

On Human Rights Day (10 December) WECF supports the letter of the Human Rights and Climate Change Working Group to the Parties to the UNFCCC calling for human rights to be fully integrated into a new climate change regime. So far more than 200 organisations have signed on to the letter - more support is welcome!

Human rights protections for all in the 2015 climate agreement

We, the undersigned organisations, call for language in the 2015 climate agreement stating that the Parties to the UNFCCC shall, in all climate change-related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights for all.

Climate change is a global injustice and one of the greatest human rights challenges of our time. We are highly concerned about the grave harm that climate change is already causing, and will continue to cause, to people and communities as well as to the environment on which we all depend. It has a disproportionate impact on the world's poorest and most vulnerable, and we are increasingly exceeding adaptation limits, resulting in significant loss and damage, as documented by the 5th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report also highlights that current emission reduction actions are insufficient to limit global warming to the 1.5 degrees needed to avoid the most catastrophic of predicted impacts.

A safe climate is critical to the full enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water, adequate housing, and self-determination. However, it is well recognized—by the UN Human Rights Council and others—that climate change and certain actions being taken to address climate change interfere with the enjoyment of human rights protected under international law. For this reason, in 2010, the Parties to the UNFCCC agreed that “Parties should, in all climate change-related actions, fully respect human rights.” We regard this recognition of existing obligations as critical for a range of aspects, including with regard to safeguards and accountability for all climate actions, full and effective participation, and support for poorer countries whose capacities to protect their citizens’ human rights are strained by climate change impacts. However, we are concerned that this language has not been further operationalised in the UNFCCC process.

With negotiations for the Paris agreement underway, NOW is the time to fully integrate rights protections in the climate regime.

We welcome the reference to human rights, indigenous peoples rights and gender in the most recent version of the non-paper released by the ADP co-chairs on 11 November, “Stressing that all actions to address climate change and processes established under this agreement should ensure a gender-responsive approach, take into account the protection of the integrity of Mother Earth, and respect human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples”.

Yet we urge all Parties to include human rights in the operational provisions of the 2015 agreement. In doing so, we endorse the recommendations of 28 independent experts of the Human Rights Council, set forth in their [“Open Letter from Special Procedures mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council to the State Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change”](#), dated 17 October:

We urge the State Parties to the UNFCCC to recognise the adverse effects of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights, and to adopt urgent and ambitious mitigation and adaptation measures to prevent further harm. We call on the State Parties to include language in the 2015 climate agreement that provides that the Parties shall, in all climate change related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights for all. And we urge the State Parties at COP 20 in Lima to launch a work program to ensure that human rights are integrated into all aspects of climate actions.

The experts highlight the fact that climate change threatens to undermine the protection of human rights, and that the UNFCCC has a crucial role in effectively protecting human rights for all. We wholeheartedly agree.