



**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,
International Labour Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations Children’s Fund, United
Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

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Response to the request of the SBI for views from Parties and observers in response to the open call for submissions for the review of the Doha work programme (SBI FCCC/SBI/2019/L.3/Add.1), call for recommendations and views on future work to enhance Action for Climate Empowerment

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) welcome the opportunity to submit information on their activities to support the implementation of the Doha work programme and Action for Climate Empowerment, as well as recommendations and views on future work to enhance the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. This submission also includes their views on the agenda for the 8th in-session Dialogue on Action for Climate Empowerment, which will advance the discussions on ways to enhance the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, following the review of the Doha work programme. OHCHR, ILO, UN Women, UNESCO, UNEP, ECLAC, UNICEF and UNECE would like to emphasize the importance of respecting, promoting and taking into consideration human rights when addressing all six components of the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) agenda in the area of human rights and climate change including with respect to realizing gender equality and women’s rights, children’s rights, labor rights and just transition, as well as the rights of indigenous peoples.

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The case for a rights-based approach to Action for Climate Empowerment

Under international human rights law, public participation, access to information and education are rights that all States have a legal obligation to respect, protect and fulfil including in the context of climate action. The UN Charter, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other human rights instruments also impose upon States the duty of international cooperation to ensure the realization of all human rights. Climate change is a human rights threat with causes and consequences that cross borders; thus, it requires a global response, underpinned by international solidarity. Under human rights law, States should share resources, knowledge and technology in order to build capacity to address climate change and raise public awareness. Pursuant to relevant human rights principles, international cooperation should be adequate, effective and transparent, it should facilitate participatory, accountable and non-discriminatory processes, and it should be targeted toward persons, groups, and peoples most in need.

In addition to being an obligation under human rights law, it is clear that a rights-based approach to climate action is also more effective. The Human Rights Council (HRC) in its resolution 41/21 affirms “that human rights obligations, standards and principles have the potential to inform and strengthen international, regional and national policymaking in the area of climate change, promoting policy coherence, legitimacy and sustainable outcomes”. The 2018 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on 1.5 degrees has also highlighted the linkages between a human rights-based approach and sustainable and effective climate action.¹

The HRC, its special procedures mechanisms, the human rights treaty-bodies, and OHCHR have addressed human rights, climate change and environmental degradation through a series of resolutions, reports, and activities, and by advocating for a human rights-based approach to all climate action. For example, the Human Rights Committee’s General Comment No. 36 (2018) on the right to life contains a specific paragraph on climate change and environmental degradation, noting that “Environmental degradation, climate change and unsustainable development constitute some of the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to enjoy the right to life”.² The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has stressed the impacts of climate change on children’s rights to health in its General Comment No. 15 (2013), and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has emphasized that “any mitigation or adaptation measures should be designed and implemented in accordance with the human rights principles of substantive equality and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment, accountability and access to justice, transparency and the rule of law”.³

The Aarhus Convention, open to all UN Member States, requires Parties to guarantee rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in climate-related matters. It also refers to the goal of protecting the right of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to health and well-being. The Convention prohibits discrimination against persons seeking to exercise their rights under the Convention on the basis of citizenship, nationality or domicile. Further, it imposes obligations on Parties to ensure that persons exercising their rights in conformity with the Convention are not penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way. The Convention also requires Parties to promote the application of its principles in both the

¹ See e.g. p. 55: “Several international human rights obligations are relevant to the implementation of climate actions and consonant with UNFCCC undertakings in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, finance, and technology transfer”

² Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 62.

³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation 37, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/37, para. 14.



procedures and substantive outputs of international climate-related decision-making processes and within the framework of international organizations dealing with climate issues.

In turn, the Escazú Agreement, open to the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, aims to guarantee the full and effective implementation in the Latin American and Caribbean region of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters, and the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development. It also contains specific provisions to protect human rights defenders in environmental matters, including climate activists.

The provisions of the Paris Agreement related to ACE should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned human rights obligations of States and the Preamble of the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC, which makes it clear that all States “should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity” as well as take into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs.

