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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 Human Rights Advocates Inc., 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.

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* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



The Relationship Between Right to Culture and the Sustainable Development Goals to Curb the Negative Effects of Climate Change

I. Introduction

Climate change has been catastrophic for developing nations as well as people living poverty in nations across the globe. One of the largest contributors to climate change are agricultural practices recommended by Western nations. The negative effects of these practices that contribute to global climate change infringes on a multitude of Human Rights peoples are afforded, including, but not limited to: Right to Food, Right to Housing, Right to Water, Right to Culture, and Right to Work to Make a Living. As people in poverty and developing nations suffer the most negative effects of climate change, these nations and peoples are the ones whose Human Rights are being most infringed by the continuation of practices that contribute to climate change, such as unsustainable agricultural practices. Thus, nation-states across the globe and their respective governments have an affirmative duty to fix the problem of climate change. I focus on how climate change has negatively affected developing nations by examining the effects of climate change on Kiribati—a small island developing nation in the Pacific. I then demonstrate how indigenous sustainable agricultural practices have demonstrated not only that they are more effective than current agricultural practices developed and used in the West but are too sustainable. Furthermore, and just as important, utilizing sustainable indigenous practices furthers these peoples' human rights because it brings these peoples into the economic global community of sustainable development for generations to come and their right to practice their culture. I demonstrate this by examining the Chinampa system in Mexico.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) states governments party the Covenant agree to take steps for the progressive realization of the right to be free from hunger, the right to gain a living by work, and right to participate in cultural life. Since current unsustainable agricultural (for example, development) practices contribute to famine, and sustainable agriculture such as the Chinampas in Mexico provide poor famers a way to gain a living by working in the new sustainable development economy and practice the indigenous agricultural practices of the region, all nations party to the ICESCR must take steps to ensure sustainable agricultural practices are developed in their respective nations. Second, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in Article 27, too, states people have a right to enjoy their culture as an affirmative right governments party to the ICCPR must protect. Third, the Universal Declaration states all persons have the right to an adequate standard of living for his or her well-being—including food. Since climate change is causing famine and drought, such as in Kiribati, and unsustainable agricultural practices not producing enough food for large urban cores, such as in Mexico City during the epochs the city reduced its Chinampa fields, all UN member states have taken on an oath to end practices that reduce the ability of peoples across the globe to not attain an adequate ration of food needed for survival. Finally, the Resolution for the 43rd Session on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on ending hunger, achieving food security, and promoting sustainable agriculture and ending poverty requires governments to implement the type of agriculture sustainable projects like Chinampas systems and eradicating climate change which is causing SIDS (small-island developing states) like Kiribati to become food scarce and thus uninhabitable.

II. Negative Effects of Climate Change due to Unsustainable Practices: Kiribati

Kiribati is becoming the first country to lose its land territory to climate change. This fact is more dire and urgent a situation than the obvious consequence of this fact—the loss of land means the loss of housing and thus the displacement of large swaths of the Kiribati people. This fact does not demonstrate the incursion of sea water due to rising sea levels associated with Climate Change has devastated the food and water supply of Kiribati long before the

land disappears under the rising sea. An 8-year-old Kiribati resident recalls one night the tides went over the seawall, hitting the land where her family kept their pigs for food. The pigs were swept to sea and the land used for husbandry destroyed. Furthermore, the number one issue Kiribati faces is a shortage of freshwater resources. Kiribati suffers water shortages due to tidal inundation and seawater intrusion from climate change-based increases of both heat and storm weather events which taint the freshwater aquifers located throughout the islands. This means Kiribati suffers from a much more urgent and dire situation from Climate Change above land loss—a situation where they will run out of fresh water long before they run out of land. Kiribati food situation is just as dire. The rising sea temperatures due to climate change is disrupting the largest economic and food resource available in Kiribati—the tuna fisheries; the rising temperatures is disrupting their migration and spawning patterns, diverting them away from Kiribati. The cruel aspect is Kiribati is responsible for less than 1% of global carbon emissions, but it suffers severely from the effects of climate change, to the point of uninhabitability. Thus, the large nation-states that supply the most negative environmental uses that contribute to climate change are responsible to take affirmative steps to implement sustainable practices that save these vulnerable nations and people.

III. Sustainable Agricultural Practices that curb Climate Change & Incorporate Cultural Practices and Vulnerable Peoples into the New Sustainable Agroecology: Mexico's Chinampas

Conventional agricultural practices developed by wealthy Western states in the 20th century is one of the greatest contributors to climate change and environmental degradation. Chinampas are an indigenous farming technique from the Central Valley of Mexico that has been used by indigenous people in the area since pre-colonization by both Europeans and the Aztecs. Chinampas use a system where they take mud and residue from the bottom of the floating plot of land to create a new layer of dirt with seedlings on the top, in a continuous cyclical cycle. This process has proven to be much more efficient than conventional Western methods that use agrochemicals and single-crop fields. Adding the residue to the topsoil plays a large role in reducing soil compaction on the surface, thus increasing water infiltration into the crop bed. Yields are, “significantly better than conventional [Western] methods,” as data shows the return on crops is about one hectare more per yield and average financial return over costs increased by 75%. Further, the conventional Western method releases large amounts of nitrous oxide into the environment due to burning excess residue post-yields—nitrous oxide has 310 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide. Chinampas use the excess residue post-yield as topsoil, thus reusing the nitrous oxide and not releasing it back into the atmosphere. Therefore, this indigenous method is not only more efficient, but also, a technique to reduce Climate Change.

Since states party to the above-mentioned treaties have a duty to not only curb Climate Change for the reasons stated, but also, a duty to preserve indigenous practices, the right to practice one's culture, and integrate these peoples into their economies—such as the lucrative and newly-developing sustainable agroecology.

IV. Recommendations

1. HRA urges the Human Rights Council to
 - a. Draft a Resolution establishing a legal framework to protect the rights of people displaced by climate change.
 - b. And to include in this legal framework the need to use sustainable indigenous practices, when possible, as to incorporate these peoples into economies and protect their Right to Culture.
 - c. And to include in this legal framework the need to develop sustainable methods that incorporate peoples in poverty and developing nations into the new economies that arise.

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