.

25. Ms. Oliveros López referred to the growing evidence confirming the key role played by Indigenous Peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation and the immediate and effective responses to climate change that Indigenous Peoples and local communities could advance. She highlighted that the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services had recognized that the best conserved areas, including those overlapping with officially protected areas, were located in the territories of life, territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, also known in some contexts as "ICCA". They are as diverse as the peoples and communities who shape and sustain them through their unique cultures, governance systems and practices. Similar findings were highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The recognition of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, innovations, practices, institutions and values, in addition to the implementation of measures to improve their quality of life, was important for biodiversity conservation.

26. She stressed the importance of paying greater attention to the type and quality of local governance of territories and biodiversity, and to strengthen the capacities and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. That was unfortunately currently far from a

reality in the territories of life, as had been highlighted by members of the ICCA Consortium in various forums. She noted in that regard the interventions by ICCA representatives at forums such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2017 and emphasized the importance of those decision-making spaces for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to collectively take part in decision-making related to their territories.

27. She noted that, at the national level, threats to territories of life were disguised as development projects, including in the case of the Mayan Train, the Transisthmian Corridor and “fortress conservation” in Mexico, which had brought violence to those territories and their custodians. She highlighted the amount of resources given in support of the efforts of Indigenous Peoples in the fight against climate change at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At the high-level event on the theme “Transforming action for nature and people”, held in the margins of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, a number of philanthropic organizations had announced the investment of \$5 billion to support to the goal of protecting 30 per cent of the planet by 2030. She questioned, however, whether those resources would reach local communities or rather only large non-governmental organizations. She concluded by calling for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ and local communities’ territories of life as an effective strategy for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

28. Mr. Muffett stressed that, with the acceleration of the climate crisis, the effects were seen on a large number of rights. They fell disproportionately on people in the global South, in particular those in vulnerable situations, as illustrated in the report of the landmark inquiry of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines into the human rights impact of climate change in the country, and the responsibilities of the “carbon majors”, companies that are the world’s largest producers of crude oil, natural gas, coal and cement. The Commission had found that the people of the Philippines were disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and that the burden fell heavily on women and girls, children, Indigenous communities, those living in poverty and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex communities and allies. Protecting the human rights of people in vulnerable situations required urgent action to limit warming to the greatest extent possible.

29. The Commission had recognized the responsibility of the “carbon majors” and the Government of the Philippines to act in that regard, as well as the duty of all Governments to cooperate to protect people from climate-related harms. That required mainstreaming human rights into climate action, including in decisions related to climate finance and adaptation, both within, between and among States. Given that Group of 20 members were responsible for 80 per cent of global emissions, while small island developing States and least developed countries combined accounted for only about 2 per cent of emissions, such action was critical. The responsibility for the climate crisis was not shared equally, and the responsibility for climate action should fall most heavily on those responsible for creating the crisis.

30. He stressed that States parties to the United Nations climate agreements had obligations to mobilize climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building through international cooperation. That obligation echoed the duty of States, under article 2 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to work together to mobilize the maximum available resources for the progressive realization of human rights. A dramatic and urgent scaling up of climate finance and a recognition that funds must flow with equal urgency to loss and damage and adaptation as they did to mitigation was required.

31. He concluded by highlighting that climate financing must not further exacerbate existing structural inequalities or add to recipient countries’ debt burdens. Without substantial upscaling, a more equitable distribution and facilitated access for the countries and people most affected by climate change, climate finance would continue to fall far short of the commitments made by developed countries in the contexts of both climate change and human rights. Making decisive progress on those issues at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would be essential to making progress towards meeting those obligations and protecting the rights of the communities that were most at risk from climate change.

B. Interactive discussion

32. During the interactive discussion, interventions were made by the representatives of Angola, Bangladesh (on behalf of the core group on human rights and climate change also representing the Philippines and Viet Nam), Barbados (on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community in Geneva), Costa Rica (also on behalf of Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, China, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Fiji, Gambia, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Principality of Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Somalia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Yemen), Djibouti (on behalf of States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development), Egypt (also on behalf of Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, China, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Djibouti, Fiji, Gambia, Honduras, Hungary, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Principality of Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, Somalia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Togo, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States and Yemen), the European Union, Fiji, the Gambia, Germany (on behalf of the States members of the Geneva Pledge on Human Rights in Climate Action), Iceland (on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries), Iraq, Maldives (including one statement on behalf of a group of small island developing States), Mali, the Marshall Islands (on behalf of the core group for the creation of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change), Mauritius (on behalf of the informal group of small island developing States in Geneva), Morocco, Namibia, the Philippines, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta.