The Preamble of the Paris Agreement further affirms “the importance of education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation at all levels on the matters addressed in this Agreement”. Article 6 emphasizes the importance of public participation in climate action including calling for efforts to “enhance public and private sector participation in the implementation of nationally determined contributions”, and Article 12 of the Agreement states that: “Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement”.

The renewal of the ACE work programme should clearly reflect that States have human rights obligations with respect to each of its components, several of which are human rights in and of themselves (i.e. education, participation and access to information). The following sections describe the linkages between human rights and ACE in greater detail with respect to several of these constituent elements, share examples of past work on rights-based approaches to these issues and make concrete recommendations for the new ACE workplan.

Public awareness, access to information and participation

Access to information and participation are human rights, as outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and political Rights and reaffirmed in environmental matters by Rio Principle 10, the Aarhus Convention and the ECLAC Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also reference these rights. SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) promotes actions in this area and is instrumental for achieving SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production). Specifically, SDG 16.7 calls on governments to “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels” and SDG targets 16.10 and 12.8 promote public access to information.

A report of the OHCHR has underlined that “public participation rights encompass the rights to be consulted at each phase of legislative drafting and policymaking, to voice criticism and to submit



proposals aimed at improving the functioning and inclusivity of all governmental bodies engaged in the conduct of public affairs”.⁴ By definition, the human right to public participation requires this participation to be meaningful, informed and effective which in turn requires a minimum level of public awareness and fulfillment of the right to access to information.

In a series of recent HRC resolutions on climate change, the Council has emphasized the importance of the participation and empowerment of those most affected by climate change. For example, HRC Resolution 41/21 of July 2019 expresses “*concern* at the adverse impacts of climate change on individuals with multiple vulnerability factors, including women and girls with disabilities”, emphasizes “the need for States to take and to support adequate measures to address their specific needs and to ensure participation in disaster response planning for emergency situations and evacuations, humanitarian emergency response and health-care services” and recognizes “the need for ensuring meaningful participation, inclusion and leadership of persons with disabilities and their organizations within disaster risk management and climate-related decision-making at the local, national, regional and global levels”. This should be interpreted, for example, in light of Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which requires Parties to “enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community”. The Council has issued similar resolutions with respect to children, women and girls and migrants.

Regarding the participation of women and girls, a OHCHR analytical study developed upon request of the HRC in its resolution 38/4 notes that “for effective climate action, decision makers must prioritize the meaningful and effective participation of women, recognizing that women are agents of change with unique perspectives, expertise, and problem-solving capabilities”.⁵ Resolution 4/17 of the UN Environment Assembly adopted in 2019 affirmed “the importance of States respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights obligations, including women’s rights, when implementing environmental legislation and policies (...) and in promoting policy coherence, legitimacy and sustainable outcomes, the connections between women’s human rights and environmental protection”.⁶ The resolution invites Member States to strengthen and implement policies aimed at increasing the participation and leadership of women in environmental decision-making and measures at the local, national, regional and international levels, and request, when appropriate, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and other United Nations agencies to support upon request national programmes and projects. The resolution further invites Member States to support training and capacity-building efforts for women and men on gender mainstreaming and enhancing all women’s active and meaningful participation in global processes, as a contribution to realizing the goal of gender balance.

The Paris Agreement and other decisions of the UNFCCC COP also address issues related to participation of persons, groups and peoples disproportionately affected by climate change. For example, UNFCCC 4/CMA.1 and 1/CP.21, state that Parties should ensure “public participation and engagement with local communities and indigenous peoples, in a gender-responsive manner”

⁴ Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Factors that impede equal political participation and steps to overcome those challenges*, UN Doc. A/HRC/27/29, para. 21.

⁵ A/HRC/41/26, para. 26.

⁶ United Nations Environment Assembly, 4/17. Promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance, 15 March 2019, UN Doc. UNEP/EA.4/Res.17



in the development and implementation of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding of NDCs.⁷

UN organizations have taken a number of actions to promote the right to public participation and access to information with respect to climate change. At UNFCCC COP25, a One UN side event was organized on SDG 16 and the theme “Realizing the right to participate: Empowering people as agents of more effective climate action”. The event was co-organized by OHCHR, ILO, UNECE, UNICEF, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNEP, UN Women and ECLAC.

