**Call for Inputs:**

**Climate Change and Human Rights: a Safe Climate**

**Questionnaire**

1. Please provide examples of ways in which climate change is already having adverse impacts on the human rights …

An irreversible climate crisis poses an existential threat to human kind, therefore affects all human rights. A stable climate system is a condition *sine qua non* for the protection and enjoyment of human rights it is important that this report acknowledges the fact that Human Rights can only be guaranteed if we succeed to keep the world under 1.5°C.

According to the latest climate science:

1. we are currently on track to a 3°C or higher temperature world but we can still bend the curve;
2. there is global consensus on an “action window” of about 12 years to ensure that we do not pass 1.5°C;
3. there is growing recognition that fast mitigation is needed to slow self-reinforcing feedbacks that will close the 12-year window, and to avoid climate tipping points that are potentially catastrophic and irreversible; and
4. the only way to keep the world safe is by quickly deploying fast mitigation actions at scale, including cutting the short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs)—HFCs, black carbon, and methane—, to slow near-term temperature increases as well as long-term temperature increases.

The underlying considerations for a fast action strategy using a human rights framework set a timeline founded in science, recognizes the emergency we face, and they are crucial to understand where we need to focus funding, policy, mitigation action, and technology efforts.

**What do we know? 10 Key Facts that impacts Human Rights**

**Fact #1:** We are not on a path to meet the Paris temperature goal. According to the UN Environment’s Emissions Gap Report 2017 current NDCs pledges cover no more than a third of the emission reductions needed, creating a dangerous gap that poses an existential threat to humankind (as detailed in the 2017 *Well under 2°C* [report](http://www.igsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Well-Under-2-Degrees-Celsius-Report-2017.pdf)).

**Fact #2:** Surpassing the 1.5°C threshold will have irreversible consequences and risk triggering tipping points that will make it impossible to stabilize the climate system. The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C notes that the likelihood of an Arctic Ocean free of sea ice in summer would increase 10X with global warming of 2°C, compared with a 1.5°C scenario; and that coral reefs would decline by > 99 percent at 2°C.

**Fact#3:** The domino-effect of climate events could move Earth into a Hothouse State. Surpassing tipping points would make efforts to reduce CO2 futile. Climate action is not just a case of turning the knob on CO2 emissions, but of understanding how various factors interact at a global level as noted by the world’s leading authorities on positive feedback loops in ‘Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene” [published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1810141115), the *Well Under 2°C* report, and most recently in Molina, Ramanathan & Zaelke, [Climate report understates threat](https://thebulletin.org/2018/10/climate-report-understates-threat/), *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (9 October 2018).

**Fact#4:** Without fast action to reduce the near-term rate of warming, global average temperature increases are likely to exceed 1.5°C during the 2040s and to exceed 2°C early in the second half of the century. Warming will be two to three times faster at high altitudes and high latitudes like the poles.

**Fact#5:** For the first time the IPCC recognizes the crucial and unique role that SLCPs must play to keep temperatures from surpassing the 1.5°C threshold. Scale-up action to reduce SLCPs can avoid 0.6°C of warming by 2050 compared to up to 0.3°C for CO2 mitigation; and can avoid 1.2°C at 2100 compared to 1.9°C for CO2; all while improving air quality and preventing as many as 2 million premature deaths and 100 million tons of crop damages annually.

**Fact#6:** The Arctic’s reflective ice shield will likely disappear within 15 years and add tremendous additional heat to the region and the globe. Just the loss between 1979 and 2011 added 25% as much warming as CO2 during this period. This implies that if the Arctic sea ice were to suddenly disappear this year, this could accelerate the onset of 1.5°C by several years. This would shorten the time available to adapt to dangerous climate changes and the time for achieving carbon neutrality. SLCPs are crucial to slow the loss of the reflective ice shield. Fast action at scale to reduce SLCPs can cut Arctic warming by two thirds.

**Fact#7:** The IPCC 1.5°C report, due to modeling limitations, did not report on self-reinforcing feedbacks and tipping points—the wildcards of the climate system—which could cause the climate to destabilize even faster. The report also fails to discuss the 5% risk that even existing levels of climate pollution, if continued unchecked, could lead to runaway warming—the so-called [“fat tail” risk](http://www.pnas.org/content/114/39/10315) or perhaps better termed the “runaway warming” risk. These omissions may mislead world leaders into thinking they have more time to address the climate crisis, when in fact immediate actions are needed. As recognized by leading scientists on tipping points and feedbacks there is a significant risk of self-reinforcing climate feedback loops pushing the planet into chaos beyond human control.

**Fact#8:** All modelled pathways that limit global warming to 1.5°C involve deep reductions in emissions of SLCPs including methane and black carbon (35% or more of both by 2050 relative to 2010). Technology exists to do the job efficiently and effectively.

**Fact#09:** Efforts to address SLCPs are underfunded. Even though near-term temperature abatement will de facto *require* a focus on SLCP mitigation and many measures that reduce SLCPs also reduce CO2 helping with both the near-term challenge as well as with the long-term temperature goal. The only global organization whose sole focus is to reduce SLSPs is the Climate and Clean Air Coalition. The CCAC trust fund budget is a mere $7 million for 2019.

**Fact#10:** There is an unprecedent opportunity to invest in a SLCP strategy that has been neglected and that can give extraordinary results in the current climate crises and uniquely provide near-term temperature abatement and reduction at scale. The IPCC 1.5°C report is helping the world start to realize that reducing SLCPs is essential to keep the world safe. The prize is cutting the rate of global warming in half and Arctic warming by two-thirds in the near-term, while also saving up to 2 m lives a year and millions of tons of crops.

