

FORUM: Human Rights Commission (HRC)

QUESTION OF: Promoting, respecting and protecting Human Rights when Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

STUDENT OFFICER: Lenio Bitsopoulou

POSITION: President

INTRODUCTION

In the words of Amnesty International Secretary General, Agnes Callamard, “The dramatic impacts of climate change have exposed with devastating clarity, how integral a healthy environment is to the enjoyment of all our other rights.”¹ Climate change is directly linked with human rights because of its effect on the environment, our well-being, and our survival. When climate change threatens the life and safety of billions of people on the planet through extreme weather or damages, our standard of physical and mental health through heat, waves, or fires, it becomes obvious that climate change is a serious matter at hand. From the right to housing to the right to health, life, and resources, the rapid burning of fossil fuels, agriculture, deforestation, and land-use change affect everything. According to the World Health Organisation, a prediction of 250,00 deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 will occur because of climate change.²

Climate change must be seen as an injustice issue, similar to other human rights violations. A movement for climate justice calls upon society to address imbalances, and injustices and lay the foundation for a renewable tomorrow. All member states have a human rights obligation, and that is preventing the foreseeable effects of climate change, ensuring that those affected have access to their human rights and dignities.³ The question of ‘Promoting, respecting and protecting Human Rights when Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Degradation’ addresses the ethical complications of our responsibility as a society toward vulnerable populations. This aligns with the theme "Ethos vs Progress:

¹ Amnesty International. “Climate Change.” *Amnesty.org*, 2019, www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/.

² (Ibid)

³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. “OHCHR | OHCHR and Climate Change.” *OHCHR*, www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change#:~:text=Climate%20change%20threatens%20the%20effective.

Reassessing our values in a fragile world" by placing the foundation needed to balance global advancements with moral responsibilities to ensure environmental justice and equity, reshaping our progress to follow along with humane and sustainable principles.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Climate Change

"Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions."⁴

Environmental Degradation

"Environmental degradation is a process through which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and the general health of the environment."⁵

Sustainable

"Of, relating to, or being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged: of or relating to a lifestyle involving the use of sustainable methods."⁶

Livelihood

"Means of support or subsistence⁷, means of supporting one's existence and necessities of life."

Biodiversity

⁴ United Nations. "What Is Climate Change?" *United Nations*, United Nations, 2024, www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change.

⁵ General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus. "Environmental Degradation." *Www.eionet.europa.eu*, www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/en/concept/15154#:~:text=Definition.

⁶ Merriam-Webster. "Definition of SUSTAINABLE." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sustainable.

⁷ Merriam-Webster. "Definition of LIVELIHOOD." *Www.merriam-webster.com*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/livelihood.

“Biological diversity in an environment as indicated by numbers of different species of plants and animals.”⁸

Deforestation

“The action or process of clearing of forests.”⁹

Renewable Energy

“Energy that comes from a source that won't run out. They are natural, self-replenishing, and usually have a low- or zero-carbon footprint. Examples of renewable energy sources include wind power, solar power, bioenergy (organic matter burned as a fuel), and hydroelectric, including tidal energy.”¹⁰

Climate Justice

“Climate justice connects the climate crisis to the social, racial, and environmental issues in which it is deeply entangled”¹¹

Climate Finance

“Climate finance refers to local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change.”¹²

⁸ Merriam-Webster. “Definition of BIODIVERSITY.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/biodiversity.

⁹ Merriam-Webster. “Definition of DEFORESTATION.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deforestation.

¹⁰ National Grid. “What Are the Different Types of Renewable Energy? | National Grid Group.” *Www.nationalgrid.com*, 10 May 2022, www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-different-types-renewable-energy#:~:text=Renewable%20energy%20is%20energy%20that.

¹¹ University of California. “What Is Climate Justice?” *UC Center for Climate Justice*, 2024, centerclimatejustice.universityofcalifornia.edu/what-is-climate-justice/.

¹² United Nations Climate Change. “Introduction to Climate Finance.” *Unfccc.int*, 2023, unfccc.int/topics/introduction-to-climate-finance#:~:text=Climate%20finance%20refers%20to%20local.

Indigenous

“Produced, growing, living, or occurring natively or naturally in a particular region or environment: of or relating to the earliest known inhabitants of a place and especially of a place that was colonized by a now-dominant group.”¹³

Climate Refugee

“People who must leave their homes and communities because of the effects of climate change and global warming.”¹⁴

Self-Determination

“Free choice of one's own acts or states without external compulsion.”¹⁵

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of Climate Change

Climate change has been altering the Earth's climate and weather patterns for many years, taking around a century of research to fully convince the vast majority of the scientific community that human activity could change our planet's climate. Starting in the 1800s, the idea that human-produced carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other gasses could collect and gather in the atmosphere was met with curiosity by the common society. By the late 1950s, CO₂ readings and data offered some of the first analytics to verify the global warming theory. Eventually, an abundance of data, along with climate modeling and real-world weather events, proved that global warming was real and that it also presented a vast amount of catastrophic consequences for our planet, along with the plants, animals, and humans living in it.¹⁶ It is important to remember that pollution can be natural or man-made, for example, natural pollution can come from volcanic eruptions. However, most of the pollution is

¹³ Merriam-Webster. “Definition of INDIGENOUS.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous.

¹⁴ National Geographic. “Environmental Refugee.” *National Geographic*, 2023, education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/environmental-refugee/.

¹⁵ Merriam-Webster. “Definition of SELF-DETERMINATION.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-determination.

¹⁶ History.com Editors. “Climate Change History.” *History*, A&E Television Networks, 6 Oct. 2017, www.history.com/topics/natural-disasters-and-environment/history-of-climate-change.

man-made. Contamination occurs due to the presence of harmful organisms or their undesirable products in a desirable product causing disease or discomfort for the organism who consumes it.¹⁷ According to Live Science in an interview with Ravi Kopparatu, a planetary scientist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, told Live Science, "In roughly 1.3 billion years from now, "humans will not be able to physiologically survive, in nature, on Earth" due to sustained hot and humid conditions. In about 2 billion years, the oceans may evaporate when the sun's luminosity is nearly 20% more than it is now."¹⁸

