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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Summary of the panel discussion on the human rights of older persons in the context of climate change

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 44/7, in which the Council decided to hold, during its forty-seventh session, a panel discussion on promoting and protecting the rights of older persons in the context of climate change. The Council also requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to submit a summary report of the panel discussion to the Human Rights Council at its forty-ninth session. The present report summarizes the panel discussion on human rights and climate change that was held on 30 June 2021.



I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to its resolution 44/7, the Human Rights Council held a panel discussion on the human rights of older persons in the context of climate change, on 30 June 2021, during its forty-seventh session.¹
2. The panel discussion was chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council. It opened with a statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which was followed by a statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.
3. The panel discussion provided an opportunity for States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the adverse impacts of climate change on the effective enjoyment of the rights of older persons, and the promotion and protection of their rights through age-inclusive climate action. The panel discussion was made accessible to persons with disabilities through the provision of International Sign interpretation and real-time captioning.
4. The panellists included the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler; the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development, Saleemul Huq; a senior environment researcher at Human Rights Watch, Katharina Rall; and an expert on issues of climate change and indigenous peoples in Africa, Handaine Mohamed.

II. Opening session

5. Opening the discussion, the High Commissioner stressed that population ageing and climate change had significant implications for human rights. She noted the estimates that by 2050, humanity would include 1.5 billion people over the age of 65, and emphasized that if greenhouse gas emissions had not been reduced to net zero by 2050, global warming would exceed 1.5° Celsius.
6. She noted that climate change had significant implications for people over 65, especially when physical, political, economic and social factors made them vulnerable. Ageism contributed to this vulnerability. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis had demonstrated how age-related discrimination created and exacerbated the poverty and marginalization of older people, amplifying human rights risks.
7. She observed that in the face of climate change, older persons were likely to face negative impacts on their health, their access to food, land, water and sanitation, their housing, their livelihoods and their well-being. In 2003, a heatwave in Western Europe had created crop shortfalls and killed thousands of people, including 14,000 in France. Of the heat-related deaths in France, 80 per cent were of people aged over 75. In 2013, 70 per cent of the people who had died as a result of floods in La Plata, Argentina, were over the age of 60.
8. She referred to the analytical study on climate change and the rights of older persons carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 44/7,² which found that older people faced disproportionate impacts from climate change on the effective enjoyment of their rights. It also found that they may be neglected or marginalized by climate laws and policies. The existing international human rights framework provided fragmented and inconsistent coverage of the human rights of older persons, in law and in practice. Older persons were seldom mentioned in international environmental agreements and there was no dedicated normative instrument on the rights of older persons. The limitations of existing instruments could hinder them from providing effective protection, including in the context of climate change.

¹ The full video of the panel discussion is available at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k16/k162xwr21t>.

² See [A/HRC/47/46](#).

9. She also noted that many older persons occupied positions of authority and had benefited from the economic development pathways that caused climate change. They had a particular responsibility to leave a better legacy for future generations. Many older persons were increasingly using their skills, knowledge, experience, resources and resilience to help stop climate change and address its worst impacts. Examples included indigenous elders in Latin America who had formed networks of solidarity to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and advocate for climate action that respected their entitlement to free, prior and informed consent. In Norway, the Grandparents' Climate Campaign had supported climate litigation. In Australia, the Knitting Nannas advocated for policies that preserved the environment and fought climate change.

10. She highlighted the fact that States had legal obligations, including under international human rights law, to implement climate policies to stop future warming; promote effective adaptation; redress existing harms; and empower all people – including older people – to participate in climate action. She noted that States must also recognize and protect access to courts in order to vindicate through legal systems the rights that were directly impacted by climate change.

11. She noted that the Human Rights Council, in its resolution 44/7, had acknowledged the need to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of older people to respond to climate change. In that resolution, the Council had emphasized the importance of international cooperation and assistance to address the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly on older people. The OHCHR study had presented promising climate action practices that are inclusive – including in the context of the implementation by Mexico of the Paris Agreement; the collection of age-disaggregated data for disaster recovery planning in the Philippines; and access to climate information for older people in Iraq.

12. In closing, she called upon States to implement an age-inclusive and human rights-based approach to climate action, noting that the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) had been adopted by the General Assembly in 2020.

13. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, in her opening statement, noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had underlined that disasters put the human rights of vulnerable groups – and particularly, in the case of this pandemic, older persons' rights – at serious risk. COVID-19 was a public health crisis, a social and economic crisis and a protection and human rights crisis that reflected the world's inequalities. Many of those who had not been affected physically had still endured long periods of solitude that had impacted on their mental health.

14. She emphasized that while the world's most developed nations were estimated to have secured COVID-19 vaccines to cover their populations four and a half times over, the world's poorest nations only had vaccines for 10 per cent of their populations. While the collection of disaggregated data could still be improved, evidence had shown that older persons were disproportionately affected by disasters. The pandemic was a case in point.

15. She stressed that when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, in the United States of America, in 2005, 75 per cent of those who had died had been over the age of 60, even though this group comprised only 16 per cent of the population. In the severe earthquake and tsunami that hit eastern Japan in 2011, 56 per cent of those who had died had been over the age of 65, although they only accounted for 23 per cent of the population. In the Philippines, the majority of older persons surveyed had said that their health had deteriorated after Typhoon Haiyan. Older persons were particularly vulnerable to heatwaves. Many of those who had died as a result of the recent heatwave in Vancouver, Canada, had been older persons. The impacts of these and other major disasters had provided impetus for specific mention in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in 2015, of the need for governments to engage with older persons.

16. She noted that older persons held knowledge, skills and wisdom that were invaluable in reducing disaster risk. Older persons needed to be included in the design of policies, plans and mechanisms, including those for early warning. To date, just over 100 States Members of the United Nations had adopted national strategies for disaster risk reduction in line with the Sendai Framework. It was incumbent on local and national governments and their disaster management agencies to ensure that strategies included older persons.

17. She referred to a survey on older persons, conducted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, which had found that challenges in the areas of mobility and access to transportation must be addressed when evacuating in advance of extreme weather events. The role that older persons could play in building community resilience to disasters needed to be recognized. Older persons had a lot to contribute to strengthening national and local strategies for disaster risk reduction, based on their life experience and understanding of the challenges faced in a crisis such as a flood, a storm or a heatwave.

18. She concluded by stating that the pandemic must serve as a wake-up call on human rights issues that could become increasingly common as the climate emergency worsened. This included the high mortality rate experienced by older persons, the rise in xenophobia and domestic abuse, and restraints on freedom of speech. Accountability and human rights were at the heart of the people-centred approach to disaster risk management advocated in the Sendai Framework. Persons at risk must be consulted on and participate in decision-making that impacted their lives – the right to life depended on this.

III. Summary of the panel discussion

19. The President of the Human Rights Council opened the panel discussion and invited the panellists to make their statements.

A. Contributions of panellists

20. The Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, in her statement by video message, said that human-caused climate change posed specific challenges for the heterogeneous group of older persons. Due to the interaction of ageism, age discrimination and climate change, they could be particularly disadvantaged and discriminated against. Age was still missing as a specific ground of discrimination in the current international human rights system. This was one aspect that explained the invisibility and insufficient protection of older persons both at the international and the national level.

21. She stressed that intersectional factors needed to be taken into account, as they often significantly shaped the way in which older persons experienced climate impacts. Older women, older persons with disabilities and older members of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples faced specific challenges in realizing their rights in relation to the impacts of climate change. For example, older women experienced higher rates of poverty and economic hardship which were aggravated by climate change. Older persons with disabilities disproportionately experienced poor housing conditions, which increased the risks to them from emergencies and disasters. She encouraged paying special attention to these groups.

22. She stated that climate change had a disproportionate impact on the rights of older persons worldwide – for example in Costa Rica, Georgia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and New Zealand – as highlighted during the country visits of the mandate holder. For instance, in Georgia, floods often caused harm to residential areas and to agricultural land, which particularly affected older persons, as 84 per cent of people aged 65 years or older worked as subsistence farmers.

23. She emphasized that the rights of older persons to life, health and safety may be violated by climate change and the lack of action to mitigate it. Older persons were more likely to die from natural disasters caused or exacerbated by climate change, such as heatwaves, typhoons, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions or floods. They may face specific challenges in reaching safety because of reduced mobility or lack of access to information about evacuation and services.

24. She urged Governments to systematically take older persons into consideration when assessing the impact of climate change, and when implementing policies to adapt to and mitigate climate change, and to adopt a policy of climate resilience that took into account the specific needs of older persons. States should adapt national legal frameworks to protect the rights of older persons in the context of climate change, building on existing standards. The voices and perspectives of older persons must be included when developing, implementing

and monitoring such policies. The contributions of older persons to climate change mitigation should also be highlighted.