33. Representatives of the following United Nations agency and national, international and non-governmental organizations also spoke: Conectas Direitos Humanos, Franciscans International (also on behalf of Earth Justice), Conselho Indigenista Missionário, United Nations Population Fund, Women's Federation for World Peace International (on behalf of the Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva), International Commission of Jurists and International-Lawyers.org.

34. Statements by the following member States were not delivered owing to a lack of time: Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Germany, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Samoa, Senegal, Sierra Leone and United States.

35. For the same reason, statements were not delivered by the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Anglican Consultative Council, Penal Reform International, the Next Century Foundation and Réseau unité pour le développement de Mauritanie.

36. Speakers noted that people in vulnerable situations, many of whom were disproportionately affected by the impact of climate change, included Indigenous Peoples, local and rural communities, peasants, migrants, children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities and environmental human rights defenders. The discussion brought forward compelling testimonies and insights from representatives of States and other stakeholders about the consequences of inadequate climate action. Speakers drew attention to how climate disasters and other adverse climate change effects had deepened existing social inequalities. They highlighted the need to recognize the intersection between racial, environmental and

climate injustice, stressing that intersecting risk factors were a particular concern. Applying an intersectional perspective was key to addressing the impact of climate change that millions of people experienced.

37. During the discussion, it was underlined how women, as the majority of the world's poor, could be more at risk than men to the impact of climate change and more dependent on threatened natural resources. Women played a central role in natural resource management, food production, nutrition, caregiving and the well-being of families and communities. As a consequence of environmental degradation and weather-related disasters, women and girls faced separation from support networks, homelessness and an increased risk of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. They also suffered reduced access to employment, education, essential health-care services and psychosocial support, as a result of loss of homes and livelihoods, water scarcity, food insecurity, the destruction of schools, health facilities and transportation systems and the displacement of families and communities. Speakers stressed that climate change was both an environmental and a social justice crisis with direct implications for gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Climate justice could be achieved through scaled-up and gender-responsive climate action that also addressed inequalities related to sexual and reproductive health and by integrating rights into climate financing, policies and interventions.

38. Several speakers recalled how the global water crisis of water pollution, water scarcity and water-related disasters, in combination with rising sea levels, changing rainfall patterns and loss of adaptive capacity and ecosystem services had had serious implications for local communities and their rights to self-determination, health and life. The right to food was also under threat as a result of droughts, floods and desertification. Speakers underlined how climate change increased risk factors and directly affected the effective enjoyment of human rights, thereby pushing people deeper into poverty.

39. Speakers emphasized that climate action could only be fully effective when it integrated the perspectives of people in vulnerable situations and addressed their needs. Mechanisms with an inclusive engagement and consultation process contributed to strengthening a bottom-up approach and protecting the rights of people in vulnerable situations. People in vulnerable situations were often excluded from acquiring access to information and meaningfully participating in the development and implementation of nationally determined contributions and climate adaptation plans. States were called upon to guarantee the rights of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters for all people, especially those in vulnerable situations.

40. During the discussion, it was noted that small island developing States constantly lived with the impact of climate change and had limited financial resources and capacity to uphold human rights and address its adverse physical, social, cultural and economic effects. Climate-induced displacement was a deeply distressing reality for people living in small island developing States. Many speakers emphasized that developing countries were entitled to assistance for mitigation and adaptation, as well as compensation for loss and damage, as highlighted in the Paris Agreement. The importance of fulfilling pledges and increasing international cooperation for climate finance, capacity-building and technology transfer was also highlighted. Speakers called for the integration of the development dimension into all climate-related action in order to strengthen the medium- and long-term resilience of people in vulnerable situations, as well as to prevent conflicts that could be triggered by competition for scarce land, water and resources.

41. The discussants highlighted the importance of implementing a people-centred, human rights-based approach to addressing the negative impact of climate change. The integration of human rights into global climate action, including climate finance, would increase its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability and contribute to the recognition and empowerment of people in vulnerable situations as agents of change.