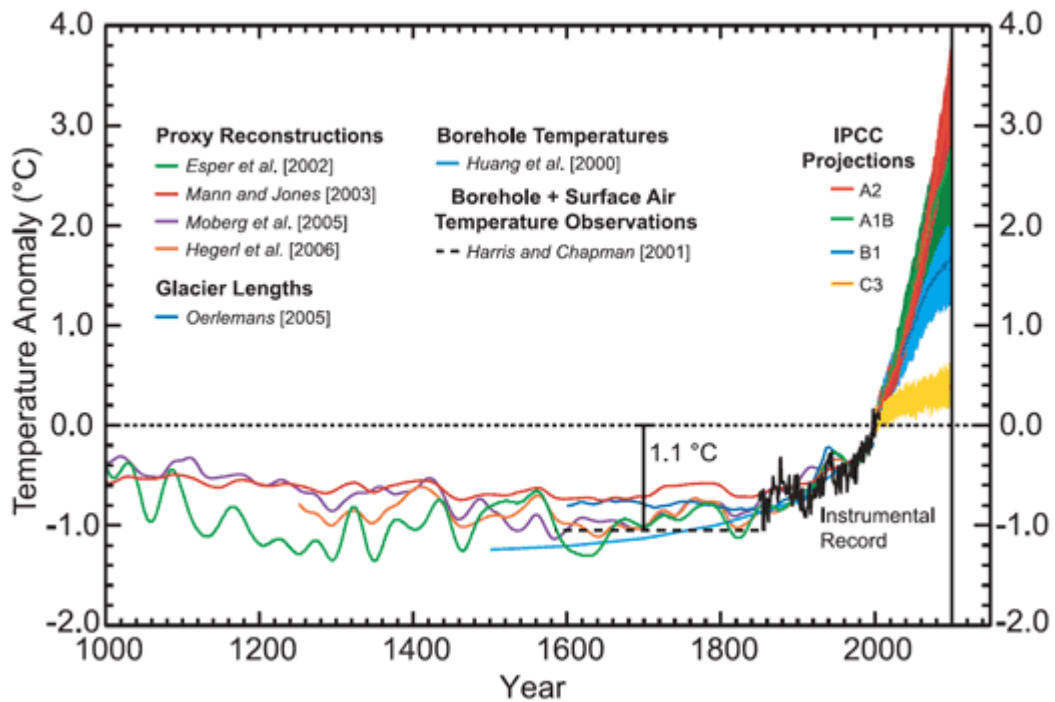


Figure 1: Graph showing the temperature abnormalities (in degrees Celsius) of the past, present, and potentially the future.¹⁹

¹⁷ Doubtnut. "Assertion : Pollution Is Always Caused by Human Activities.Reason : Pollution Is Not Different from Contamination.a Both a and R Are True and R Is the Correct Explanation of Ab Both a and R Are True but R Is Not Correct Explanation of Ac a Is True but R Is Falsed a and R Are False." *Doubtnut*, 2024, www.doubtnut.com/pcmb-questions/106684. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

¹⁸ Coffeypublished, Donavyn. "How Long Will Earth Exist?" *Livescience.com*, 3 Dec. 2023, www.livescience.com/planet-earth/how-long-will-earth-exist#:~:text=Roughly%201.3%20billion%20years%20from.

¹⁹ Cook, John. "Climate Change: Past, Present, and Future." *Skeptical Science*, 2019, skepticalscience.com/Climate-Change-Past-Present-and-Future.html. Accessed 8 Nov. 2019.

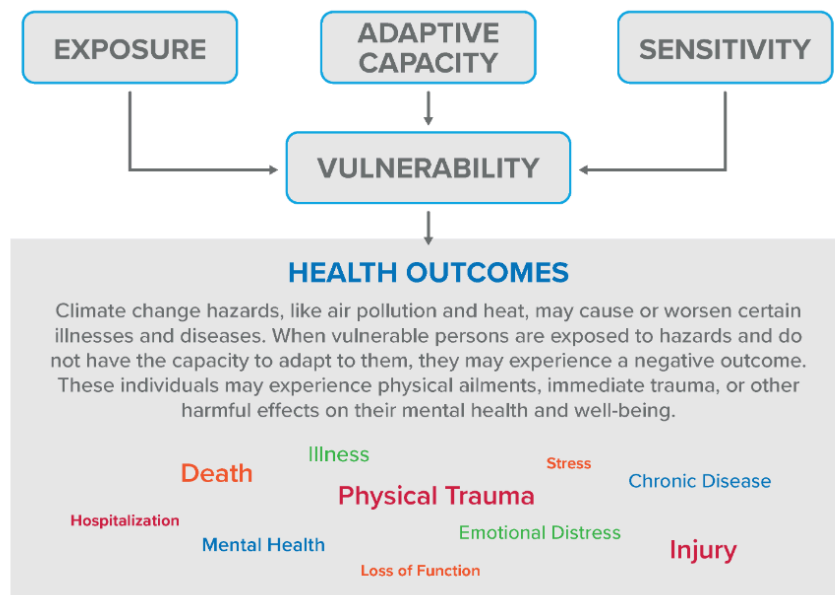
The Impact of Climate Change on Health and Self-Determination

Impact On Health

By changing the seriousness or frequency of health problems that people already face and by creating new health problems in people or places where they have not been before, climate change plays a serious role in the health of humans.

The health effects of climate change include respiratory and heart diseases, pest-related diseases such as, but not limited to, Lyme disease and West Nile Virus, water- and food-related illnesses, injuries, and deaths.²⁰

A person’s vulnerability to illness from climate change depends on three things; exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. Different people and different organisms are exposed to climate hazards differently, therefore exposure will depend on the place and amount of time people spend doing what they do. Furthermore, some people’s organisms are more sensitive than others. This could be due to a vast amount of factors, such as age or health conditions. Finally, people can adjust their response to climate change hazards, according to their ability to adapt which may depend on their age, access to health care, income, and many other factors.²¹



²⁰ US EPA. “Climate Change and Human Health.” *Www.epa.gov*, 20 Mar. 2022, www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-human-health#:~:text=The%20health%20effects%20of%20climate.

²¹ (Ibid)

Figure 2: Graph showing how a person’s exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity can lead them to become vulnerable to various climate change hazards.²²

Impact On Self-Determination

In 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council (H.R.C.) recognized self-determination as one of the human rights most affected by climate change. Climate change will inevitably displace people, limiting their ability to practice their culture and freely engage in economic, social, and cultural development. Although the effects of climate change on the right to self-determination concern all groups around the world, certain groups, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS) residents and Indigenous peoples, are particularly at risk. This affects vulnerable groups, including SIDS and Indigenous peoples, by potentially worsening their living situation and worsening pre-existing inequalities with mudslides, periods of abnormally hot water, water contamination, and/or floods.²³ This emphasizes the crucial role of the international community in engaging in mitigation and adaptation strategies to protect and ensure the right of self-determination for all peoples.²⁴

The Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Resources

Impact On Food & Agriculture

Agriculture is an important sector of the global economy, with crops, livestock, and seafood produced in the United States contributing more than \$300 billion to the economy each year.²⁵ Agriculture and fisheries are highly dependent on the climate and increases in temperature and carbon dioxide (CO₂) can increase crop yields in some places if nutrient levels, soil moisture, water availability, and other conditions remain intact. Changes in the frequency and severity of droughts and floods could pose challenges for farmers and ranchers and threaten food safety. Overall, climate change makes it more difficult to grow

²² (Ibid)

²³ United Nations. *New UN Report: Inequalities Cause and Exacerbate Climate Impacts on Poor and Vulnerable People.* 2016, www.un.org/hi/desa/new-un-report-inequalities-cause-and-exacerbate-climate-impacts-poor-and#:~:text=Families%20living%20in%20poverty%20systematically,thereby%20worsen%20pre%2Dexistent%20inequalities.

