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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 International Action for Peace & Sustainable Development, 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.

[24 May 2024]

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



Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change

In July 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ian Fry, presented a comprehensive report highlighting the intersection of climate action and human rights obligations. This report underscores the responsibilities of countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, emphasizing that climate change mitigation and adaptation must be aligned with the protection and promotion of human rights. The report draws on extensive consultations with governments, United Nations entities, and civil society organizations, supplemented by over 60 submissions from diverse stakeholders. This collaborative approach reflects the evolving understanding that climate change is not only an environmental issue but a common concern for humanity, as recognized by the General Assembly's 1988 resolution 43/53, titled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind."

Consequences of militarization along the line of divide in the Kashmir region not only play a role in climate change but also impede initiatives aimed at tackling environmental concerns. The presence of military activities in the region contributes to environmental degradation and also poses a significant obstacle to endeavours focused on addressing pressing environmental issues.

In a world where political conflicts and climate change may initially seem like disparate issues, there exists a substantial correlation between the two forces. The connection becomes more apparent when we shift our perspective from climate's impact on conflict to the vulnerability of regions affected by conflict to climate change.

A notable case in point is the region of Kashmir, where the effects of militarization across the line of divide not only contribute to climate change but also hinder efforts to address environmental issues. The absence of any cooperative management of resources or to attend to the common issues on both sides further aggravates the problem.

Issues such as habitat loss, deforestation, pollution, and ecological imbalances are prevalent in this region, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. Disruption of traditional livelihoods has pushed more people into poverty, while the delicate ecosystems of lakes are threatened by pollution and habitat destruction caused by military activities.

The consequences of climate change, including glacier melting and altered water flow patterns, further exacerbate environmental challenges in the region. The expansion of military facilities and activities has played a significant role in contributing to ecological problems.

A view of the glacier that lies at the junction of Guraize Belt, Shounthar Valley and Niat Nallah of Gilgit Baltistan (Pakistan Administered Kashmir). It is located at an altitude of 14000 ft. Photo/Sardar Muhammad Rafique Khan

Deforestation is a prominent consequence of conflict, driven by increased demand for timber resources and a lack of oversight. This rampant deforestation not only results in the loss of crucial ecosystems but also reduces the planet's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, a key driver of climate change.

Resource exploitation driven by conflict often leads to widespread pollution, as industrial activities and infrastructure development proceed without adequate environmental safeguards. The unrestricted release of pollutants into the atmosphere intensifies the greenhouse gas effect, exacerbating global warming and amplifying the impacts of climate change.

In the Kashmir region, a staggering 3,000 metric tonnes of plastic waste are generated annually, with over 1,700 metric tonnes recklessly dumped into agricultural fields, forests, and water bodies. The improper disposal of waste poses a severe threat to the region's fragile ecosystem. Shockingly, more than 50 percent of waste in the Kashmir region is disposed off without proper treatment, harming the land, air, and water bodies and affecting the overall environmental health of the region.

Black carbon emissions from various sources in India, including diesel vehicles, brick kilns, cookstoves, and coal-based power plants, contribute significantly to regional warming. Irresponsible scattering of land mines and activities like chemical blasting and ice cutting for military camp establishment further degrade the environment and pose risks to local communities.

The influx of new residents into ecologically fragile regions as part of post-August 5, 2019 decisions, exacerbates resource demand and waste management challenges. This contributes to environmental degradation, including deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution, disrupting the natural balance of ecosystems and affecting local weather patterns. It underscores how conflicts, the environment, and climate are all interconnected.

The nexus between conflict and climate change results in a web of interconnected consequences, where humanitarian crises and environmental degradation are intertwined. The Indian government's introduction of the new domicile order expands residency definitions, allowing a new category of non-Kashmiris to settle in the region.

This policy shift and new laws that facilitate land use, encourage new settlers and lead to expansion of military camps and development projects, at the risk of dislocating local populations, do not only lead to forced abandonment of homes but also adversely impact biodiversity, ecosystem resilience, and broader environmental conditions.

International organizations, such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies, play a crucial role in addressing climate change resulting from conflicts. Their involvement ensures a collective approach to climate-induced conflicts, providing essential protection and support to affected populations.

In conclusion, the relationship between climate change and political conflicts is far from coincidental. These two forces walk hand in hand, with conflicts exacerbating environmental challenges and climate change intensifying the impacts of conflicts. To address this complex issue, international cooperation and concerted efforts are essential. Recognizing the interdependence of climate, conflict, and the environment is the first step towards finding sustainable solutions to these pressing global challenges.
