Ministry of Human and Minority Rights

and Social Dialogue

Sector for Human Rights

Belgrade, July 15, 2022

**Input to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change**

**1.** The effects of climate change on the population in rural areas are mostly seen through the reduction of income due to the decline in agricultural production, but also in increased risks to health due to the reduction of water availability and more difficult access to health care. Among them, agricultural producers with minimal capital are certainly the most vulnerable because, most often, they are completely dependent on agricultural production and natural resources. Also, seasonal workers in the agricultural sector are among the most vulnerable.

Apart from the direct impacts of climate change, the vulnerability of groups can also be a consequence of mitigation and adaptation measures. The reduction of GHG emissions, that is mitigation, and the accompanying change of industrial sectors to "low-carbon sectors", can affect job losses and increase electricity costs. It is expected that the number of jobs will decrease primarily in the sectors related to fossil fuels and in the agricultural sector, as well as in large enterprises. On the other hand, one can expect an increase in employment in activities related to forestry, as well as in small and medium-sized enterprises.

**2.** The Republic of Serbia is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol in the status of "Non-Annex I Party", and since 2017 is one of the 175 countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement.

All current data related to climate change as well as the impact of climate change on relevant sectors and systems at the national level are contained in *the Second Report of the Republic of Serbia according to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. The report is available on the website https://w№v.klimatskepromene.rs/wp-content1up10ads/2() 1 7/ 12/Drugi-izvestai-o-promeniklime-SNC Srbiia.pdf.

The adoption of *the Law on Climate Change* in 2021 demonstrated the readiness to fulfill internationally assumed obligations, as well as the readiness to help the economy to be competitive in the current market, with the possibility of entering new markets, and above all, to make its full contribution to the reduction of losses and damages caused by natural disasters and disasters caused by changed climatic conditions.

With this Law is envisaged the creation of a *Program for Adaptation to Changed Climate Conditions with an Action Plan*, which aims to assess the impacts of climate change on society and sectors of the economy in the country, determine adaptation measures in the most vulnerable sectors and assess the benefits and costs of their application and the identification of institutions that will be responsible for their implementation. Defining and implementing adaptation measures to changed climate conditions, in addition to fulfilling obligations towards the international community, is one of the conditions for sustainable economic development of the country and reduction of risks, damages and losses from natural disasters and catastrophes.

By creating the Program, the Republic of Serbia also fulfills its obligations under the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as requirements regarding the harmonization of national and EU legislation. This Program is in the drafting phase and will be adopted by the Government, at the proposal of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, within two years of the adoption of the Law on Climate Change.

With *the Law on Reconstruction after Natural and Other Disasters* is envisaged a form of compensation for citizens through the state assistance and reconstruction program for the purpose of rebuilding and repairing the consequences of natural and other disasters that occurred as a direct consequence of climate change.

With *the Law on Environmental Protection* is mandated the prevention, control, reduction and remediation of all forms of soil, water and air pollution. By decision of the Government in November 2016, the Green Fund was established to collect income from environmental fees. It has been in force since January 2017, but is still not fully operational.

In accordance with the Water Law, *the Water Management Strategy of the territory of the Republic of Serbia until 2034* was adopted.

**3.** A certain number of farmers are not financially able to pay the insurance premium, and therefore are unable to receive compensation for damage caused by natural disasters. It is necessary to consider amending the Law on reconstruction after natural and other natural disasters for extremely vulnerable groups: people with disabilities, single parents, the elderly, etc. and that in the part that refers to the conditions for exercising the right to assistance and the condition that all measures have been taken to reduce the risk of natural and other disasters (Article 11, paragraph 5). Likewise, consider increasing the percentage of insurance premiums in agriculture to help vulnerable social groups reduce damage to their properties from adverse events.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection supported the development of an analysis of the impact of climate change on children in Serbia, prepared by UNICEF, which is available on the website https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/1 8356/file/CLAC%20izvestai.pdf

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia strongly supports the development of new educational programs and profiles and the training of pupils and students for "green" occupations through the further development of the dual education system, the intensification of professional practices, training for artisan and other forms of acquiring practical knowledge and skills.

Training which are carried out targeted in the most affected sectors can help workers to acquire the necessary competencies and skills to properly implement the transition and be more innovative and resistant to change.

**4.** The Government of the Republic of Serbia established *the Public Investment Management Ofiice*, as a body responsible for managing reconstruction projects and providing assistance after natural and other disasters. During the year, the Public Investment Management Ofiice verifies the assessment of damage from natural disasters made by commissions, formed by the local self-government unit, and prepares proposals for measures to the Government, which adopts state aid and reconstruction programs to mitigate the consequences.