²⁴ L’Green, Jasmine, and Zara Bendit-Rosser. “The Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Self-Determination.” *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, 30 June 2022, www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-impact-of-climate-change-on-the-right-to-self-determination/#:~:text=In%202009%2C%20the%20United%20Nations.

²⁵ Hatfield, J., et al. “National Climate Assessment.” *National Climate Assessment*, 2014, nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/sectors/agriculture.

crops, raise animals, and catch fish in the same ways and same places as we have done in the past.²⁶

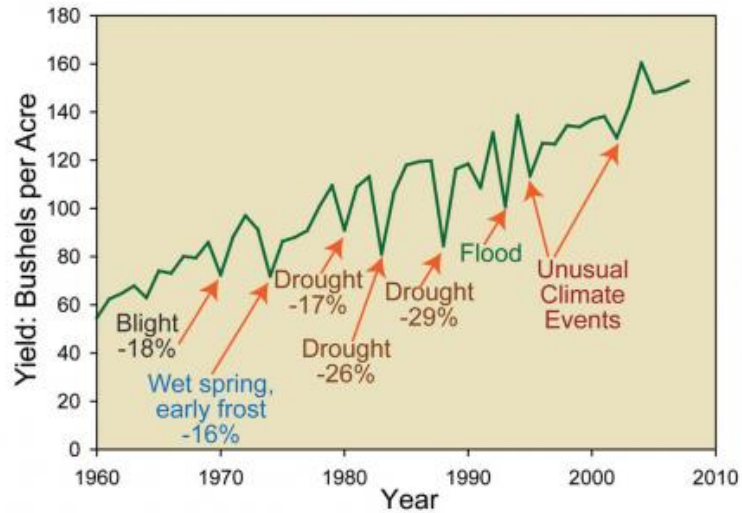


Figure 3: Graph showing that the crop yield falls whenever a severe climate event occurs.²⁷

Impact On Water Access & Quality

Water and climate change are interlinked. Climate change affects the world’s water in many different and complex ways. From unpredictable rainfall patterns to shrinking ice sheets, rising sea levels, floods, and droughts – most impacts of climate change come down to water.²⁸ According to a 2022 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) report, about two billion people worldwide don’t have access to safe drinking water today²⁹ and around 50% of the world’s population is experiencing severe water scarcity for at least part of the year.³⁰ These numbers are expected to increase, exacerbated by climate change and population

²⁶ United States Environmental Protection Agency. “Climate Impacts on Agriculture and Food Supply | Climate Change Impacts | US EPA.” *Climatechange.chicago.gov*, climatechange.chicago.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-agriculture-and-food-supply#ref1.

²⁷ (Ibid)

²⁸ United Nations. “Water and Climate Change.” *UN-Water*, 2023, www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-and-climate-change.

²⁹ United Nations. “— SDG Indicators.” *Unstats.un.org*, 2022, unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/Goal-06/.

³⁰ ---. *SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT Working Group II -Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability Food Production Losses*. Oct. 2022.

growth.³¹

Furthermore, the water supplies stored in glaciers and snow cover are expected to further decline and melt over the years, therefore reducing water availability during warm and dry periods in regions supplied by meltwater from major mountain ranges, where more than one-sixth of the world’s population currently live (2008.)³²

Finally, water quality is also affected by climate change, as higher water temperatures and more frequent floods and droughts are projected to worsen many forms of water pollution – from sediments to pathogens and pesticides.³³

Impact On Shelter

When people have fewer resources accessible to them, they are not as prepared for significant weather shifts or natural disasters due to climate change. For people already experiencing homelessness, climate change is an ever-present emergency. Extreme weather conditions such as winter storms or severe heat have an obvious impact on unsheltered homelessness, making extreme climate change severe for many people.³⁴ Furthermore, more and more people are slowly being displaced from their homes due to climate phenomena, also known as ‘climate refugees’. This can happen due to various factors such as, but not limited to, floods, droughts, storms, sea level rise, and other disasters caused by human-induced climate impacts. Since 2008, more than 376 million people have been displaced by climate disasters.³⁵

³¹ World Meteorological Organisation. “Protect Our People and Future Generations: Water and Climate Leaders Call for Urgent Action.” *World Meteorological Organization*, 7 Mar. 2022, wmo.int/media/news/protect-our-people-and-future-generations-water-and-climate-leaders-call-urgent-action.

³² World Meteorological Organisation, and United Nations Environmental Programme. *Climate Change and Water Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC Technical Paper Vi*, June 2008, <https://archive.ipcc.ch/pdf/technical-papers/climate-change-water-en.pdf>.

³³ (Ibid)

³⁴ Mello, Caitlin. “How Climate Change Impacts Homelessness.” *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, 24 Apr. 2023, endhomelessness.org/blog/how-climate-change-impacts-homelessness/#:~:text=For%20people%20currently%20experiencing%20homelessness.

³⁵ Green2Sustain. “Climate Refugees: The Invisible CrisisGreen2Sustain.” *Green2Sustain*, 2021, www.green2sustain.gr/climate_refugees_the_invisible-crisis/#:~:text=The%20term%20%E2%80%9Cclimate%20refugees%E2%80%9D%20describes. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

Case Study: The Melting Ice in the Arctic Sea and Its Effect on Indigenous People

Ice acts like a protective cover over the Earth and our oceans since it reflects excess heat into space to keep the planet cooler. However, with the increasing temperatures, since water molecules in ice vibrate but don't move past each other, as the temperature increases, they begin to vibrate more. Eventually, their movement overcomes their attractions and they can no longer stay in their orderly crystal structure, causing them to melt.³⁶ The ice found in glaciers around the world can range from several hundred to several thousand years old. Through their study, we gain important information about the extent to which the planet is warming. Today, about 10% of the land area on Earth is covered with glacial ice. Almost 90% is in Antarctica, while the remaining 10% is in the Greenland ice cap. Additionally, the fast ice melt in Antarctica and Greenland also influences ocean currents since massive amounts of very cold glacial melt water entering warmer ocean waters is slowing ocean currents. It is important to remember that, as ice on land melts, sea levels will continue to rise.³⁷ This causes severe issues in many different urban settings along coastlines around the world since rising seas threaten infrastructure necessary for local jobs and regional industries. Roads, bridges, subways, water supplies, oil and gas wells, power plants, sewage treatment plants, landfills, and more are all at risk from sea level rise.³⁸

³⁶ ACS Chemistry for Life. "Lesson 2.5: Changing State—Melting." *American Chemical Society*, www.acs.org/middleschoolchemistry/lessonplans/chapter2/lesson5.html#:~:text=Melting%20Ice.