42. A series of good practices for human rights-based climate action were shared. The disaster risk management strategy of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development was aimed at building resilience to drought and other disasters in order to reduce their impact on people's livelihoods and assets. The European Union Green Deal was highlighted, in view of the European Union's role as the world's largest provider of public climate finance to

developing economies. The nationally determined contribution of Morocco included national commitments to mitigation, adaptation, cooperative approaches and transparency in the context of climate change. Namibia supported the climate resilience of women and children in vulnerable situations by requiring that all climate change action under the national climate change strategy and action plan, 2013–2020, be gender sensitive.

43. Maldives aimed to lead by example in reducing and tackling environmental vulnerabilities as the first country to phase out hydrochlorofluorocarbons. By implementing the Cafu project, a large-scale project based on integrated policies that sought sustainable solutions, Angola fostered resilient economic, social and cultural development in local communities in the south of the country. The national adaptation plan of Fiji supported efforts to ensure the full involvement of people in vulnerable situations in development-related decision-making processes at all levels and across all stages of designing, implementing and monitoring policies and plans. Malteser International, the relief agency of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, supported communities that were vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including droughts, floods and food scarcity.

44. Speakers highlighted the recognition by the Human Rights Council of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the establishment of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change as examples of how the Council had addressed some of the most pressing human rights issues of our time. The Geneva pledge for human rights in climate action was put forward as an initiative that could be used as a bridge to ensure that human rights played a key role in addressing climate change while leaving no one behind. Speakers encouraged the Council to do more to mitigate the impact of climate change on the lives of people and communities in vulnerable situations and to protect their human rights.

45. Speakers also asked the panellists a number of questions. Panellists were invited to elaborate on how to best promote the integration of a gender perspective into climate action and to address the adverse impact of climate change on persons in vulnerable situations. Speakers asked the panellists how to ensure the meaningful participation of people in vulnerable situations as agents of change, including at the international level. They also asked the panel how the Human Rights Council could help to promote synergies and coherence in the work of international bodies, including within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in order to promote more sustainable climate action. They asked panellists to elaborate on what they saw as the main barriers for inclusive, rights-based climate action and how to overcome them. Panellists were also asked how human rights-based climate action could contribute to ensuring the survival of small island developing States and the protection of people in vulnerable situations within those countries. Speakers requested that panellists share best practices that would assist States in mobilizing resources and support in order to reduce the adverse impact of climate change on people in vulnerable situations.

C. Responses and concluding remarks

46. After the interactive discussion, the President of the Human Rights Council invited panellists to make concluding remarks.

47. The Special Rapporteur, in his concluding remarks, noted that it was clear from the testimonies provided that climate change was a global problem, affecting people throughout the world, that particularly affected people in vulnerable situations. He noted that there was the need to build resilience to the long-term adverse effects of climate change. He called for greater representation of women and girls in climate change meetings, including as part of delegations, in order to bridge the gender divide. Young people and children should also be included in climate change decision-making processes in order to ensure that their voices are heard. He encouraged the parties in the room to include women, young girls and children in their delegations, including for the conferences of the parties, and not just to attend side events but to participate in the actual negotiations. He expressed support for the calls for the

protection of environmental human rights defenders, noting the need to address the intolerable situation of environmental defenders being killed in various countries.

48. He urged all parties to undertake human rights-based mitigation, which required full representation of all people, so that they might provide input into mitigation plans, for example, as Fiji had highlighted in its remarks. He referred to the concerns expressed by the Sami people concerning the development of wind turbines on their land without their free, prior and informed consent as an example of how increased efforts were needed to ensure that the human rights of Indigenous Peoples were respected, protected and fulfilled during climate action. The Special Rapporteur highlighted the need to close the gap between the human rights sector and the climate change sector, stressing that members of the Human Rights Council were also parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He emphasized that creating an improved dialogue process between countries and within delegations was key to addressing that gap, suggesting the organization of an international conference where the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change could speak with human rights experts.