**5.** Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management through the implementation of the *National Rural Development Plan for the period 2018-2022.* implemented several incentive support measures that indirectly influenced the reduction of the impact of climate change on vulnerable social groups. This program implemented a special policy of support for the population of rural areas, and the amount of incentives for residents in areas with difficult working conditions in agriculture was higher for certain support measures. A group of support measures aimed at improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and food sector is intended to respond, among other things, to the challenges of climate change, environmental protection and animal welfare. The growth of competitiveness includes an increase in adaptability to climate change and an increase in the ability to manage risks.

A draft of the *National Program for Rural Development for the period 2022-2024* has been prepared, which also envisages the continuation of the policy of supporting measures for vulnerable groups. Additionally, the program envisages support for the implementation of a group of measures aimed at diversifying income and improving the quality of life in rural areas Within these measures is also a measure for the improvement of rural infrastructure, which aims to improve the economic and social position and prospects of rural areas, slow down negative demographic trends and increase the attractiveness of rural areas as a place to live and invest, and respond to the challenges of climate change, protection environment and animal welfare. The improvement of the state of rural infrastructure envisages incentives for the construction of atar and forest roads, the construction and equipping of facilities for water supply and road infrastructure, as well as for other infrastructure projects, whereby the intensity of support will amount to 100%. Also, as part of these measures, there is also a measure to improve economic activities in rural areas through supporting non-agricultural activities, as well as a measure to support young farmers, within which the importance of members of vulnerable social groups, primarily women, is recognized and additionally valued in relation to other beneficiaries in such a way that, when applying for the right to incentives, female applicants are scored with a higher number of points.

It is necessary to increase financial investments in adaptation measures, and at the same time work on increasing awareness of the importance of prevention, especially in rural areas. Effective timely announcement of heat waves would be a significant step in increasing the resilience of the health system to climate change. It is also necessary to adopt and implement the National Adaptation Plan, as a legal approach to reduce the negative impact of climate change.

**6.** Realization of financial benefits and methods of securing compensation for vulnerable groups are:

* Development of a financial strategy for risks
* Promotion of insurance (insurance for the risk of natural disasters for SE Europe and the Caucasus)
* Study of potential liabilities and fiscal impact (tax benefits)
* Analysis of administrative mechanisms after natural disasters
* Capacity building of the Ministry of Finance

Financing of climate change projects by state-owned enterprises:

Eight state-owned companies were identified as companies that are relevant for this analysis: Naftna Industrija Srbije - NIS, Elektroprivreda Srbije - EPS, Srbijagas, Srbijašume, Vojvodinašume, Srbijavode, Putevi Srbije and Koridori Srbije. Of this group, only three responded to the polite request for data submission, specifically: NIS, EPS and Srbijašume, where only NIS and EPS submitted concrete financial data. NIS reported total investments in climate change (mainly mitigation measures related to CO2 reduction) in the amount of RSD 1.06 billion in the period from 2016 to 2018. The largest item in the financing structure is RSD 250 million for the reconstruction of the small thermal power plant Majdan X in 2016. EPS, on the other hand, cites investments of 33.4 million rsd in its distribution network as a measure to reduce CO2 emissions. More significant funds were invested in the rehabilitation of hydroelectric power plants: Đerdap 1 hydroelectric power plant and HPP Zvornik, about 5 billion rsd each, in each of the above-mentioned HPPs. EPS also lists very relevant projects that it intends to implement in the future, such as solar power plants and wind farms.

**7.** It is necessary to increase financial investments in mitigation measures: afforestation, integral manure management, organic production, etc. from local, national and foreign funds for financing "green" projects. In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management encourages the development of organic production through various measures, as climate-smart agriculture, which plays a significant role in the strategy of the development of agriculture and the processing industry in Serbia. Those measures are:

•             incentives for organic crop production per hectare, which are increased by 250% compared to conventional production;

•             incentives for organic livestock production, which are increased by 40% compared to the measures available to producers engaged in conventional livestock production;

•             refund of control and certification costs, 50% and 65% of total costs, maximum 1 million dinars per user.

**8.** We believe that the "green" and digital transition will have a strong social impact, especially due to the shutdown of some and the creation of new jobs and working conditions, which is why it is necessary to include fairness and solidarity. This impact should be taken into account when creating transition plans, because by timely identifying the expected social consequences of the transition, harmful effects can be minimized and prevented. In this sense, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry provides full support to companies that implement measures so that the transition is socially responsible and sustainable in the long term.

It is necessary to include the expected climate changes, especially the expected values of extreme temperatures and precipitation, in the strategic and planning documents at the local, national and regional level.