2. Given that “[urgent, effective and ambitious action](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/BurningDowntheHouse.aspx)” to ensure a safe climate is essential to protecting a wide range of human rights, what are the specific obligations of States and businesses in terms of addressing the main drivers of climate change (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, industrial agriculture)?

See answer above When trying to solve climate change, winning slowly is the same as loosing. Speed should be our new metric.

3. Please provide examples of good practices in preventing, reducing, or eliminating the adverse impacts of climate change on human rights.

Linking Clean Air and Climate is an important way to enhance climate ambition. The Climate and Clean Air Coalition that we helped to fund provides good examples on how this can be done on the ground. See https://ccacoalition.org/en

A blind spot on climate action is cooling. Cooling is central to health, prosperity, and climate. Efficient, clean cooling for all underpins many Sustainable Development Goals and represents an opportunity to avoid substantial greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A combined strategy that enhances energy efficiency of cooling equipment while phasing down HFCs under the Kigali Amendment can avoid up to 1°C of warming and is an essential part of such a Fast Mitigation Action Plan.

The October 2016 Kigali Amendment can avoid up to 0.5°C of warming. The amendment’s initial phasedown schedule will capture 80% of this, with 20% more available from faster ratification and implementation, including through a leapfrog strategy whereby countries leap over HFCs during the Montreal Protocol’s ongoing mandatory phaseout of HCFCs, which can avoid an additional 53 billion tons CO2-eq. Parallel improvements in the energy efficiency of air conditioners and other cooling equipment during the switch of refrigerants can double the climate benefits.[[1]](#footnote-1) The energy efficiency improvements of room air conditioners alone can save enough energy to avoid building up to 1,587 medium-size peak power plants by 2030, [according the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory](https://eta.lbl.gov/publications/benefits-leapfrogging-superefficiency), including up to 619 in China and up to 142 in India in the next decade. The cumulative global savings are [$2.9 trillion through 2050 from HFC + Energy Efficiency, according to the International Energy Agency](https://www.iea.org/newsroom/news/2018/may/air-conditioning-use-emerges-as-one-of-the-key-drivers-of-global-electricity-dema.html)

The IEA estimates that the energy demand for cooling is the fastest growing end-use in buildings, with 10 air conditioners (AC) sold every second over the next 30 years.[[2]](#footnote-2) Room AC alone could add an estimated 132 to 167 billion tonnes (Gt) of CO2 emissions by 2050. This amount represents 25% to 50% of the remaining carbon budget which if realized will derail the Paris Agreement temperature goals.

The economic and environmental benefits of catalyzing simultaneous energy efficiency improvements, in concert with the Montreal Protocol Kigali HFC phasedown, supports reduced energy consumption through avoided CO2 emissions, in addition to HFC mitigation, which can potentially double the climate benefit of the HFC phase-down alone.3 Improving air conditioning performance by more than 50% by 2030 could cut CO2 emissions from space cooling in half while reducing local air pollution from power generation.[[3]](#footnote-3)

6. What are ways in which high-income States should assist low-income States in responding to climate change, while simultaneously contributing to sustainable development in those low-income States?

Aligned ODA to ensure it promotes actions to remain under 1.5C

Use the Montreal Protocol approach which is the most successful environmental treaty that exists.

Aligned IFIs ODA to ensure it promotes actions to remain under 1.5C

There a many actions that increase climate ambition while supporting the achievement of SDGs. Please see climate and clean air coalition.

See also our report **Well Under 2 Degrees Celsius:** *Fast Action Policies to Protect People and the Planet from Extreme Climate Change*

http://www.igsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Well-Under-2-Degrees-Celsius-Report-2017.pdf

9. How do you ensure that the rights of individuals working on climate change (environmental human rights defenders) are protected? What efforts has your Government or business made to create a safe and enabling environment for them to freely exercise their rights without fear of violence, intimidation, harassment or reprisal?

Strengthening environmental institutions is key for environmental defenders. Strong environmental institutions should translate on strong environmental compliance and enforcement as well as a civic space for environmental claims to nourish public policy. The weaker the environmental institution the more fragile and vulnerable the civic space for environmental defenders. Special measures to protect environmental defenders to avoid their criminalization is crucial. Among these measures we can identify:

1. Stronger environmental institutions
2. Specialized judiciary
3. Fast reaction of human rights systems to protect environmental activist under attack or criminalization
4. Higher standards of scrutiny when an environmental defender is the subject of criminal actions
5. Special considerations on the burden of proof and reinforcement of the principle of innocence
6. Special Units to Defend Defenders and Register Violations
7. Changes in types of crimes that are used to criminalize environmental defenders
8. Ensure that the concept of refugees includes environmental defenders
9. Take specific measures to minimize impacts of smear campaign 4

1. These figures are from the [6 February 2019 quadrennial report of the Montreal Protocol’s Scientific Assessment Panel](https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/csd/assessments/ozone/2018/report/), comprised of scientists from WMO, UNEP, NASA, NOAA, and the European Commission, and are consistent with earlier calculations by Project Drawdown, which ranks management of HFC refrigerants the number one most important strategy of the 100 it recommends. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. International Energy Agency (2018) [Future of Cooling](https://www.iea.org/newsroom/news/2018/may/air-conditioning-use-emerges-as-one-of-the-key-drivers-of-global-electricity-dema.html): Opportunities for energy-efficient air conditioning. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. International Energy Agency (2018) [Future of Cooling](https://www.iea.org/newsroom/news/2018/may/air-conditioning-use-emerges-as-one-of-the-key-drivers-of-global-electricity-dema.html): Opportunities for energy-efficient air conditioning. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)