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

Written statement* submitted by The American Pakistan Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Empowering Resilience: Addressing Climate Change and Human Rights in Vulnerable Communities

It is an honor to address this session on behalf of the American Pakistan Foundation (APF), rooted in its mission to empower the Pakistani American community and foster bridges between the United States of America and Pakistan. The American Pakistan Foundation recognizes the paramount importance of addressing the adverse impacts of climate change on human rights and the crucial need to ensure livelihood resilience in the face of escalating risks.

Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities (1). Rising sea levels threaten the right to housing in coastal areas, while increased frequency of extreme weather events undermines the right to food and water security (2). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment synthesis report highlights the urgent need for global greenhouse gas emissions to peak before 2025 and decline 43% by 2030 to limit warming to 1.5°C and avoid severe human rights impacts (3). According to the World Bank, by 2050, over 800 million people in South Asia could be at risk from climate-induced disasters, significantly impacting their human rights. (4)

Case Study: Pakistan

Pakistan, a country with significant contributions to global agriculture and a large population dependent on farming, is particularly vulnerable to climate change (5). The adverse effects are already evident and profound:

Extreme Weather Events: In recent years, Pakistan has experienced severe floods and droughts, causing substantial loss of life and livelihoods. The 2022 floods, for example, affected 33 million people, caused widespread displacement, and destroyed agricultural lands, which are critical for food security and income generation. (6)

Glacial Melt and Water Security: The rapid melting of glaciers in the northern regions of Pakistan poses a significant threat to water security. As glaciers retreat, there is an increased risk of glacial lake outburst floods, which can devastate communities and agricultural areas downstream(7).

Public Health: Climate change also impacts public health in Pakistan, with increased incidences of heatwaves, vector-borne diseases, and water-borne diseases exacerbated by extreme weather events and flooding. (8)

Disproportionate Burden on LMICs and Human Rights

Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) like Pakistan experience the burden of climate change disproportionately due to their limited resources and infrastructure to mitigate and adapt to its impacts (9). These countries contribute the least to global greenhouse gas emissions but suffer the most from the consequences, highlighting a profound injustice (10). Climate change exacerbates existing inequalities and infringes on fundamental human rights, including the right to life, health (SDG 3), food, water (SDG 6), and adequate housing. The lack of resources to effectively respond to climate-related disasters often leads to violations of these rights, leaving vulnerable populations in a perpetual state of crisis and insecurity.

Strategies for Resilience

To address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, particularly in LMICs, it is imperative to implement comprehensive strategies that enhance resilience and ensure sustainable development. These strategies must be multifaceted, combining immediate relief efforts with long-term planning, and be grounded in a human rights-based approach. By focusing on sustainable livelihoods, robust social protection systems, and community-based approaches, we can build resilience at the grassroots level, empowering communities to withstand and recover from climate-related shocks.

Additionally, international cooperation and adequate funding are essential to support these efforts, ensuring that resources are available to implement and sustain these resilience-building measures.

Adopting sustainable agricultural practices and investing in climate-resilient crops can bolster food security and support farmers' livelihoods. Forest management and sustainable fisheries also play crucial roles in maintaining ecological balance and supporting local economies.

Expanding social protection schemes, including crop insurance and disaster relief funds, is essential to provide a safety net for those most at risk. Such systems should be inclusive, covering informal workers and other vulnerable groups.

Engaging local communities in climate adaptation planning ensures that interventions are context-specific and culturally appropriate. Indigenous knowledge and practices can offer valuable insights into sustainable resource management and resilience building.

International Cooperation and Funding

Enhanced international cooperation is imperative. Developed nations must honor their commitments to provide financial and technical support to developing countries, facilitating their efforts to adapt to climate impacts and build resilient communities. The operationalization of the Santiago Network and the establishment of new funding arrangements at COP27 are positive steps that need robust follow-through.

Recommendations and Call to Action

Member states should integrate human rights considerations into national climate policies and adaptation strategies.

Developed countries should increase their financial contributions to the Green Climate Fund and other mechanisms to support climate resilience in vulnerable nations.

All countries should foster inclusive dialogue and cooperation, ensuring the participation of women, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups in climate decision-making processes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ensuring livelihood resilience in the context of climate change is not only a matter of environmental sustainability but a fundamental human rights imperative. Pakistan's experience underscores the urgent need for global action to protect the rights and livelihoods of those most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Let us commit to transformative actions that protect our planet and uphold the dignity and rights of all people, especially those most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.

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