OHCHR has supported the development of guidance on inclusive and rights-based NDCs, including through organizing workshops and events at PreCOP in Costa Rica in October 2019, as well as an Expert Workshop on Integrating Human Rights in NDCs from 3-4 June 2019 in Geneva.

ECLAC and OHCHR launched joint guidance on ‘[Climate change and human rights: contributions by and for Latin America and the Caribbean](#)’, in 2019, including references to human rights standards applicable to climate change on access to information, participation and justice, among others, and developments in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

ECLAC has developed the [Observatory on Principle 10 in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), which provides an overview of key references on access rights to information, participation and justice in international and national frameworks of the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Work under the Aarhus Convention has supported capacity-building of public officials on effectively providing the public with access to environmental information, as well as how to organise inclusive and meaningful public participation on climate-related decision-making. The Convention’s three thematic Task Forces (on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice) provide multi-stakeholder global platforms to share achievements and learn how to overcome barriers linked to climate-related procedural rights. The Convention’s updated recommendations on promoting effective access to environmental information through the use of electronic information tools (forthcoming) and its Maastricht Recommendations on ensuring effective public participation in decision-making on environmental matters provide useful guidance to support public officials in this work.⁸ The Aarhus Clearinghouse⁹ and an online collection of case studies¹⁰ offer opportunities to learn about successful experiences and challenges. Aarhus Centres¹¹, established in a number of countries with the support of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, are implementing projects aimed at e.g. raising awareness of local communities about their rights linked to climate issues. To support governments in promoting transparency and effective public participation in international climate-related decision-making specific guidelines have been developed under the Convention¹².

⁷ UNFCCC Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, Decision 4/CMA.1, and 1/CP.21, Annex I, para. 4(a)(i), FCCC/PA/CMA/2018/3/Add.1 (Mar. 19, 2019).

⁸ Maastricht Recommendations on Promoting Effective Public Participation in Environmental Matters, <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=49142>

⁹ See <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/>;

¹⁰ See e.g. good practices: https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/resources-keyword?individual=1&field_keywords_target_id=good%20practice

¹¹ See <https://aarhus.osce.org/activities/climate-change>

¹² The Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums:

<https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2005/pp/ece/ece.mp.pp.2005.2.add.5.e.pdf>; A snapshot of the Almaty Guidelines: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/ppif/Leaflet_PPIF_final_EN.pdf; A checklist for national action plan:



UNICEF in collaboration with YOUNGO, a coalition of champion governments and other partners launched an [Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action](#) at COP25, which reflects priorities identified by children and youth throughout the world united around a strong commitment to accelerate inclusive, child and youth-friendly climate policies and action at national and global levels, including the need to enhance their participation in decision-making. UNICEF also recently launched a summary report ‘[Are Climate Change Policies Child-Sensitive](#)’ which highlights the need for child-sensitive climate policies to be informed by, and provide for, the systematic consultation and meaningful participation of all children, including different ages, genders and social backgrounds, at every step of the climate policy-making process and at all levels.

Education

Education is also a right. According to Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to education. Article 29(1)(e) of the Convention specifically states children have the right to an education directed toward respect for the natural environment. Human rights education should be provided alongside and integrated with climate education.

A study by OHCHR as requested by HRC resolution 32/33 notes that “States should conduct and disclose environmental and children’s rights impact assessments and ensure an adequate education related to environmental issues in order to inform children’s participation in climate decision-making”,¹³ and references how the CRC has in its General Comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, noted that “children’s participation in relevant decision-making processes, including those related to climate adaptation and mitigation policies, must be ensured.”¹⁴ Education is a right in and of itself, but also a necessary enabling condition for effective enjoyment of the right to participation. The Aarhus Convention promotes environmental education and public environmental awareness, especially in the context of obtaining information, participating in decision-making and accessing to justice. The guidance material developed under the Convention support these objectives.