³⁷ Hancock, Lorin. "Why Are Glaciers and Sea Ice Melting?" *World Wildlife Fund*, World Wildlife Fund, www.worldwildlife.org/pages/why-are-glaciers-and-sea-ice-melting.

³⁸ Lindsey, Rebecca. "Climate Change: Global Sea Level | NOAA Climate.gov." *Www.climate.gov*, 19 Apr. 2022, www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-sea-level#:~:text=In%20urban%20settings%20along%20coastlines.

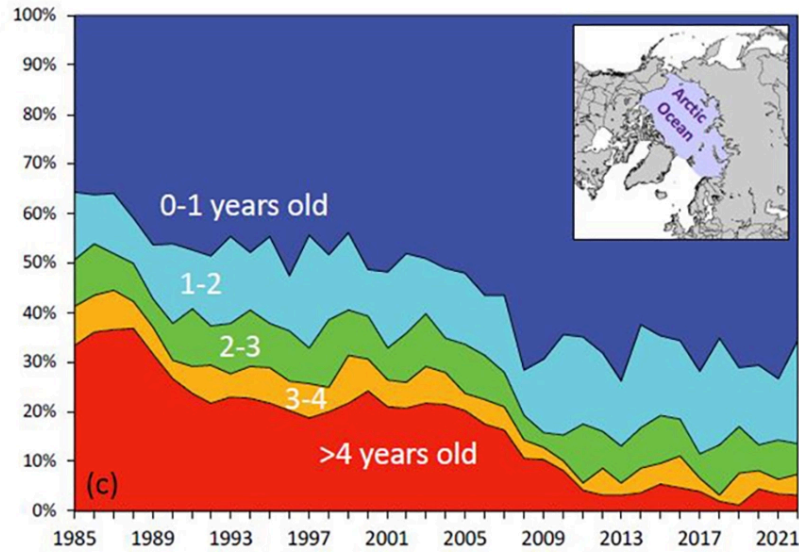


Figure 4: Sea ice age percentage within the Arctic Ocean for the week of 11-18 March 1985-2022.³⁹

Additionally, melting sea ice in the Arctic is causing significant impacts on Indigenous peoples and communities, including increasingly risky travel and hunting conditions, damage and loss to settlements, food insecurity, and socioeconomic and health impacts.⁴⁰

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States

The United States of America is a significant emitter of greenhouse gasses. In 2022, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions totaled 6,343 million metric tons (14.0 trillion pounds) of carbon dioxide equivalents. This total represents a 3.0 percent decrease since 1990, down from a high of 15.2 percent above 1990 levels in 2007.⁴¹ They have a large involvement in

³⁹ Change, NASA Global Climate. “Arctic Sea Ice Minimum | NASA Global Climate Change.” *Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet*, climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/arctic-sea-ice/?intent=121#:~:text=Summer%20Arctic%20sea%20Ice%20extent.

⁴⁰ U.S. Global Change Research Program. “National Climate Assessment.” *National Climate Assessment*, 2014, nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings/indigenous-peoples#:~:text=Declining%20sea%20ice%20in%20Alaska.

⁴¹ US EPA, OAR. “Climate Change Indicators: U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions.” *US EPA*, 27 June 2016,

international climate agreements as well as domestic and international advocacy on human rights and environmental justice.⁴² Furthermore, the air quality of the United States is at a crucial point since the emission of air pollutants continues to act as an important factor in several air quality issues. In 2023, about 66 million tons of pollution were emitted into the atmosphere in the United States.⁴³ Additionally, Indigenous peoples and tribal communities in the United States, especially in coastal areas, are being forced to relocate due to the rising rates of sea level rise, land erosion, and/or permafrost thaw caused by climate change.⁴⁴

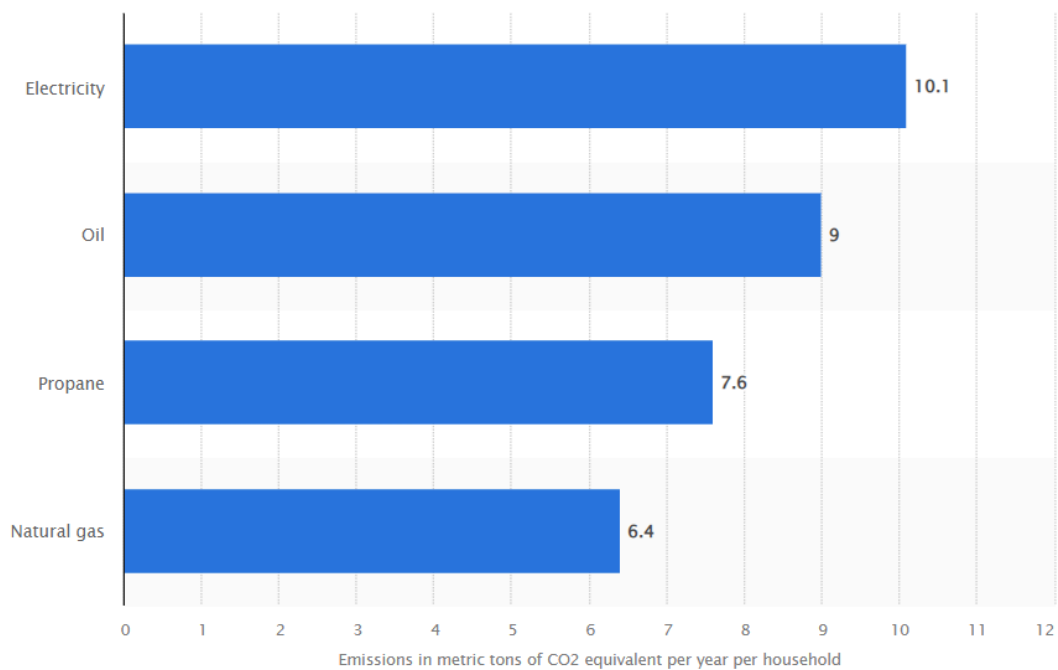


Figure 5: Annual greenhouse gas emissions (in metric tons) of a typical US household as of 2012.⁴⁵

www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions#:~:text=Data%20%7C%20Technical%20Documentation-

⁴² *Observations by the United States of America on the Relationship between Climate Change and Human Rights.*

⁴³ US EPA, OAR. "Air Quality - National Summary." *US EPA*, 4 May 2016, www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-national-summary#:~:text=The%202008%20and%202017%20estimates.