25. She concluded by saying that persistent ageism and age discrimination and the lack of an international convention on the rights of older persons made it more difficult for older persons to claim their rights and fundamental freedoms, including in relation to climate change. COVID-19 had illustrated that older persons could not enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others because international human rights law did not provide coherent, explicit guidance in this respect. This resulted in the specific human rights concerns and challenges faced by older persons being overlooked and not prioritized. The dignity and human rights of older persons were at stake and action was needed to move closer to a legally binding international instrument on the human rights of older persons.

26. Mr. Huq, in his statement by video message, stressed that Bangladesh was one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, with more than 170 million people living in a land area of less than 150,000 km². Bangladesh was located in the delta of two of the biggest rivers in the world, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, which was subject to regular flooding and regular cyclones from the Bay of Bengal. Millions of people in Bangladesh were affected every few years by the impacts of climate change.

27. He referred to this loss and damage from climate change and noted that some of the most vulnerable people were the poorest people, who were living in the most hazardous and vulnerable locations. He noted that, within these groups, women were impacted more than men, children more than adults, and the elderly more than able-bodied adults. The Government of Bangladesh was taking steps to help these vulnerable communities adapt to the impacts of climate change, including by setting up and implementing its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Mr. Huq concluded by noting that the new Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan would be developed in order to build the resilience of vulnerable populations, with a focus on the most vulnerable, which would include the elderly.

28. Ms. Rall emphasized that those who were already marginalized were often the most affected by climate change. Frequent droughts were worsening malnutrition among indigenous children in Colombia, and increasing heat in the United States of America and Germany was threatening healthy pregnancies. Indigenous peoples in Canada, including many older persons, were struggling to access food as a result of rising temperatures. Governments were not doing enough to mitigate climate change and to help the populations that were affected the most to adapt. Millions of older people around the world experienced human rights violations every year, ranging from age-based discrimination and social and political exclusion, to abuses in nursing facilities, neglect in conflicts and in refugee camps, and barriers to health care and other essential services. Most of these abuses went undocumented and those responsible were not held to account. COVID-19 had exposed the dangerous price of ignoring the rights of older people.

29. She shared three observations regarding the impacts of heat on older people. First, there was robust data on the number of older persons among those who had died due to heatwaves. Second, the health impacts of heat on older persons were much less documented or monitored. The health monitoring gap and related barriers – including barriers to accessing health-care services – was especially concerning for older persons with disabilities. These barriers were often not monitored; neither were the specific impacts on older women, who often lived in isolation and may experience distinct barriers. Third, government responses to heatwaves did not always account for the needs of older people. There were gaps in how government adaptation plans were addressing the role of isolation and the different living situations of older people, including those affected by energy poverty and those living in institutions. The gap in data and in the monitoring of climate impacts on older people was likely one of the main reasons why the needs of older people were not well addressed by climate laws and policies. Many older people around the world were raising their voices to change this, drawing attention both to their needs and to their efforts to protect the planet.

30. She stressed that governments had a human rights obligation to protect older people and other vulnerable groups from adverse climate impacts, including by urgently reducing greenhouse gas emissions, removing fossil fuel subsidies, and supporting individuals and communities to adapt to climate change. This adaptation element required States to consider

the impacts on different groups, including older persons, and to design targeted measures to assist them. This could only be done with better data and research.

31. She concluded by saying that the lack of sufficient data and knowledge about the impacts of climate change on older people spoke to a broader need for a more focused discussion at the Human Rights Council on the human rights dimensions of climate change. The climate crisis was a human rights crisis impacting a broad range of rights of persons in all corners of the earth – with severe and disproportionate impacts on a broad range of groups which included older people, children, women, indigenous peoples and persons living in poverty. She noted that it was time for a more systematic engagement on climate change at the Council, which could be ensured by creating a dedicated special procedure mandate on human rights and climate change.

32. Mr. Mohamed highlighted the fact that older people constituted more than a quarter of the world's population – a population pyramid that was forecast to become a square by the year 2100, with older people making up almost half of the world's population. Changes in the world's climate – bringing global warming, natural disasters and rising sea levels – were, in common with the population of older persons in the world, on a trajectory of greater and greater growth. This symmetry between climate change and older persons brought a huge responsibility on the international community, particularly on the Human Rights Council, to limit the impacts from climate change on the rights of older persons.

