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**Open-Letter from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
on integrating human rights in climate action**

Excellency,

As I write to you today, human rights are under threat from a force that challenges the foundations of all life on this planet we share.

The findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its special report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C could not have been clearer. Climate change is already affecting people's lives, the effective enjoyment of their rights, and the ecosystems on which we all rely. Preserving humanity's future by preventing the worst impacts of climate change requires the international community to work together to take effective, ambitious, urgent, human rights-based climate action now.

Next month, in Katowice, Poland, States and other stakeholders will come together to finalize a series of critical decisions on the work programme of the 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. These decisions will govern climate action under the Paris Agreement for the indefinite future.

It is critical that the outcome of the COP24 in Katowice be grounded in concrete commitments to uphold human dignity and rights, in order to live up to the legacy and purpose of the Paris Agreement, as well as to the world's efforts to achieve sustainable development and eradicate extreme poverty.

We must also look beyond COP24 to the implementation of the Paris Agreement in the coming years. Over the course of the next two years, many Governments will have the possibility to submit and/or update their first nationally determined contributions. This gives your Government the opportunity to strengthen the commitments reflected in its initial intended contribution. I am urging all authorities to urgently consider such a move. We know that the sum total of States' current nationally determined contributions put us on track for roughly 3°C of warming, more than twice the target the international community agreed to pursue efforts to reach three years ago in Paris.

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Permanent Missions to the United Nations
in Geneva and New York



The consequences of this degree of climate change are unthinkable. Entire nations, ecosystems, peoples and ways of life could simply cease to exist. And countless lives will be irreparably harmed, starting with those who already face discrimination because of their gender; because of their economic status; because they are members of indigenous peoples or minorities; because they are migrants, or internally displaced; because of their age; or because they are people with disabilities.

States have a human rights obligation to ensure that those affected by climate change, particularly those in vulnerable situations, have access to effective remedies and the necessary means of adaptation to enjoy lives of human dignity. They also have an obligation to strengthen their mitigation commitments in order to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. To achieve these objectives, States must work individually and collectively to regulate greenhouse gas emissions, to mobilize adequate resources for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and to ensure the meaningful participation of all persons in climate action.

I am deeply committed to the struggle to uphold the rights of the millions of people threatened by climate change, now and in the coming years. My Office will extend all possible support to Member States in negotiating and implementing human rights-based climate actions in this critical struggle.

In this regard, my Office stands ready to provide guidance on a number of crucial measures for the protection of human rights in climate action should that be helpful. We will continue to work with Governments and other stakeholders to promote climate action and a COP24 outcome that benefits both people and planet.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Michelle Bachelet
High Commissioner for Human Rights