⁴⁴ Maldonado, Julie, et al. "The Impact of Climate Change on Tribal Communities in the US: Displacement, Relocation, and Human Rights." *ResearchGate*, Oct. 2013, www.researchgate.net/publication/257548095_The_impact_of_climate_change_on_tribal_communities_in_the_US_Displacement_relocation_and_human_rights#:~:text=Tribal%20communities%20in%20the%20United,brought%20on%20by%20climate%20change.

⁴⁵ "U.S. Households: Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Fuel | Statista." *Statista*, Statista, 2023, www.statista.com/statistics/218298/annual-greenhouse-gas-emissions-of-a-typical-us-household/. Accessed 14 Aug. 2024.

China

China is the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses as well as a key player in global climate negotiations with many efforts in green technology and renewable energy. Additionally, China's government is taking measures to increase renewable energy aiming to reach the climaxing emissions before 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060 by adopting "more vigorous policies and measures."⁴⁶

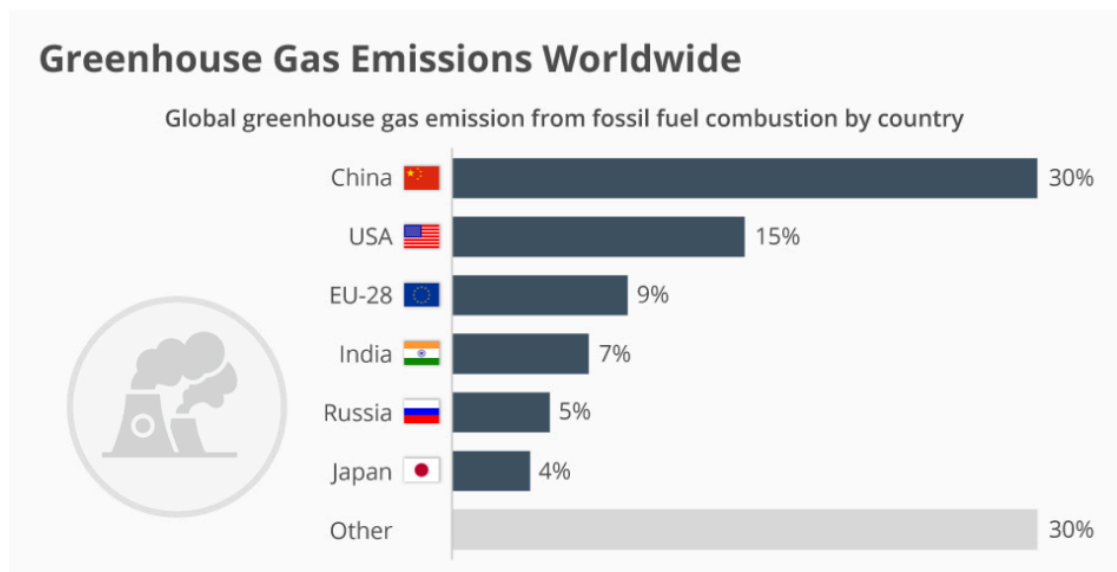


Figure 6: Greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, proving China is the largest greenhouse gas emitter worldwide with 30% of emissions.⁴⁷

Brazil

The issue of climate change which occurs in Brazil is mainly that of the climate constantly getting hotter and drier than it already is. More specifically however, this is a much more complicated issue in Brazil than in other countries, as Brazil is the home of the Amazon Rainforest. Greenhouse effects of excess carbon dioxide and methane emissions make the Amazon rainforest in Brazil hotter and drier, resulting in more wildfires, with parts

⁴⁶ Wikipedia. "Climate Change in China." *Wikipedia*, 30 Mar. 2022, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_in_China#:~:text=China.

⁴⁷ "Infographic: China Leads Greenhouse Gas Emissions Worldwide." *Statista Infographics*, 1 June 2017, www.statista.com/chart/9633/global-greenhouse-gas-emission-countries-and-industries/.

of the rainforest at risk of becoming a savanna.⁴⁸ Between 1985 and 2021, the Amazon lost an area of rainforest and other native vegetation equivalent to three times the size of the UK.⁴⁹ A non-profit organization called The Rainforest Alliance has begun acting to preserve the Rainforest by working together with farmers and forest communities, scientists, governments, companies, and citizens, in more than 60 countries to cultivate sustainable, rural economies to keep the Rainforest standing.⁵⁰

Bangladesh

The World Risk Index 2023 ranks Bangladesh ninth worldwide for climate disaster risk, stating that by 2050, Bangladesh will lose 17% of its territory due to rising sea levels, resulting in the loss of 30% of the country's agricultural land. The rise of sea levels in coastal areas of Bangladesh is further prompting people to migrate into cities, yet climate migrants are presented with poor living conditions, contributing to higher levels of poor health, food insecurity, and national poverty all around the country.⁵¹

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) monitors and reports on the human rights impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and advocates for the protection of vulnerable communities by holding governments and corporations accountable for their environmental and human rights obligations.⁵²

⁴⁸ Wikipedia. "Climate Change in Brazil." *Wikipedia*, 10 Oct. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_in_Brazil#:~:text=Climate%20change%20in%20Brazil%20is.

⁴⁹ WWF. "Amazon Rainforest." *WWF*, 20 Sept. 2023, www.wwf.org.uk/where-we-work/amazon.

⁵⁰ Rainforest Alliance. "Our Mission to Protect the World's Forests." *Rainforest Alliance*, 19 Dec. 2019, www.rainforest-alliance.org/insights/our-mission-to-protect-the-worlds-forests/.

⁵¹ Veer, Amruta. "BIPR." *Bipr.jhu.edu*, bipr.jhu.edu/BlogArticles/31-Climate-Change-Exposes-Bangladesh-to-Greater-Risk.cfm#:~:text=The%20World%20Risk%20Index%202023.

⁵² Human Rights Watch. "Environment." *Human Rights Watch*, 25 Oct. 2019, www.hrw.org/topic/environment.

Greenpeace

Greenpeace is an international organization that advocates for environmental protection and human rights by hosting multiple campaigns on issues such as deforestation and pollution.⁵³ The committed activists and supporters of Greenpeace have come together to perform multiple actions to help the world, such as banning commercial whaling, stopping nuclear testing, protecting the Arctic, passing the Global Oceans Treaty and so much more.⁵⁴

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

WWF is a non-profit organization with over 1 million members working with 6 continents and 350 different countries and cities to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth. They often collaborate with local communities to conserve the natural resources we all depend on and build a future in which people and nature thrive.⁵⁵ Some of their actions include protecting wildlife animals, stopping the use of plastics, creating petitions for the public, and hosting lessons.⁵⁶

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
December 10th, 1948	The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, establishing human rights, which later became the foundation for addressing climate-related issues. ⁵⁷
March 13th, 2008	The Maldives calls for the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to address the human rights implications of climate change. ⁵⁸

⁵³ Greenpeace. "Who We Are." *Greenpeace International*, www.greenpeace.org/international/about/?_gl=1.

