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Human Rights Council

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Agenda items 2 and 3

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

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

**Joint written statement* submitted by Franciscans
International (FI), the Commission of the Churches on
International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, the
Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU),
non-governmental organizations in general consultative
status**

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

[31May 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Climate change and human rights: The urgency for the appointment of the UN Special Rapporteur on climate change and human rights**

Introduction

Franciscans International (FI), Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKSU), World Council of Churches (WCC) and Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council¹ would like to welcome the Report of the Office of United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (A/HRC/20/7) on the outcome of the Seminar concerning addressing the adverse impact of climate change on the full enjoyment human rights held in 23 and 24 February 2012, in pursuant with the Human Rights Council Resolution 18/22 on human rights and climate change.

We would like to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council on the urgency to address the negative impact of Climate Change from the Human Rights perspective. It is imperative that the international community and all sectors of civil society mobilize to tackle the hurdles that obstruct adequate and equitable international action on climate change and human rights.

Current situation

Over the last years the dramatic effects that Climate Change has on Human Rights have become evident. Some of the consequences that populations are facing in various regions of the world are forced displacement, migration, loss of livelihoods and cultures. These threats affect in particular vulnerable peoples that have a strong and direct link to nature such as people living on small islands or indigenous peoples. Women and children are particularly under threat. Our planet and the lives of millions of peoples are at stake.

The Human Rights Council has taken actions on the linkage between human rights and climate change through Resolution 7/23 (March 2008) which expressed already “climate change poses an immediate and far reaching threat to people and communities around the world and has implications for the full enjoyment of human rights” while “the effect of climate change will be felt most acutely by those segments of the population who are already in a vulnerable situation”. Pursuant to this resolution, the OHCHR conducted a study on the relationship between climate change and human rights². In its 10th Session in March 2009, the Council adopted Resolution 10/4 on climate change and human rights and decided to organise a panel discussion on the relationship between climate change and human rights³.

In accordance to the Human Rights Council Resolution 13/17, the Social Forum was requested by the Council in 2010 to address “the adverse effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights, including the right to life and economic, social and cultural

** The Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council, an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.

¹ These NGOs together with International Catholic Center of Geneva are the part of the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change, Environment and Human Rights.

² See A/HRC/10/61.

³ See A/HRC/10/61.

rights⁴". At its final report, the Social Forum recommended "the Human Rights Council to establish a new mechanism", which in our opinion should be a special Rapporteur, "dedicated to human rights and climate change."

In its 18th Session in September 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 18/22 which affirmed that human rights obligations, standards, and principles have the potential to inform and strengthen international and national policy making in the area of climate change, promoting policy coherence, legitimacy, and sustainable outcomes. The Council also decided to organise a Seminar on human rights and climate change which was held on 23 and 24 February 2012.⁵

Despite the actions mentioned above, the Human Rights Council has not been able to establish an appropriate mechanism to address the impact of the climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights. As a result, the issue of climate change is addressed in an ad-hoc manner and the Council has failed to respond the grievances of the victims of climate change.

Conclusions and recommendations

We commend the conclusions of the OHCHR 2012 Seminar addressing the adverse impact of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights. Taking note of the recent developments at the Human Rights Council and building on the calls being made by civil society organizations in 2010⁶, 2011⁷ and 2012⁸, we strongly believe that more needs to be done. The effects of Climate Change on the full enjoyment of Human Rights must be addressed without delay.

Therefore, we recommend the Human Rights Council to:

- Establish a UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights, with the mandate, among others, to assess the impact of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights, to make country visit, to receive communication from the victims and affected communities, and take stocks of good practise on the field of climate change.
- Provide inputs to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, through the Special Rapporteur, and for the Special Rapporteur to be a focal point for monitoring the impacts of climate change on the realization of rights.

We encourage Human Rights Council members to table such a resolution to be adopted as soon as possible ideally by consensus.

⁴ See the report of the 2010 Social Forum at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/SForum/Pages/SForum2010.aspx>

⁵ See the report of the seminar at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/HRClimateChangeIndex.aspx>

⁶ See NGO Declaration on Climate Change and Human Rights at http://www.ccig-iccg.org/declaration_on_climate_change_&_human_rights.php

⁷ See it at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=8407>

⁸ The petition is now being circulated and open to signature, see the online version at : http://www.petitions24.com/sr_human_rights_and_climate_change