33. In this context, he noted that older people were a heterogeneous group, as described in the OHCHR report.³ Their situation varied between that in many industrialized countries of the North, where the rights of older people were often guaranteed in the social legislation of the country, and that in many less developed countries of the South, where older people were often left to themselves and became the most vulnerable category in the population.

34. He stressed that climate change directly affected the rights of older people on several levels and that older persons may not be fully able to rapidly take on board information about climate change and adapt to its effects. He stressed the need for capacity-building programmes for older people to help them understand and act on climate change. The international community, States and civil society had a duty towards older people to improve their abilities to cope and to ensure their right to access to information.

35. Regarding the right to a healthy and clean environment, he noted that older people had the right to live in a suitable environment, given their vulnerable situation, which included the right to access clean drinking water, and clean food, and to a calm and serene life. Older persons could not easily cope with natural disasters occurring due to climate change and had the right to be sheltered quickly and be kept out of danger. He noted that, for example, older persons constituted half of those who were affected by cyclones.

36. He expressed concern regarding the situation in Africa, where older persons were disproportionately affected by climate change due to, inter alia, the lack of infrastructure and of good governance. In the region of the Sahel and the Sahara, which had already been weakened by insecurity, the high rate of mortality of older people in recent decades could only be explained by climate change, which had made the region more arid, with water shortages and low numbers of livestock.

37. He concluded by describing a hierarchy in the rights of older persons, whereby older persons in the North could access their rights and had minimal exposure to the effects of climate change, while those in the South faced difficulties in enjoying their rights in the context of worsening climate change. At the bottom of the ladder, indigenous peoples, who were already in a situation of marginalization of their rights, saw climate change exacerbate their situation. Older indigenous persons also faced the loss of their language and identity due to mobility and climate migration. Islanders saw rising sea levels invade indigenous lands, with their monuments and sacred sites – a cultural genocide and a loss of universal heritage, which would disappear forever.

³ A/HRC/47/46.

B. Interactive discussion

38. During the plenary discussion, interventions were made by the representatives of Azerbaijan (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), the Bahamas (on behalf of a group of countries), Cameroon (on behalf of the Group of African States), Ecuador (on behalf of a group of countries), Fiji, Germany, Luxembourg, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Qatar, Slovenia (including one statement on behalf of a group of countries), Timor-Leste, the United States of America and Viet Nam (one statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and one on behalf of the core group on human rights and climate change representing the Philippines and Bangladesh), and of the European Union (including one statement on behalf of a group of countries).

39. Representatives of the following national, international and non-governmental organizations also spoke: the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, the Conselho Indigenista Missionário, the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations and the Center for International Environmental Law (on behalf of a group of organizations).

40. Statements by the following member States were not delivered owing to a lack of time: the Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Namibia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).⁴

41. For the same reason, statements were not delivered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Internazionale Onlus, Jameh Ehyagan Teb Sonnati Va Salamat Iranian, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, New Humanity, the Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés and the International Council of Russian Compatriots.⁵

42. Speakers emphasized the deep interconnections between climate change and human rights and the significant impact that climate change was having and would continue to have on a wide range of human rights. They noted that while climate change was already affecting human rights, the worst was yet to come, as the frequency of climate emergencies and the level of human rights risk were both rising. Several speakers also noted that often those individuals, groups and States who had contributed the least to climate change were facing its worst effects.

43. The discussion brought to light the particular effects that climate change may have on the human rights of persons in situations of vulnerability, including many older persons. Older persons were a heterogeneous group and their rights were affected by climate change in a wide variety of ways. They may experience particular effects on their physical and mental well-being, and may be less able to adapt to climate change. Speakers emphasized that older persons were too often excluded and subjected to discrimination and ageism, and that the situations of vulnerability they experienced may be magnified by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender and of presence in rural communities. Speakers underscored that the simultaneous phenomena of climate change and population ageing must be addressed in a coherent manner.

44. At the same time, speakers recognized the valuable contributions by older persons to climate action, as well as those of environmental human rights defenders – including older persons. They noted the importance of traditional and indigenous knowledge about how to preserve the environment and prevent further global warming, as well as the need to mobilize the rich experience and expertise of older persons. They called for the prioritization of older persons in climate change adaptation and mitigation, including disaster risk reduction.