⁵⁴ —. *About - Greenpeace USA*. 6 May 2015, www.greenpeace.org/usa/about/#:~:text=Our%20committed%20activists%20and%20supporters.

⁵⁵ World Wildlife Fund. "WWF - Endangered Species Conservation | World Wildlife Fund." *World Wildlife Fund*, World Wildlife Fund, 2024, www.worldwildlife.org/.

⁵⁶ —. "https://www.worldwildlife.org/Pages/All-Actions." *World Wildlife Fund*, www.worldwildlife.org/pages/all-actions.

⁵⁷ United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, 10 Dec. 1948, www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

⁵⁸ ---. "Small Islands, Rising Seas | United Nations." *Un.org*, United Nations, 2020, www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/small-islands-rising-seas.

March 25th, 2009	The United Nations Human Rights Council passed its first resolution (10/4), recognizing that climate change poses a serious threat to people’s human rights. ⁵⁹
November 29th, 2015	During the COP21 in Paris, 195 nations agreed to adopt the Paris Agreement, which acknowledges the importance of protecting human rights when addressing climate change. ⁶⁰
September 28th, 2016	The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment released a report outlining the human rights obligations humans have to the environment and the impact of climate change on those rights. ⁶¹
September 25th, 2019	Sixteen youth activists filed a complaint with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, claiming that five countries have failed to address how climate change violates children’s rights, as stated under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. ⁶²
October 7th, 2021	The UN Human Rights Council recognizes the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental human right, linking it to climate change and its impact on human rights. ⁶³
July 20th, 2022	The UN General Assembly adopts a resolution recognizing access to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a universal human right, emphasizing the connection between environmental health and human rights. ⁶⁴

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The Paris Agreement (2015)

An international treaty under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial

⁵⁹ ---. *Human Rights Council Tenth Session*. 25 Mar. 2009.

⁶⁰ UNFCCC. “The Paris Agreement.” *United Nations Climate Change*, United Nations, 2015, unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement.

⁶¹ United Nations. *Safe Climate a Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment*. 28 Sept. 2016.---. *Safe Climate a Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment*. 28 Sept. 2016.

⁶² ---. *16 Children, Including Greta Thunberg, File Landmark Complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child*. 23 2019, www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/16-children-including-greta-thunberg-file-landmark-complaint#:~:text=The%20child%20petitioners%20%E2%80%93%20aged%20between,devastating%20impacts%20of%20climate%20change.

⁶³ —. *What Is the Right to a Healthy Environment?* 2022.

⁶⁴ ---. “UN General Assembly Declares Access to Clean and Healthy Environment a Universal Human Right.” *UN News*, 28 July 2022, news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482.

levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C, including provisions for protecting human rights in the context of climate action.⁶⁵

United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 32/33 (2016)

This resolution emphasizes the need for integrating human rights into climate action, calling for the protection of human rights in the context of climate change impacts.⁶⁶

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/211 (2014)

This resolution recognizes the importance of addressing climate change in a way that respects and protects human rights.⁶⁷

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 to provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. Each goal has different reports made for it for further explanation, as well as tailored and more personalized goals for specific aspects. The focus on many different global crises, such as SDG 7 (Clean and Affordable Energy), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Underwater), or SDG 15 (Life on Land).⁶⁸

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The Equator Principles (2003)

The Equator Principles are a risk management framework adopted by financial institutions to assess and manage environmental and social risks in project financing. It

⁶⁵ UNFCCC. "The Paris Agreement." *United Nations Climate Change*, United Nations, 2015, unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement.

⁶⁶ United Nations. *Resolution Adopted by the Human Rights Council on 1 July 2016*. 18 July 2016.

⁶⁷ ---. *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013*. 29 Jan. 2014.

⁶⁸ ---. "The 17 Sustainable Development Goals." *United Nations*, United Nations, 2024, sdgs.un.org/goals.

includes human rights considerations, particularly concerning affected communities.⁶⁹ Although Equator Principles are highly criticized by many for failing to fully protect human rights and the environment, some others believe that it significantly improved the banking industry by developing an industry standard that created “uniform public expectation” which compels banks to take a more active role.⁷⁰

The Green Belt Movement (1977)

The Green Belt Movement, founded by Wangari Maathai in Kenya, focuses on tree planting, environmental conservation, and women’s empowerment, addressing both environmental degradation and social equity. Some actions they take include but are not limited to, tree planting, water harvesting, strengthening the understanding and capacity of rural communities to take action, and advocating for a greater political accountability and democratic space in Kenya and across Africa.⁷¹

The Rainforest Alliance (1987)

The Rainforest Alliance is an international non-profit organization that works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices, and consumer behavior. It integrates human rights into its environmental and social standards and tackles issues such as climate change, forests, biodiversity, human rights, and livelihoods.⁷² The ethicality of the Rainforest Alliance, however, seems to be two-sided. As of 2019, more than 5,000 companies buy or sell products from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms, and the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal can be seen in more than 170 countries. As of June 2015, 13.6 percent of the world's cocoa and 15.1 percent of tea comes from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms⁷³, proving their success. However, according

⁶⁹ “The Equator Principles.” *Equator Principles Association*, equator-principles.com/about-the-equator-principles/.

⁷⁰ Mapalo, Carla. “Equator Principles: An Attempt towards Sustainable Financing.” *Nyujlb.org*, 2016, www.nyujlb.org/single-post/equator-principles-an-attempt-towards-sustainable-financing#:~:text=Although%20Equator%20Principles%20are%20highly. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

⁷¹ Green Belt Movement. “What We Do | the Green Belt Movement.” *Greenbeltmovement.org*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/what-we-do.

⁷² Rainforest Alliance. “About.” *Rainforest Alliance*, 2023, www.rainforest-alliance.org/about/.

⁷³ Wikipedia Contributors. “Rainforest Alliance.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Aug. 2024,

to the Fair World Project, the Rainforest Alliance has very low standards and notoriously weak enforcement. Every year, new cases of forced labor, child labor, and other exploitation on farms that claim to be certified to their “ethical” standards arise.⁷⁴

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Strengthen Environmental and Human Rights Policies

Strengthening environmental and human rights policies involves creating and enforcing regulations that protect both the planet and the people who live and depend on it. This approach ensures that environmental conservation efforts are aligned with protecting communities' rights to clean air, water, and land. Furthermore, it is important to note that addressing these issues together, rather than separately, is crucial because environmental degradation and climate change directly impact human rights, such as the right to health and self-determination.

