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**Statement – Heinrich Böll Foundation**

**27th session of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee**

**For the Session “Impact of new technologies for climate protection (21 February 2022)**

Good afternoon, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this session.

Geoengineering approaches carry a risk of very serious impacts on humans and ecosystems. Rather than addressing the climate crisis, they could exacerbate it. They could lead to further biodiversity loss and ecosystem destruction, undermine food security and perpetuate global inequalities. Some technologies can be weaponized, and their development would risk further entrenching geopolitical tensions and undermining peace and democracy.

Geoengineering approaches also risk delaying climate action until a point where it is too late. The belief and investment in these technological “fixes” undermine carbon reduction commitments through locking in the use of fossil fuels, which then risks breaching dangerous tipping points in the climate system. In sum, the human rights threats of geoengineering approaches are multi-faceted and real.

Despite these known risks to human rights, investment into geoengineering technologies from various climate-polluting industries, is growing at a fast rate. Outdoor experiments and field tests for different geoengineering approaches are being carried out in different locations across the world, most notably on indigenous lands.

A growing coalition of civil society groups (including indigenous networks and the Climate Action Network International with its more than 1500 member organizations) and dozens of world-leading scientists agree that the development and deployment of planetary scale solar geoengineering must be internationally banned.[[1]](#footnote-1) Other approaches, such as Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR), and Carbon Capture Usage and Storage (CCU/S) must likewise be viewed with great scepticism and evaluated based on their impact on the climate system and their potential negative impacts on biodiversity, food security, and land rights.[[2]](#footnote-2) We simply cannot afford any pathways that would further lock-in fossil fuel dependency.

Leading legal experts[[3]](#footnote-3) have pointed at the risks that geoengineering poses to a range of rights including the right to life, the right to health, an adequate standard of living, the right to food and the right to a livelihood. In proposed projects, the full range of relevant rights, including the principle of free prior and informed consent (FPIC) needs to be considered - which is a challenge when considering technological interventions that aim to have transboundary and even global impact!

Further, any future regulation of geoengineering must respect and build on the moratoria expressed in the COP Decisions adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)[[4]](#footnote-4) and the London Protocol to the London Convention (LCLP)[[5]](#footnote-5).

Public participation in geoengineering decision-making must be meaningful, global and transparent to ensure the severity and scale of potential impacts of geoengineering are fully recognised and taken into account. Those who are already most affected by the climate crisis and those who would suffer most from the adverse impacts of geoengineering must be given an active and leading voice in geoengineering governance and decision-making. This would include, among others, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, small-scale farmers and fisherfolk, women and youth.

We are surprised to see that today’s panel of experts consists of only Northern/Western academic experts with a track record of support for specific geoengineering approaches and would like to encourage the Advisory Committee to seek further consultation with and advice from indigenous peoples and potentially affected rights-holders from around the world.

I thank you for your attention.

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1. See e.g. <https://climatenetwork.org/resource/can-position-solar-radiation-modification-srm-september-2019/> and <https://www.solargeoeng.org/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://climatenetwork.org/resource/can-position-carbon-capture-storage-and-utilisation/>

   and IPCC 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, Chapters 4 & 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In 2021 Philippe Sands and Kate Cook wrote a public legal opinion on the Restriction of Geoengineering under International Law that the Heinrich Böll Foundation is willing to share upon request. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.cbd.int/climate/geoengineering/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Environment/Pages/geoengineering-Default.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)