



Climate Change and the Universal Periodic Review

Date: 3rd of July 2024, 56th session of the Human Rights Council

Time: 16:00-17:00 (Geneva)

Location: Palais des Nations, Room XXV

Organisers: UPR Info

Context

Climate change is among the major drivers of change at a global level. Today, we can see the direct consequences of the climate change crisis and the loss of biodiversity and nature, affecting the human rights of people around the world. Climate change and its effects have a direct impact on people's right to health, to food, to water, to housing, and on the displacement of populations, among many other. At a time when extreme weather events are becoming more and more frequent, it is important to ensure that a human rights-based approach is adopted in order to provide solutions to their causes and responses to their consequences.

Issues relating to climate change and its impacts on human rights are increasingly being elevated with discussions at the United Nations (UN), particularly the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The UN Human Rights Council recognizes that environmental changes brought about by climate change can impact the realisation of fundamental and internationally recognised human rights, including those protected by the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESC) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Various OHCHR, Special procedures, and UN Treaty bodies affirm this through various publications analysing human rights that are impacted by climate change such as those above mentioned. Even the UN General Assembly in New York has prioritised this issue adopting a landmark resolution recognising the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

However, when we analyse the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations made on these themes over the first 3 cycles, we find that only 888 recommendations out of 98'274 referred to terms such as "climate change", "environmental", "greenhouse gas", "biodiversity", "natural", "environment(al)" or "conservation". Thanks to its universality, the UPR can be an extremely effective mechanism for addressing all human rights and is therefore the best tool for raising the visibility and addressing the impact of climate change on human rights. The UPR can act as a catalyst to implement national laws for the protection of a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and to put in place public policies for mitigating the impact of climate change and responding to extreme weather events, awareness-raising campaigns on the consequences of the climate change on human rights and how to address them - among others. Strengthening the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and addressing the consequences of climate change through the UPR will have a positive impact on other human rights, such as right to food, to health, to housing, and on vulnerable groups such as women and girls, children, indigenous Peoples. Finally, the UPR is also a way of keeping climate change issues at the top of the political agenda.



Objectives

This HRC 56th session side event aims to understand the role that the UPR can play to advance human rights in the climate change age. The UPR has the potential to advance human rights, as the recommendations may propose strengthening laws, institutions and suggesting public policies by including specific references to climate change elements and to specific wording to the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and thus reinforcing human rights in a comprehensive manner.

Format

This one-hour panel discussion is open to representatives from Member States, experts, and interested civil society organizations.

Speakers are invited to prepare 10-minute interventions. A moderated questions and answer period will follow.

Moderator: Ms. Mona M'Bikay, Executive Director, UPR Info

Panellists:

- Ms. Elisa Morgera, Special Rapporteur on climate change
- Ms. Nela Cernota, OHCHR
- Christian Mounzeo, Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme

Concluding remarks: Francesca Mingrone, CIEL