



Climate Change and Human Rights

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Foreword



Climate change is one of the greatest threats to human rights of our generation, posing a serious risk to the fundamental rights to life, health, food and an adequate standard of living of individuals and communities across the world. This report aims to support government and private decision makers by assessing the relationship between climate change and human rights law.

While the United Nations and national governments acknowledge that climate change and the responses to it can impact on human rights, there is less agreement on the corresponding obligations of governments and private actors to address this problem. The relationship between human rights and the environment has been much debated over the past few decades, supported by UNEP, OHCHR and the Human Rights Council-appointed Special Rapporteur, specifically the identification of positive, mutually reinforcing links between the fields of law and policy.

This UNEP report sheds light on the human rights obligations of both governments and private actors in responding to climate change, including those relating to rights to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice, as well as obligations relating to adaption and mitigation.

The report makes a number of recommendations on how governments and other actors may address climate change. These include the need to recognize the link between climate change and human rights in climate-related processes and activities. The report also highlights the need for greater ambition with regard to mitigation, human rights safeguards for international climate finance mechanisms, financial assistance for developing countries faced with adaptation, and the development of an international mechanism on climate-induced displacement and migration. In addition, the report proposes a number of new human rights-related mechanisms for international coordination and accountability in delivering these outcomes.

The Paris agreement is a stepping stone rather than the end objective for climate change action. So I hope that, whatever the outcome, this report will become a central reference for anybody involved in making climate or environmental related decisions in the crucial years ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Achim Steiner'.

Achim Steiner
UNEP Executive Director

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