Ensure Access to Justice and Remedies for Affected Populations

Ensuring access to justice and remedies for populations affected by climate change involves providing legal avenues for these communities to deal with and hold polluters accountable. Remedies could include monetary compensation, rehabilitation of damaged environments, and support for relocation if deemed necessary. However, monetary compensation alone may not be sufficient, especially in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) that may lack the resources to provide the support people may need. International cooperation and funding, along with strong legal frameworks, are essential to ensure these populations receive the assistance and protection they need and deserve, beyond what individual LEDCs can provide on their own.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainforest_Alliance#:~:text=As%20of%202019%2C%20more%20than. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

⁷⁴ Canning, Anna. “There’s a Race to the Bottom for the Definition of “Ethical.”” *Fair World Project*, 25 June 2020, fairworldproject.org/rainforest-alliance-is-not-fair-trade-2/#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20having%20lower.

Adopt a Human Rights Based Approach to Climate Finance

Adopting a human rights-based approach to climate finance means ensuring that funds aimed at addressing climate change are used in ways that protect and promote human rights by recognizing how issues such as discrimination, and inequalities in education and health affect climate vulnerability, and by allocating adequate resources to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of all, by all. This approach prioritizes the needs of vulnerable and marginalized communities, ensuring they have access to resources and are involved in decision-making processes. It also ensures that climate projects do not harm communities or violate their rights.

Monitoring and Reporting Human Rights Violations in Regards to the Environment

Monitoring and reporting human rights violations related to the environment involves systematically documenting instances where environmental harm violates people's rights, such as access to clean water, air, and land. This process ensures that violations are brought to light and emphasizes the need for policy changes. It also helps in identifying patterns of abuse and informing international and national responses, further avoiding the same mistakes in the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ACS Chemistry for Life. "Lesson 2.5: Changing State—Melting." *American Chemical Society*,

www.acs.org/middleschoolchemistry/lessonplans/chapter2/lesson5.html#:~:text=Melting%20Ice.

Amnesty International. "Climate Change." *Amnesty.org*, 2019,

www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/.

---. "How Are Human Rights Affected by Climate Change?" *FutureLearn*,

www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/climate-change-human-rights/0/steps/266013.

Canning, Anna. "There's a Race to the Bottom for the Definition of "Ethical."" *Fair World*

Project, 25 June 2020,

fairworldproject.org/rainforest-alliance-is-not-fair-trade-2/#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20having%20lower.

Change, NASA Global Climate. "Arctic Sea Ice Minimum | NASA Global Climate Change." *Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet*, climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/arctic-sea-ice/?intent=121#:~:text=Summer%20Arctic%20sea%20ice%20extent.

Coffey published, Donavyn. "How Long Will Earth Exist?" *Livescience.com*, 3 Dec. 2023, www.livescience.com/planet-earth/how-long-will-earth-exist#:~:text=Roughly%201.3%20billion%20years%20from.

Cook, John. "Climate Change: Past, Present, and Future." *Skeptical Science*, 2019, skepticalscience.com/Climate-Change-Past-Present-and-Future.html. Accessed 8 Nov. 2019.

Doubtnut. "Assertion : Pollution Is Always Caused by Human Activities. Reason : Pollution Is Not Different from Contamination. a Both a and R Are True and R Is the Correct Explanation of Ab Both a and R Are True but R Is Not Correct Explanation of Ac a Is True but R Is Falsed a and R Are False." *Doubtnut*, 2024, www.doubtnut.com/pcmb-questions/106684. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

Environment, U. N. "Climate Change and Human Rights." *UNEP - UN Environment Programme*, 16 Sept. 2017, www.unep.org/resources/report/climate-change-and-human-rights.

General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus. "Environmental Degradation." *Www.eionet.europa.eu*, www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/en/concept/15154#:~:text=Definition.

Green Belt Movement. "What We Do | the Green Belt Movement." *Greenbeltmovement.org*, 2019, www.greenbeltmovement.org/what-we-do.

Green2Sustain. "Climate Refugees: The Invisible CrisisGreen2Sustain." *Green2Sustain*, 2021, www.green2sustain.gr/climate_refugees_the_invisible-crisis/#:~:text=The%20term%20%E2%80%9Cclimate%20refugees%E2%80%9D%20describes. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

Greenpeace. *About - Greenpeace USA*. 6 May 2015, www.greenpeace.org/usa/about/#:~:text=Our%20committed%20activists%20and%20supporters.

---. "Who We Are." *Greenpeace International*, www.greenpeace.org/international/about/?_gl=1.

Hancock, Lorin. "Why Are Glaciers and Sea Ice Melting?" *World Wildlife Fund*, World Wildlife Fund, www.worldwildlife.org/pages/why-are-glaciers-and-sea-ice-melting.

Hatfield, J., et al. "National Climate Assessment." *National Climate Assessment*, 2014, nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/sectors/agriculture.

History.com Editors. "Climate Change History." *History*, A&E Television Networks, 6 Oct. 2017, www.history.com/topics/natural-disasters-and-environment/history-of-climate-change.

Human Rights Watch. "Environment." *Human Rights Watch*, 25 Oct. 2019, www.hrw.org/topic/environment.

"Infographic: China Leads Greenhouse Gas Emissions Worldwide." *Statista Infographics*, 1 June 2017, www.statista.com/chart/9633/global-greenhouse-gas-emission-countries-and-industries/.

L'Green, Jasmine, and Zara Bendit-Rosser. "The Impact of Climate Change on the Right to Self-Determination." *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, 30 June 2022, www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-impact-of-climate-change-on-

[the-right-to-self-determination/#:~:text=In%202009%2C%20the%20United%20Natio ns.](#)

Lindsey, Rebecca. "Climate Change: Global Sea Level | NOAA Climate.gov." *Www.climate.gov*, 19 Apr. 2022, [www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-global-sea-level#:~:text=In%20urban%20settings%20along%20coastlines.](#)

Maldonado, Julie, et al. "The Impact of Climate Change on Tribal Communities in the US: Displacement, Relocation, and Human Rights." *ResearchGate*, Oct. 2013, [www.researchgate.net/publication/257548095_The_impact_of_climate_change_on_tribal_communities_in_the_US_Displacement_relocation_and_human_rights#:~:te xt=Tribal%20communities%20in%20the%20United,brought%20on%20by%20climate %20change.](#)

Mapalo, Carla. "Equator Principles: An Attempt towards Sustainable Financing." *Nyujlb.org*, 2016, [www.nyujlb.org/single-post/equator-principles-an-attempt-towards-sustainable-fina ncing#:~:text=Although%20Equator%20Principles%20are%20highly.](#) cessed 1 Sept. 2024.

Mello, Caitlin. "How Climate Change Impacts Homelessness." *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, 24 Apr. 2023, [endhomelessness.org/blog/how-climate-change-impacts-homelessness/#:~:text=For %20people%20currently%20experiencing%20homelessness.](#)

Merriam-Webster. "Definition of BIODIVERSITY." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/biodiversity.](#)

---. "Definition of DEFORESTATION." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deforestation.](#)

---. "Definition of INDIGENOUS." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019,
www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous.