Over the past several years, UN organizations have undertaken numerous efforts to highlight the importance of education in the response to climate change and facilitate better climate education. At COP25, a One UN side event was organized on SDG 4 focusing on “Climate Change Education”, where e.g. an upcoming course on climate change and human rights developed by the UNFCCC Paris Committee on Capacity-Building (PCCB) and OHCHR was discussed. The event was co-organized by the UN Alliance on Climate Change Education, Training and Public Awareness (UN Alliance), FAO, ILO, UN Climate Change, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNITAR. Similar events have been organized by the UN Alliance at COPs 21-24.

From 2015 to 2019, UNESCO implemented the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The GAP generated substantial action around the world, exceeding targets set around five priority action areas: (1) advancing policy; (2) transforming learning and training environments; (3) building capacities of educators and trainers; (4) empowering and mobilizing youth; and (5) accelerating sustainable solutions at local level. Through its Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), UNESCO supported 258 schools in 25 countries to adopt a “Whole-Institution Approach to Climate Action”. UNESCO and

https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/ppif/Checklist/Checklist_of_measures_for_national_action_plan_on_PPIF_final_En_2018.pdf

¹³ A/HRC/35/13, para. 39

¹⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, para. 12.



the UNFCCC Secretariat also supported ACE country focal points through the development of [‘Guidelines for accelerating solutions through education, training and public awareness’](#) (2016).

In December 2019, UNICEF in collaboration with Plan International and Brookings Institution launched [‘Girls’ education in climate strategies: Opportunities for improved policy and enhanced action in Nationally Determined Contributions,](#)’ which recognises how education, specifically of girls, contributes in powerful ways to humanity’s ability to reverse climate catastrophe. This provides a baseline from which progress in national climate change policies can be tracked on crucial issues including gender equality, education, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Also in December 2019, UNICEF launched the research report [‘It is getting hot: Call for education systems to respond to the climate crisis’](#) focusing on East Asia and the Pacific. The report calls for urgent actions to ‘climate-proof’ the education sector and to accelerate climate-resilient and climate-smart education investments. Finally, through a recent [Partnership with the European Investment Bank,](#) UNICEF will help improve access to quality education and support the scale-up of community-based climate adaptation initiatives in schools and health facilities.

Training / capacity-building

Effective training is needed to ensure that all persons and governments have the necessary capacity to address climate change. States must ensure that appropriate adaptation measures are taken to protect and fulfil the rights of all persons, particularly those most endangered by the negative impacts of climate change such as those living in vulnerable areas (e.g. small islands, riparian and low-lying coastal zones, arid regions, and the poles). States must build adaptive capacities in vulnerable communities, including by recognizing the manner in which factors such as discrimination, and disparities in education and health affect climate vulnerability, and by devoting adequate resources to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of all persons.

Capacity-building is also necessary to ensure that States understand, assess and follow-through on the commitment to respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment when taking actions to address climate change. These include, *inter alia*, obligations related to assessing environmental, social and human rights impacts, the mobilization of finance, transparency, participation, education, training and public awareness, all of which are identified as priority areas within decision 1/CP.21. Capacity-building is also needed to ensure a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, including women and girls and youth. The ILO’s [Guidelines](#) provide an important framework in this regard. The transition to carbon-neutral and sustainable economies can potentially create millions of jobs, but requires bold and well-coordinated actions. Equal access to training, raising environmental awareness, and systematic capacity-building for current and future workers will be essential for the implementation of inclusive green production and service delivery. Reskilling and upskilling measures are crucial in reducing the risks of rising unemployment, poverty and inequality in the face of climate change.

