

Human Rights Council creates a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change

Joint press release by the members of the core group, consisting of The Bahamas, the European Union, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Panama, Paraguay and Sudan.

Geneva, 8 October 2021

We warmly welcome the creation of the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change by the Human Rights Council. Through a dedicated mandate, the Human Rights Council will henceforth be able to give climate change the systematic, focused and comprehensive attention it has long deserved and to raise international awareness and understanding of the profound interdependence between human rights, a healthy environment and combating climate change.

Climate change is already having negative effects on the enjoyment of human rights across the globe and these effects are more acutely felt by persons in vulnerable situations. The UN human rights system can and should be in a position to provide its contribution on such a critical topic at such a critical juncture.

The resolution presented today by Bahamas, EU, Fiji, Panama, Paraguay, Sudan and Marshall Islands, decides to appoint, for a period of three years, a Special Rapporteur that will, among other responsibilities, study and identify how the adverse effects of climate change affect the full and effective enjoyment of human rights, provide guidance to States related to the adoption of a human rights based approach to climate adaptation and mitigation policies; and work closely with states to support national efforts while being attentive to country-specific challenges.

“The Council’s decision today has given those of us at the forefront of climate change the opportunity to deal with the existential threats that we have been concerned with. The Special Rapporteur will have the crucial task of looking into not only climate impact but also climate policies to help states cooperate with each other and raise the ambition to respond to the climate emergency,” says Ambassador Doreen de Brum of the Marshall Islands.

“Respect for and promotion of human rights must guide the design and implementation of our climate change mitigation and adaptation policies. The new Special Rapporteur will be well placed to support us and advise us to this end, especially acting in full and close cooperation and coordination with other relevant mechanisms and mandate holders. This send a strong signal, in particular ahead of the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP26),” says Ambassador Lotte Knudsen, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva.

“Today, the Human Rights Council stood at the crossroads of an historic opportunity. The decision to establish the Special Rapporteur demonstrated that the Council, the standard bearer of human rights at the global level, could rise to the occasion in support of a human rights issue deserving urgent attention and that is critical for all peoples of the global community now and in generations to come.” says Ambassador Keva L. Bain of The Bahamas.

“Climate change is a crisis multiplier and one of the biggest threats to human rights worldwide, which demanded a far stronger response from the Human Rights Council through

a dedicated mandate. Today marks a historic moment for climate action with the establishment of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. It sends a firm signal that the HRC stands to fulfil its mandate to protect the rights and survival of those on the frontlines of climate impacts,” says Ambassador Juan Castillero of Panama.

“Sudan is pleased to be among those who stood for and supported the establishment of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change. We genuinely believe this new mandate will contribute to reinforcing the work of the Human Rights Council and add to the current momentum of its activities,” says Ambassador Ali Ibn Abi Talib Mahmoud.

“Climate Change is a priority for Fiji in the Human Rights Council, today we have moved from statements to actions. The decision of the Human Rights Council today in accepting the call of those at the forefront of climate change especially for SIDS and vulnerable communities to take real actions is a testament of the critical role of Council and the true spirit of multilateralism. This is a critical contribution, one that is unprecedented and timely especially as we are on the eve of the opening of the UNFCCC COP 26 in Glasgow. We welcome therefore the endorsement of a Special Rapporteur for Climate Change with our support ”, says Anare Leweniqila, Charge D Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Fiji

“It is undeniable that climate change has negative impacts on the human rights of millions of persons everywhere, particularly, those who are most vulnerable. As a Landlocked Developing Country, I wish to emphasize the importance of the specific mandate given to the Special Rapporteur to raise awareness on the disproportionate burden that the most vulnerable countries face when dealing with the consequences of climate change”, Raquel Pereira, Delegate of Paraguay in the HRC.