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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 India Water 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.

[30 January 2024]

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



Protecting Human Rights in India in the Context of Changing Climate

Climate change is impacting India's natural environment, economy and society with increased frequency and intensity. Heat waves, floods, monsoons and declining groundwater reserves are some of the extreme challenges that India is facing today. Heat wave risks to wellbeing and GDP have been particularly costly. In 2023, 15 states across India struggled with the impacts on health, agriculture and the availability of water from heat waves. Floods have cost India US\$26.3 billion, with damages exceeding approximately 0.5% of its GDP. Several studies point to the devastating economic and social costs of climate-related damages in India due to climate inaction – which could total US\$35 trillion over the next 50 years with particular impacts in the health and agriculture sectors. The increasing frequency of such disasters is felt most by the local communities inhabiting India's 'climate frontiers' – areas that are more susceptible to climate-related disasters while internal migration and losses to livelihoods are already occurring.

India's domestic policy on climate and environmental action includes protecting regional glaciers, greening the railway system, reducing single-use plastic and producing clean cooking fuel. India aims to reach net zero by 2070 and has been able to decouple its economic growth from its emissions. The IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report released in March 2023 scientifically re-enforces India's position on the historical responsibility of developed countries for usurping the Carbon Budget and excessive emissions. It confirms once again that India, despite being home to more than 17% of the global population, has contributed less than 4% of the global cumulative CO₂ emissions.

As a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, India submitted its first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in the year 2015 comprising, inter-alia, of following two quantifiable targets:

To reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 from 2005 level; and

To achieve about 40 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

These two targets have been achieved well ahead of the time. On 31st October, 2023; the cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources is 186.46 MW, which is the 43.81% of the total cumulative electric power installed capacity. As per the third national communication submitted by India to the UNFCCC in December 2023, the emission intensity of its GDP has been reduced by 33 percent between 2005 and 2019. It echoes Prime Minister Modi's vision for LiFE or Lifestyle for Environment, which is a global mass movement for promoting environmental friendly lifestyle to protect and preserve the environment.

India's current climate action plans are propelled by a recognition of the risks and economic costs that may result in the case of inaction. India's 2021-22 Economic Survey highlights that investments made in green technology and resilient infrastructure can safeguard the economy from future climate-induced uncertainties. To date, India's climate adaptation and mitigation work has predominantly been funded by domestic sources of green finance. Now, it is also actively working to organise its investment platform to channel the growing pool of international sources of climate finance. Climate change reduces crop yields and lower nutrition quality of produce. Extreme events like droughts affect the food and nutrient consumption, and its impact on farmers. Government has formulated schemes/plans to make agriculture more resilient to climate change.

The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture is one of the Missions within the National Action Plan on Climate Change. The mission aims at evolving and implementing strategies to make Indian agriculture more resilient to the changing climate.

To meet the challenges of sustaining domestic food production in the face of changing climate, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India launched a flagship network research project ‘National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture’ in 2011. The project aims to develop and promote climate resilient technologies in agriculture, which addresses vulnerable areas of the country and the outputs of the project help the districts and regions prone to extreme weather conditions like droughts, floods, frost, heat waves, etc. to cope with such extreme events. Short term and long-term research programs with a national perspective have been taken up involving adaptation and mitigation covering crops, horticulture, livestock, fisheries and poultry. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyan: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy’s scheme helps farmers install solar pumps and grid-connected solar and other renewable power plants across the country. The government provides a subsidy of 60% to farmers, and 30% of the cost is covered by loans. Farmers bear only 10% of the total cost of the project.

Department of Science and Technology is carrying out studies like district level vulnerability assessment as well as disaster risk assessment to understand the quantum of present and future impacts of climate change. The assessment will help in initiating appropriate climate actions. It will also benefit climate-vulnerable communities across India through the development of better-designed climate change adaptation projects. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority Funds to promote afforestation and regeneration activities as a way of compensating for forest land being diverted to non-forest uses.

India’s private sector has been playing a key role in reducing the cost of existing technologies like solar photovoltaic panels as well as emerging technologies for clean energy and transport solutions such as carbon capture and storage, green hydrogen and battery storage solutions. The Securities and Exchange Board of India has further bolstered India’s sustainable finance flows by strengthening its regulatory regime around green bonds, introducing the concept of ‘blue bonds’ focusing on ocean health and improving incentives around disclosures to avoid green washing of bonds by issuers. Through initiatives like the Leadership Group for Industry Transition co-founded by India, the country aims to develop green hydrogen value chains and their industrial applications in high-emitting industries like steel and cement. The National Infrastructure Pipeline is one such initiative that provides a repository of infrastructure projects to be connected with investors.

The 2022 Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill sets in motion the creation of a domestic market for carbon trading for India which can help minimise the country’s energy consumption and incentivise the deployment of clean technologies. Mumbai aims to become South Asia’s first zero-carbon city by 2050, using green bonds, public-private blended finance and global lenders. Such tax and price measures, when balanced with investments in clean infrastructure assets and research innovation, can help nations to act quickly and at scale on climate mitigation. India estimates that US\$4.5 trillion is required until 2040 to ensure intergenerational equity and sustainability is honoured alongside the country’s poverty eradication and growth agenda. India’s NDC is now conditional on wealthier countries providing it with adequate climate finance and facilitating requisite technology transfers. The Paris Agreement goal to stay “well below 2 degrees” of warming was reflected in the commitments India made at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021.

India plays a critical leadership role for other emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) in the Global South and will demonstrate this through its upcoming G20 Presidency in 2023 and by having co-founded initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, One Sun One World One Grid and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. India’s ‘global net zero’ approach is informed by the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, which holds developed countries and international financial institutions liable for financing the clean transition of the developing world. It is part of the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC), a group that advocates for more control in how finance is used for adaptation and mitigation to prevent future loss and damage. India will be an important influence in how to operationalise the ‘US\$100 billion commitment’ the climate finance pledged to developing countries by wealthier nations.

India will also push for improvements in the pace and scale of climate finance to help developing countries meet their goals. According to estimates US\$100 billion a year is not sufficient to cover the costs of avoiding climate change: by 2025, bilateral donors must double their climate finance commitments while multilateral development banks must triple their financing from 2018 levels.

The country has made huge strides in improving energy access during the past two decades, with near-universal household access achieved in 2019. Its challenge now is to continue to develop the energy network and diversify its fuel mix to meet growing demand. The situation presents India with the opportunity to take bold action, putting it on a path to realizing strong, equitable, shared growth, while also averting the worst effects of the changing climate. The G20 presidency shaped the climate and energy transition agenda at a global level. Reflecting its sheer size and diversity, any successful models it develops can be replicated in other economies, producing a beneficial effect for billions of people. India has established itself as a role model through its response to these opportunities, potentially having a resounding impact on our collective future.
