
Plenary Session [Plenary Session I]

**A Human Rights-Based Approach to Mitigating
and Countering Climate Change
– Local Solutions to a Global Problem**

Oct 10, 2022 (Mon) 17:30-19:30

Organizers: Gwangju Metropolitan City, UN Human Rights, UCLG-CSIPDHR

Background

States - at all level - have a human rights obligation to prevent the foreseeable adverse effects of climate change and ensure that those affected by it, particularly those in vulnerable situations, have access to effective remedies and means of adaptation to protect their lives, rights and dignity.

The Preamble of the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change makes it clear that all States "should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights".

Urban activities are major sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Estimates suggest that cities are responsible for 75 percent of global CO2 emissions, with transport and buildings being among the largest contributors. Many cities have initiated work on the increased use of renewable energy sources, cleaner production techniques and regulations or incentives to limit industrial emissions.

Yet, the "triple planetary crisis" of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution hampers the enjoyment and achievement of a wide range of human rights including the human rights to water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture and development. It also affects the enjoyment of the human right to a clean, safe and healthy environment, as recognized by the UN Human Rights Council in October 2021.

The negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately borne by persons and communities already in disadvantageous situations owing to geography, poverty, gender, age, disability, cultural or ethnic background, among others, that have historically contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions. Local communities that occupy and rely upon low-lying coastal lands, tundra and Arctic ice, arid lands, and other delicate ecosystems and at risk territories for their housing and subsistence face the greatest threats from climate change.



So, in the face of the exponentially increasing impacts on human rights, what role can local and regional governments play in the protection and promotion of human rights by fighting against climate change, biodiversity loss and implementing the right to a clean, safe and healthy environment? How can cities ensure that mitigation and climate change responses do not negatively affect human rights? What solutions exist when cities are quicker to respond to this global emergency than national authorities are? How can global discussions benefit from the local rights-based responses to the triple planetary crisis?

Objective & Main Agenda

Through a discussion between international experts and representatives of local and regional governments, of local governments' network and of civil society, the panel will aim at:

1. Looking at the impact of climate change on human rights and why considering human rights in combatting climate change, adaptation and mitigation measures is crucial;
2. Highlighting extraterritorial obligations of local governments and exploring human rights-based practices at local level for mitigating and countering climate change;
3. Considering the use of these local practices and perspectives to feed into global discussions, declarations and decisions on climate change, like the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.

