



Jane Goodall Institute

## Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development

Roots & Shoots Global, Jane Goodall Institute Global



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## Introduction

Roots & Shoots is a youth service program founded by Dr Jane Goodall, DBE, who is also the founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and is a United Nations (UN) Messenger of Peace. Roots & Shoots began in Tanzania in 1991 when a group of local teenagers approached Dr Goodall with concerns about their community. Today, Roots & Shoots groups are active in 60+ countries, united in our mission to foster respect and compassion for all living things; to promote understanding of all cultures and beliefs; and to inspire each individual to take action to make the world a better place for animals, people, and the environment.

Roots & Shoots is grateful for the opportunity to respond to both themes within the Special Rapporteur's scope of reporting for 2024 and will address each theme accordingly. We draw attention to the four overarching principles necessary for the right to development as identified and so defined by the Special Rapporteur: self-determination, intersectionality, intergenerational equity, and fair distribution.

### (a) Climate justice: Loss and damage

*We are seeing the consequences of the crazy idea that there can be unlimited economic development on a planet with finite natural resources and a growing population. Decisions are made for short-term gain at the expense of protecting the environment for the future. Now, the world's population is estimated at over 8 billion people, and it is expected to be closer to 10 billion by 2050. Then there is our greedy lifestyle, our reckless burning of fossil fuels, the demand for meat, poverty – and, of course, we must also tackle corruption.*

-Dr Jane Goodall, DBE

Roots & Shoots acknowledges the importance of the right to development for everyone, everywhere as consistent with the *Declaration on the Right to Development* adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986 (**Declaration**). The Declaration recognises that:

development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process aimed at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom...

The right to development, as defined, is undermined by the negative impacts of climate change on individuals, communities, and ecosystems. To contextualise these impacts, it is necessary to understand how climate change connects with biodiversity loss and environmental inequity (or, as we articulate it, 'the convergence of three crises'). For example, climate change causes increased ocean acidity and different precipitation patterns. These changed precipitation patterns, in turn, cause massive changes to habitats for millions of species, leading to biodiversity loss. The affected species



are then forced to migrate to other areas, changing their roles within highly-interconnected ecosystems that are sensitive to change. With respect to environmental inequity, the adverse impacts of climate change are often caused by those in positions of privilege (i.e. those with access to wealth and resources often have a disproportionately large carbon footprint based on their consumption habits) but are borne by more vulnerable groups.

In Africa, temperatures are rising at a rate faster than the average global rate of rise; the frequency of droughts has nearly tripled in sub-Saharan Africa since 1979; and sea level rise along African coasts is faster than the global average, which contributes to increasing frequency and severity of coastal flooding and erosion. The flow-on effects of these changes have severe consequences for human and non-human communities alike, including increased food scarcity. Food scarcity not only threatens the wellbeing of people relying on the productivity of their crops for livelihood and nutrition, but also the animals with which they share their environment, leading to increased competition and conflict. The loss of vegetation owing to prolonged droughts increases the risk of fires and threatens viable habitat for species, many of whom provide invaluable ecosystem services that sustain life on Earth. Further, loss of viable habitat due to climate change and changes to land use and consumption push wildlife into closer proximity with humans, increasing the risk of future pandemics with the spread of zoonotic diseases.

In teasing out the relationship between the right to development, self-determination, and climate change, it is useful to consider the status of Small Island Developing States (**SIDS**) and Indigenous peoples. Climate change challenges the realisation of a range of human rights, including self-determination, which was recognised in 2009 by the UN Human Rights Council as one of the human rights most impacted by climate change. Self-determination exists as a collective right through which groups are empowered to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development and is recognised by wording to this effect in art 1 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*, and art 3 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*. The self-determination of SIDS is threatened by climate change as they are vulnerable due to their small populations, geographic isolation, remoteness from international markets, and susceptibility to sea level rise, threatening their territorial existence and permanent sovereignty. Herein, the loss and damage wrought by climate change and its impact on development is not merely reducible to economic terms but enlivens international obligations concerning the international community's common interest in reducing statelessness.





The self-determination of Indigenous peoples whose relationship to land and Country are intrinsic to their cultural identity, health, and continued wellbeing are similarly under threat, with forced migration and the loss of significant sites turning from prospect to reality. For instance, heatwaves, droughts, and floods in Australia have seen Aboriginal people impacted by vector-borne and water-borne diseases, heat stress, and isolation. The catastrophic 2019-2020 bushfires burned culturally significant plants, animals, and sites (including rock art); and coastal erosion due to climate change continues to damage coastal sites including shell middens and burial grounds.

With respect to intersectionality and gender, climate change exacerbates gender inequalities and limits economic opportunities for women and girls. Women are disproportionately vulnerable to the economic fallout of climate change given their underrepresentation in formal employment and overrepresentation in poorer households. More time spent performing household chores (such as collecting water), child-rearing, and caregiving under increasingly harsh conditions leaves women little time to earn an income, which impedes their access resources including land, credit, and technology. Earlier in life, girls are having their education de-prioritised and disrupted due to climate impacts including natural disasters. Women and girls face a range of gendered impacts of climate change, from lack of access to safe and affordable water and sanitation for managing menstruation, compromised reproductive health leading to mother and infant mortality, and gendered violence when experiencing situations of extreme duress and coercion (including forced marriage and vulnerability to human trafficking).