---. "Definition of LIVELIHOOD." *Www.merriam-Webster.com*,
www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/livelihood.

---. "Definition of SELF-DETERMINATION." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019,
www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-determination.

---. "Definition of SUSTAINABLE." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019,
www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sustainable.

National Geographic. "Environmental Refugee." *National Geographic*, 2023,
education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/environmental-refugee/.

National Grid. "What Are the Different Types of Renewable Energy? | National Grid Group."
Www.nationalgrid.com, 10 May 2022,
[www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-different-types-renewabl
e-energy#:~:text=Renewable%20energy%20is%20energy%20that](http://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-different-types-renewabl-e-energy#:~:text=Renewable%20energy%20is%20energy%20that).

*Observations by the United States of America on the Relationship between Climate Change
and Human Rights.*

Rainforest Alliance. "About." *Rainforest Alliance*, 2023, www.rainforest-alliance.org/about/.

---. "Our Mission to Protect the World's Forests." *Rainforest Alliance*, 19 Dec. 2019,
www.rainforest-alliance.org/insights/our-mission-to-protect-the-worlds-forests/.

"The Equator Principles." *Equator Principles Association*,
equator-principles.com/about-the-equator-principles/.

U.S. Global Change Research Program. "National Climate Assessment." *National Climate
Assessment*, 2014,
[nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings/indigenous-peoples#:~:text=D
eclining%20sea%20ice%20in%20Alaska](http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings/indigenous-peoples#:~:text=D
eclining%20sea%20ice%20in%20Alaska).

“U.S. Households: Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Fuel | Statista.” *Statista*, Statista, 2023,

www.statista.com/statistics/218298/annual-greenhouse-gas-emissions-of-a-typical-us-household/. Accessed 14 Aug. 2024.

UNFCCC. “The Paris Agreement.” *United Nations Climate Change*, United Nations, 2015, unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement.

UNITED NATIONS. *What Is the Right to a Healthy Environment?* 2022.

United Nations. “— SDG Indicators.” *Unstats.un.org*, 2022, unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/Goal-06/.

---. *16 Children, Including Greta Thunberg, File Landmark Complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child*. 23 2019, www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/16-children-including-greta-thunberg-file-landmark-complaint#:~:text=The%20child%20petitioners%20%E2%80%93%20aged%20between,devastating%20impacts%20of%20climate%20change.

---. “Convention on the Rights of the Child.” *OHCHR*, United Nations, 20 Nov. 1989, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child.

---. *Human Rights Council Tenth Session*. 25 Mar. 2009.

---. *New UN Report: Inequalities Cause and Exacerbate Climate Impacts on Poor and Vulnerable People*. 2016, www.un.org/hi/desa/new-un-report-inequalities-cause-and-exacerbate-climate-impacts-poor-and#:~:text=Families%20living%20in%20poverty%20systematically,thereby%20worsen%20pre%2Dexisitent%20inequalities.

---. *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013* . 29 Jan. 2014.

---. *Resolution Adopted by the Human Rights Council on 1 July 2016*. 18 July 2016.

---. *Safe Climate a Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment*. 28 Sept. 2016.

---. *SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT Working Group II -Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability Food Production Losses*. Oct. 2022.

---. "Small Islands, Rising Seas | United Nations." *Un.org*, United Nations, 2020, www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/small-islands-rising-seas.

---. "The 17 Sustainable Development Goals." *United Nations*, United Nations, 2024, sdgs.un.org/goals.

---. "UN General Assembly Declares Access to Clean and Healthy Environment a Universal Human Right." *UN News*, 28 July 2022, news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482.

---. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *United Nations*, 10 Dec. 1948, www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

---. "Water and Climate Change." *UN-Water*, 2023, www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-and-climate-change.

---. "What Is Climate Change?" *United Nations*, United Nations, 2024, www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change.

United Nations Climate Change. "Introduction to Climate Finance." *Unfccc.int*, 2023, unfccc.int/topics/introduction-to-climate-finance#:~:text=Climate%20finance%20refers%20to%20local.

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. "OHCHR | OHCHR and Climate Change." *OHCHR*, www.ohchr.org/en/climate-change#:~:text=Climate%20change%20threatens%20the%20effective.

United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Climate Impacts on Agriculture and Food Supply | Climate Change Impacts | US EPA." *Climatechange.chicago.gov*, climatechange.chicago.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-agriculture-and-food-supply#ref1.

University of California. "What Is Climate Justice?" *UC Center for Climate Justice*, 2024, centerclimatejustice.universityofcalifornia.edu/what-is-climate-justice/.

US EPA. "Climate Change and Human Health." *Www.epa.gov*, 20 Mar. 2022, www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-human-health#:~:text=The%20health%20effects%20of%20climate.

US EPA, OAR. "Air Quality - National Summary." *US EPA*, 4 May 2016, www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-national-summary#:~:text=The%202008%20and%202017%20estimates.

---. "Climate Change Indicators: U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions." *US EPA*, 27 June 2016, www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions#:~:text=Data%20%7C%20Technical%20Documentation-.

Veer, Amruta. "BIPR." *Bipr.jhu.edu*, bipr.jhu.edu/BlogArticles/31-Climate-Change-Exposes-Bangladesh-to-Greater-Risk.cfm#:~:text=The%20World%20Risk%20Index%202023.

Wikipedia. "Climate Change in Brazil." *Wikipedia*, 10 Oct. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_in_Brazil#:~:text=Climate%20change%20in%20Brazil%20is.

---. "Climate Change in China." *Wikipedia*, 30 Mar. 2022, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_change_in_China#:~:text=China.

Wikipedia Contributors. "Rainforest Alliance." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Aug. 2024, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainforest_Alliance#:~:text=As%20of%202019%2C%20more%20than. Accessed 1 Sept. 2024.

World Meteorological Organisation. "Protect Our People and Future Generations: Water and Climate Leaders Call for Urgent Action." *World Meteorological Organization*, 7 Mar. 2022,

wmo.int/media/news/protect-our-people-and-future-generations-water-and-climate-leaders-call-urgent-action.

World Meteorological Organisation, and United Nations Environmental Programme. *Climate Change and Water Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC Technical Paper Vi*. June 2008.

World Wildlife Fund. "https://www.worldwildlife.org/Pages/All-Actions." *World Wildlife Fund*, www.worldwildlife.org/pages/all-actions.

---. "WWF - Endangered Species Conservation | World Wildlife Fund." *World Wildlife Fund*, World Wildlife Fund, 2024, www.worldwildlife.org/.

WWF. "Amazon Rainforest." *WWF*, 20 Sept. 2023, www.wwf.org.uk/where-we-work/amazon.