The PCCB workplan for 2016-2020, as outlined in decision 1/CP.21 and as extended at COP 25, calls upon States to collaborate with institutions under and outside the Convention, to identify capacity gaps and ways to address them, to promote the development of tools for capacity-building, and to foster global, regional, national and subnational cooperation.¹⁵ The PCCB has recognized the importance of strengthening consultation processes between States and all stakeholders,

¹⁵ See UN Doc. FCCC/SBI/2019/L.30, para. 15.: “*Further requests* the Paris Committee on Capacity-building to develop a workplan for the period of its extension on the basis of the priority areas and activities contained in the annex for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-sixth session (November 2020);”



including women, local communities and indigenous peoples, youth, children, and workers. In June 2019, a workshop on integrating human rights in climate action was organized by the PCCB and OHCHR at SB 50.¹⁶ Topics included just transition, integrating rights in NDCs, gender and the rights of youth and children. During the ACE dialogues, the importance of human rights, including the rights of women, children, youth and indigenous peoples, were referenced.¹⁷ The partners of this joint submission have been active participants in these discussions, sharing lessons learned from their areas of expertise. These experiences, along with COP decisions related to local communities and indigenous peoples, loss and damage, and gender, demonstrates that there is a need for additional training and capacity-building with respect to human rights and climate change.

The PCCB report of its 3rd meeting¹⁸ in June 2019 referred to the recent ILO report ‘Skills for a Greener Future: A global view’, which highlighted the importance of policy coherence and inter-ministerial coordination in climate action. The report analyses how skills development can underpin the green transition with documented good practices in 32 countries. It is the first global study on the implications of the transition to low-carbon and resource-efficient economies for skills, gender and occupations. It provides new insights into occupational skill effects in declining and growing industries by 2030 based on two global scenarios (energy sustainability and circular economy). The green transition is conditional on holistic implementation of NDCs to achieve the Paris Agreement. The commitments under sectors prioritized in mitigation and adaptation measures set out in NDCs are all subject to the availability of relevant skills and trainings. Social dialogue will remain essential to ensure relevant education and training to achieve a just transition for all.

UNESCO supports countries to integrate Climate Change Education into their education systems through capacity-building and technical support. ESD capacity-building initiatives are currently underway in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Pacific Island States, Myanmar, Mozambique and Central America. UNESCO also supported Costa Rica, Kenya and Viet Nam in developing national ESD policies and action plans to implement the policy with roll-out programmes and capacity-building.

One of the four key pillars of UNICEF’s climate and environmental work is to protect children from impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Under this pillar, UNICEF calls for climate resilience and environmental sustainability to be a core element of services that children depend upon for their survival and well-being, including water/sanitation, health, and education. UNICEF advocates for sector development strategies, budgets, infrastructure and capacity development to include climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

Recommendations for future action

ACE is critical to achieve the objectives of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement and protect people and planet from the ravages of unchecked climate change. A future work programme on ACE should explicitly integrate a rights-based approach, be closely aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (2030 Agenda), and promote synergies between different aspects of the work of the UNFCCC to facilitate more effective, inclusive and equitable climate action.

¹⁶ Technical Workshop Building Capacity for Integrating Human Rights into Climate Action, SB 50, Bonn, https://unfccc.int/PCCB-OHCHR_workshop

¹⁷ See e.g. [Keynote to the 6th Dialogue on Action for Climate Empowerment](#), 9th May 2018 of Mary Robinson, Chair of the Elders: “Participation is a human right. Education and access to information, other cornerstones of ACE, are also human rights.”

¹⁸ PCCB report, Third meeting, Bonn, Germany, 20-22 June 2019, p. 5, available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/PCCB%203%20meeting%20report_FINAL.pdf



For instance, the work on ACE should be informed by and connected to the work of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. Climate actions affecting indigenous peoples should be subject to consultations with indigenous peoples with the objective of obtaining their free, prior and informed consent as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as ILO Convention No. 169. Meaningful, inclusive and informed participation by all interested stakeholders should be considered a key criteria to ensure that climate actions are better designed and more sustainable, with systems for grievances and redress mechanisms that are independent, easy to access and demonstrably impartial.

ACE should also be aligned with the aims of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan. The COP 25 decision on the Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan references human rights and just transition, and also highlights the importance of gender balance, participation and women’s leadership “to achieve and sustain the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the UNFCCC process”.¹⁹ ACE should also contribute to the implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, in particular, activities related to strengthening the evidence base and understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women and the role of women as agents of change and on opportunities for women; enhancing capacity-building for governments and other relevant stakeholders to collect, analyse and apply sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in the context of climate change.

