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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 the Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés (OIPMA), 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.

[8 February 2019]

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



Reducing future losses due to climate change

Anthropogenic climate change has been the main dominant cause of observed warming since the mid-20th century, while the global average surface temperature warmed by 0.85°C between 1880 and 2012. Climate change is imposing a threat to the environment, humanity and biodiversity. With multiple causes engaging in this global issue, climate change has amounted to global warming of the layers of Earth, oceans, changes in precipitation patterns, the melting of glaciers, rise sea levels, ocean acidification and frequency of extreme weather namely storms or heat waves.

After the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, it is undeniable the need to keep global warming at 1.5 °C by 2030. Knowing the practical differences between a world with 1.5°C of warming and one with 2°C is essential to understanding the practical effectiveness of adaptation and losses' reduction.

By 2100, it is predicted that the rate of sea-level rise will be 30% less in a 1.5°C scenario than in a 2°C scenario. For heat-related extremes, temperatures in a 1.5°C scenario would remain within 'the upper level of present-day natural variability', but that a 2°C scenario would launch a steamy 'new climate regime' for tropical regions (with parts of Africa, South America and South-East Asia taking the biggest hit). In a 1.5°C world, by 2100, up to 70% of tropical coral reefs will be at risk of severe degradation on account of temperature-induced bleaching. In a 2°C world, virtually all tropical corals would be extremely threatened.

In December, the outcomes of COP24 failed to comply with the Paris Agreement which promised to protect, respect, and consider human rights in climate action.

The "Organisation Internationale pour les Pays les Moins Avancés" (OIPMA) / The International Organization for Least Developed Countries (IOLDCs) is deeply concerned about the lack of commitment in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Many populations, as a main economic income, rely on their fishing and harvesting outcomes. The increase of rains and sea-level rise leads to the destruction of crops and fresh water reserves by floods. Moreover, the change in temperature and acidification suffered by the oceans are impacting marine species to the extent of producing them diseases, forcing their movement or even its extinction.

The increase of vector-, food- and water-borne diseases, asthma, skin, heart and mental health diseases has been found attributable, in part, due to climate change. In fact, women's health is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This is sometimes driven or hindered by existing socio-economic inequalities, cultural norms, or intrinsic physiological factors.

Among the vulnerable subjects, not only women but indigenous and local communities depending on natural resources are extremely exposed to the impacts of climate change. A 2009 OHCHR report found that climate change is having implications for indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, including the right of a people not to be deprived of its own means of subsistence, and the obligation of a State party to promote the realization of the right to self-determination.

Many communities have already been forced to leave their homes, leaving behind not just the material acquisitions they used to owe but also the symbolic value that these items represent for the community, their lifestyle, culture and/or religion.

It has been proved that some women ended up in prostitution as the only mean of survival they had left after climate change impacted their community. Moreover, climate change is a potential factor to increase conflict for resources, even reaching the extent of armed conflict.

Several LDCs, although their little contribution to Green House Gases (GHG) emission, are extremely threatened by climate change with far fewer capabilities to mitigate and adapt from it. Developed countries are also witnessing the impacts of such a phenomenon. But yet, climate justice is not a priority for many stakeholders, major contributors to GHG release and in possession of enough capacities to deal with the impacts of climate change.

OIPMA believes that environmental justice is a process that should integrate the affected communities; it must be a dialogue amongst all the partners that ultimately lead to clear and transparent decisions, leaving no one behind.

Communities must be allowed to engage in such process and planners must be skilled in listening, persuasion, deliberation, argumentation, and consensus-building.

In several national jurisdictions, the right to life has been accepted as including the right to pollution-free water and air as well as placing positive obligations on the state to remedy environmental risks that threaten life. Moreover, in 2017, the IACtHR delivered an Advisory Opinion on the interpretation of the American Convention on Human Rights in the context of environmental law. Among other things, the Court found that protection of the environment is critical to the enjoyment of other human rights, including the right to life.

In separate cases in 2004 and 2008, the ECtHR found a violation of the right to life because the authorities in each instance had not discharged positive obligations to protect life against risks from known and imminent environmental hazards.

In this regard, OIPMA believes that adopting such an approach would facilitate respect for the environment and climate action towards a dramatic decrease of GHG emission.

OIPMA, calls upon stake-holders to engage with existing mechanisms in this field to help communities to adapt and become climate-resilient, with a human rights and inclusive approach.

Welcoming, among others, the importance of the Nansen Initiative of 2012 and the follow-up Platform of Disaster Displacement, The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage of 2013 and the five-year rolling work-plan started in 2018, OIPMA urges stakeholders to engage with and contribute to the mandate of such mechanisms.

OIPMA calls upon the collaboration of the International Community to prioritize the reduction of Green Houses Gases (GHG), to prevent and lessen climate disasters.

It is vital to hold global warming to a half-degree below 2°C. This would dramatically abate water scarcity, slow sea-level rise, save the world's tropical reefs from complete collapse, prevent sharp declines in crop production and reduce crippling heat waves.

Progress towards limiting warming to 1.5°C requires a significant acceleration of this trend. Climate change constrains possible development paths, but opportunities for effective climate responses overlap with opportunities for sustainable development.

For this purpose, it is required substantial societal and technological transformations, dependent in turn on global and regional sustainable development pathways.

In order to hold Global Warming to 1.5°C but also funding the costs of mitigation and adaptation, accountability is necessary. In particular, Oil companies have a crucial role in causing, shaping, advancing, and defending the current unsustainable fossil fuel dependent global economy. By continuing to provide fossil fuels to feed the demand, they have been dictating the rules of the game to the global economic system.

Moreover, Big Oil had the possibility to reduce the harmful effects of its business and to adjust its business model to become less carbon-intensive; some investor-owned oil corporations had this opportunity since more than 40 years ago. Leading investor-owned oil companies actively opposed and, in many cases, successfully prevented policies towards GHG reduction and in some countries funded climate denial efforts.

The oil industry holds fossil fuel reserves that, if burned, will bring the planet well above the 2°C warming. Thus, to avoid exceeding that threshold, more than one-third of current oil reserves and half of the gas reserves should, in fact, be kept in the ground.

OIPMA urges the reduction of harmful environmental activities, and the rectification of the harm already done which are so-called: Decarbonisation and disgorgement, respectively.

Oil companies are directly responsible for the problem and financially capable of assisting in the global climate change efforts. They should disgorge part of the money they accumulated by benefitting from their harmful activities to help the 'victims' to prevent or adapt to climate impacts, and to compensate those non-adapted or mitigated.

The inclusion of Big Oil among the direct agents of climate justice can propel global collaboration on climate change by adding the necessary resources to pursue the ambitious goals set by the Paris Agreement, and distributing such resources in a more equitable manner than in the current international system.

It is urgent to consider 1.5°C as a maximum extent of Global warming for, at least, the next 11 years. A failure in doing so would consequently increase the need of adaptation plans and worsen the situation of many populations, biodiversity and land already impacted. Sustainability and clean energies will, by contrast, reduce the need for adaptation and the prevention of further losses and damages.

Greener policies are urgent, it is an ethical and human rights obligation, essential to leave no one behind.