The profound injustice of the political response to climate change sees countries and communities with the most limited means being the same as those who have contributed the least to the current crisis, and which are the most greatly impacted. The 1992 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* adopted the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’, which may be understood as deriving from earlier principles in international law – namely, the ‘polluter-pays’ principle. It is time that the balance of rights and responsibilities, and benefits and burdens of climate change be more equitably distributed so that the right to development can fulfil its potential. Fair distribution aligns with art 2(3) of the Declaration whereby the aim of development policies should be the constant improvement of the wellbeing of the entire population and of all individuals and the fair distribution of benefits.

Climate finance may be the most direct means by which climate justice is achieved. We draw the Special Rapporteur’s attention to Chapter 8 of the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Sixth Assessment Report (2022)* concerning poverty, livelihoods, and sustainable development, which would be useful to consider against the present Terms of Reference. Delivering on finance is indispensable to achieving climate objectives. 80% of global biodiversity is in the hands of local communities and indigenous peoples who receive less than 1% of climate funding. We call for an ambitious scaling up of global climate financing and funding to support meaningful action across the entire continuum of



mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, including through the scaled-up implementation of high-integrity nature-based solutions, with an increased proportion made directly available to indigenous peoples and local communities.

Our team from Roots & Shoots Tanzania, some as young as 17 years of age, emphasise the importance of thinking 'long term and investing in resilience and coping mechanisms including irrigation, improved seed varieties, strengthened health systems and greater access to finance and telecommunications.' When asked how developing countries could be assisted in adapting to climate change, they suggested financial support, ecosystem restoration, and the maintenance of effective early warning systems. With respect to disaster relief, the group asserted a strong universal moral responsibility to assist and stressed that a human rights-focused approach be adopted, including non-discrimination and respect for the dignity of all persons particularly when they are at their most vulnerable: 'everyone is responsible for protecting the earth so that it is a safe place. It is important to ensure access to assistance when people are climate change affected regardless of their characteristics because it will assure equity.'

#### **(b) The right to development of children and future generations**

*We haven't inherited this planet from our parents, we've borrowed it from our children. We have not borrowed our children's future -- we have stolen it and we're still stealing it now, and it's time we get together, whatever our religion, whatever our culture, get together and start changing the way -- changing our attitude -- so that we can leave a better world for our children, whom we love.*

-Dr Jane Goodall, DBE

Like the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, the right to development may be regarded as essential for realising all other human rights. These rights have a complex relationship. Whereas the preamble of the 1972 *Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment* warned that economic development through industrialization and technology often came at the cost of environmental degradation, the emergence of sustainable development in international law and policy (from the *Brundtland Report* to the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and the *Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment*) encourages consideration of environmental, social, and economic factors.

Intergenerational equity is key to advancing sustainable development wherein the needs of the present generation should not impede the capacity for the future generations to meet their own needs.

Equality among generations has both moral and legal bases, with the core instruments forming the International Bill of Rights recognising the inherent dignity of all persons and the *Maastricht Principles on The Human Rights of Future Generations* as recently adopted offering long overdue legal clarity as to whether future generations are legally entitled to human rights.



Our global network of Roots & Shoots groups and youth leaders often report back on planned or completed development projects including the construction and expansion of dams, roads, industrial farming of domestic and wild species, biomedical research facilities (some active in laundering wild specimens into lab stock), plantations (including monocultures that compromise biodiversity), and mines as well as oil and gas exploration (including seismic testing). While it is disheartening to see many of these projects completed without meaningful community consultation or consideration of environmental and social impacts, it is perhaps hardest to witness young people at risk of becoming jaded and apathetic after having their voices dismissed by adults. Our program has worked arduously for the past 35+ years to empower young people and maximise their agency and participation in public life. We continue to be inspired by the work of our founder, Dr Goodall, who herself established the Lake Tanganyika Catchment Reforestation and Education (**TACARE**) Project in 1994 to address rapid degradation of natural resources in the area around Gombe National Park by focusing on community socio-economic development and offering training and education in sustainable natural resource management.

Systemic change is needed to ensure that the rights of future generations are considered meaningfully in all decision-making processes at international, regional, national, and local levels. Private organisations should be incentivised to undertake intergenerational impact assessments analogous to environmental impact assessments adapting existing mechanisms such as the precautionary principle. Youth representation in decision-making should be mainstreamed and supported through civic education and good governance programs bringing together a range of non-state actors including universities, civil society organisations, businesses, and the media. As to how to operationalise the participation of Indigenous children specifically, we draw the Special Rapporteur's attention to Chapters 5 and 6 of Dr Holly Doel-Mackaway's *Indigenous Children's Right to Participate in Law and Policy Development* (2022).

## **Conclusion**

We extend our thanks to the Special Rapporteur for his consideration and implore him to embrace our message of 'inspiring hope through action'. We reserve our concluding remarks for our Roots & Shoots Tanzania Team:

*By involving huge numbers of children in development related issues this will make them feel connected to the issues...it is stipulated by the UN Sustainable Development Goals that no one should be left behind. Everyone should have equal opportunity to live well and be valued simply because they are also humans.*

-Roots & Shoots Tanzania