The work of the PCCB should be closely linked to that on ACE in order to promote a coherent approach to quality training and systematic capacity-building for more effective climate action under the UNFCCC. This work should necessarily reflect efforts to build capacity to implement the human rights commitments of States in the context of climate change.

The range of guidance material developed under international instruments like the Aarhus Convention and the Escazú Agreement offer valuable guidance to countries in the implementation of the ACE programme, and should be used to assist governments and stakeholders in promoting access to information and public participation in the climate context. For instance, promotion of active dissemination of climate-related information through modern ICTs should be encouraged. More efforts should be made to ensure digital inclusion of vulnerable populations, while being mindful of their possible limitations (e.g. knowledge of languages, digital literacy). Trainings for public officials involved in the day-to-day task of carrying out public participation procedures on climate-related projects, plans, policies, strategies and legislation should receive priority. Trainings should also be organised for public officials on how to engage the public effectively in international climate-related decision-making. Furthermore, specific trainings and awareness-raising events about obligations to ensure the safety of people exercising their environmental human rights should be strongly encouraged for officials of public authorities, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, members of judiciary, providers of private security services and developers in particular.

Capacity-building activities should be more participatory, including through the effective inclusion of vulnerable groups. Multi-stakeholder dialogues on issues such as energy transition, climate adaptation/mitigation, just transition and technology sharing should be promoted. Such dialogues should involve relevant authorities, members of the public, indigenous peoples, local communities, civil society, women’s organizations, scientists, private sector, children and youths, financial institutions and other stakeholders. Public libraries, educational institutions, media, Aarhus Centres and other information sites or community centres remain instrumental to reach out and build capacities of local communities and vulnerable groups.

¹⁹ UN Doc. FCCC/CP/2019/L.3, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2019_L03E.pdf



The Beijing Platform for Action aims to review and celebrate new laws, programmes and policies advancing gender equality and the realization of human rights. It should also be closely linked to ACE. The Beijing declaration of 1995 recognizes that “Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making processes and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace” Women’s participation in environmental sustainability, gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience, and digital and financial inclusion will be central in this reviewing process. UN Women together with other UN agencies are currently supporting those processes and will have to consider and come up with a consistent approach and alignment with the Doha work programme and Action for Climate Empowerment, which reaffirms “the importance of taking into account gender aspects and the need to promote the effective engagement of children, youth, the elderly, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, local communities and non-governmental organizations in activities related to Article 6 of the Convention. UNEP is currently supporting the Beijing +25 processes. The Platform for Action is an agenda for women’s empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. It aims to undertake a review and appraisal of progress through the years. UNEP is a key institution in supporting actions of climate empowerment in that specific context and will support the development of Action Coalitions and join relevant coalitions through institutional commitments.

The partners of this joint submission advise that relevant experts from States, UN organizations and civil society be invited to regularly share their views and experiences on human rights obligations relating to ACE. ACE workshops and activities should be more participatory, including through effective inclusion of persons most affected by climate change and those marginalized, and outcomes reflecting their views. Recommendations and outcomes from ACE should be effectively communicated to the COP in order to inform and improve its deliberations in the spirit of Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. The COP may wish to consider establishing a taskforce or committee of experts on ACE to ensure effective and inclusive action. Strengthening the human rights-based and gender-responsive approaches should also include building capacity of ACE focal points, strengthening reporting, and supporting the integration of human rights in relevant processes, including the NDC review. Enhanced ambition in the revised NDCs could support a rights-based approach, e.g. through skills training.

A new ACE programme should be aligned with the SDGs, including SDGs 16, 4, 5, 8, 12 and 13. The timeframe should be 2021 to 2030, and the reporting and implementation process closely linked to the 2030 Agenda. Synergies with the future programme “Education for Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the SDGs”, and its five priority areas: policy, learning environment, training educators, youth and communities and advocacy and monitoring of progress are recommended.

To the extent that resources permit, the co-authors of this submission are ready to provide relevant support for the ACE agenda, particularly in the areas of human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, rights of children and youth, access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters, rights-based climate education, and just transition and to support Member States to include this area within their capacity-building work.