49. Ms. Oliveros López reiterated, in her concluding remarks, that those who lived in Indigenous and local communities were among the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. She highlighted how their ancestral ways of living had ensured the survival of those communities and preserved biodiversity in their territories of life. She said that those who defended those territories were in a constant struggle for the recognition of their rights, including the right to participation. She further called for the recognition of the defenders of territories of life as allies in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

50. She noted that the recognition of Indigenous and local communities' right to self-determination would effectively contribute to the reduction of vulnerabilities in those communities and increase their resilience and adaptive capacities with regard to climate change, while enhancing the conservation of ecosystems. She concluded by noting the urgency of ensuring that financial resources and support to address climate change had reached Indigenous and local communities and those in vulnerable situations, especially women and girls who were currently hindered from adequately participating in local governance processes.

51. Mr. Muffett noted the consensus by the participants in the panel discussion regarding the critical human rights implications of climate change and its acute impact on people in vulnerable situations. The clear implications of that included the urgent need to transition away from the fossil fuels that were driving the climate crisis and to accelerate finance, not only for climate change mitigation, but also for adaptation and loss and damage.

52. He highlighted that, while climate change was a threat in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and an urgent and accelerating threat in the 1980s and the 1990s, it had now grown into a lived reality with a mounting impact on human lives, livelihoods and on human rights around the world. He concluded by stating that that had created an immediate and urgent responsibility for all duty-bearers, particularly for those countries and corporations that had been most involved in creating the crisis, to address the negative human rights impact that they had created. That required an urgent escalation of climate finance focused on addressing unmet needs for adaptation and responding to mounting loss and damage driven by the climate crisis.

53. Following the concluding remarks, the President of the Human Rights Council closed the discussion.

IV. Recommendations

54. **Speakers highlighted that climate change was an environmental and social justice crisis and that, for climate action to be fully effective, it had to integrate the perspectives of people in vulnerable situations. That included Indigenous Peoples, local and rural communities, peasants, migrants, minorities, children, older persons, women, persons with disabilities and other persons in vulnerable situations. States were called upon to apply a human rights-based approach and an intersectional perspective to**

climate action in order to address the impact of climate change, in particular on people in vulnerable situations who were more exposed to the negative impact of climate change due to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

55. States should urgently reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, in line with their common but differentiated responsibilities, due to which developed countries had a heightened responsibility to address the climate crisis that they had created. Speakers called upon States to put an end to fossil fuel subsidies and to create mitigation and adaptation plans that were in line with the recommendations of the scientific community, as well as States' human rights obligations.

56. States were urged to ensure that persons in vulnerable situations could meaningfully participate in and influence climate-related decision-making. They should take measures to enhance the representation of people in vulnerable situations in climate change meetings, including as part of their delegations to conferences of the parties, and to ensure their effective and meaningful participation in the negotiations.

57. States should strengthen the resilience of persons in vulnerable situations and support recovery from the long-term effect of climate change. Speakers highlighted the links between climate change, conflict and displacement and urged States to take measures to prevent conflicts being triggered by competition over diminishing land and agricultural resources as a result of climate change.

58. Several speakers called for better protection of environmental human rights defenders, many of whom risked their lives to defend the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment – to the benefit of all of humanity.

59. Speakers emphasized the need to recognize the important contribution of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to climate change mitigation and adaptation through the use of their traditional knowledge and practices. The recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including their land and resource rights and their right to self-determination, was highlighted as essential for sustainable, human rights-based climate action.

60. States parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement should fulfil their commitments to mobilize climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building through international cooperation in support of climate action in developing countries.

61. States should increase international climate finance, in line with their responsibilities under the Paris Agreement and international human rights law. The need to ensure that climate funding reached people in vulnerable situations directly, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women in remote areas, was stressed.

62. Several speakers called for increased funding to compensate for loss and damage and for adaptation, including through a new finance facility for loss and damage under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to compensate for the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries.

63. Speakers emphasized that businesses are legally liable for, and should be held accountable and pay for the impact of, growing greenhouse gas emissions, highlighting the transboundary impact and the particularly profound impact of climate change on small island developing States and least developed countries.

64. **Speakers called for increased synergies in the outcomes of the various United Nations bodies related to human rights and climate change. Following the adoption by the Human Rights Council of resolution 48/13, recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, States parties to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change were called upon to include explicit human rights references in the decisions of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which would contribute to better protecting the rights of the communities that were most vulnerable to climate change, in line with States' human rights obligations and climate change commitments.**