⁴ Statements received by the secretariat are available on the Human Rights Council extranet.

⁵ Ibid.

45. Several speakers pointed to the impacts and lessons of COVID-19. The pandemic had been an example of the disproportionate effects that disasters had on older persons and of the impact that ageism had on older persons' human rights. It had also magnified situations of vulnerability and exacerbated inequality around the world. The negative economic and social effects of the pandemic may be diminishing the possibility of meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement.

46. Speakers emphasized that in light of the human rights challenges presented by climate change, including for older persons, there was a great need for solidarity, multilateralism, international cooperation, and increased ambition to end reliance on fossil fuels and drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Sufficient commitment and sufficient climate finance were both key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of the Paris Agreement, to building resilience and sustainable infrastructure, and to accounting for climate change-related loss and damage.

47. Speakers underlined the critical importance of a human rights-based, age-inclusive and gender-responsive approach to climate action from the grass roots to the international level, and committed to taking such an approach. They specifically called for the implementation of recommendations regarding human rights and climate change in the actions of the Human Rights Council and at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and for the inclusion of human rights in the finalization of the Paris Agreement rulebook. Several speakers pointed to the potential value of the creation of a new special procedure mandate on climate change and human rights, a substantive resolution on older persons at the Human Rights Council, and an international instrument dedicated to rights of older persons. Other speakers suggested the possible utility of a dialogue on older persons at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and of global recognition of the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

48. A number of good practices related to the inclusion of older persons and respect, protection and fulfilment of their human rights in climate action came to light during the course of the discussion. Examples of practices shared included the commitment of Qatar to provide \$100 million in climate finance to least developed countries, with an emphasis on those most affected or in situations of vulnerability. Luxembourg had adopted a solidarity-based approach to autonomy and participation for older persons, which included universal health care and a national heatwave plan. Maldives had banned single-use plastics. States and United Nations entities had made efforts to embrace a One Health approach at the international level. Mauritius had inaugurated a climate change information centre with a particular emphasis on communicating climate change information to those in vulnerable situations. In Morocco, the creation of a climate change cooperation centre was aimed at fostering South-South climate cooperation. Timor-Leste had an age-inclusive approach to rapid information distribution in the face of climate-related emergencies. Mozambique had integrated older persons into its early warning system and created a national policy on social allowances for older persons.

49. Speakers asked panellists a number of specific questions. Panellists were invited to elaborate on good practices for including older persons in climate action and fostering intergenerational solidarity, and to share ideas on how the COVID-19 recovery process could be mobilized in the service of inclusive and human rights-based climate action. Panellists were also asked to suggest measures that could be taken to address the disproportionate effects of climate change on older women. It was also asked whether more could be done to advance human rights in the context of climate change, for example by creating a special procedure mandate on human rights and climate change.

C. Responses and concluding remarks

50. After the interactive discussion, the President of the Human Rights Council gave panellists the opportunity to make concluding remarks.

51. The Independent Expert, in her concluding remarks, noted that the discussion, which brought together climate change and the human rights of older persons, was very timely.

From her perspective, developing a binding human rights framework with a special focus on older persons would make older persons more visible, contributing to efforts to protect their rights. With respect to good practices, she highlighted the need to specifically consider older persons in national assessments of climate change impacts and to take a human rights-based approach to ageing and older persons. To ensure that no one is left behind, she underlined that States should include older persons in Sustainable Development Goals indicators as a first step towards assessing their current situation.

52. She noted that more disaggregated data was needed to inform policies and develop evidence-based measures. National and international disaster risk reduction strategies that included older persons were one good example of age-inclusive climate measures. She called for systematic attention to be paid to the human rights of older persons in climate change discussions, and for the meaningful participation of older persons in all relevant discussions at the national and international levels. This included drawing on their experience, knowledge and skills on measures to reduce the impact of climate change. Other good examples included the measures that States had adopted to reduce the impact of heatwaves on older persons.

53. She said that including older persons in risk assessment and ensuring their access to information was key. Some States had adapted their information into accessible formats, and had provided advice targeted to older persons on how to deal with climate change and how they could participate and be included. A systematic approach was still lacking to ensure the full participation of all older persons – which was key. The Independent Expert concluded by reiterating that the human rights and the dignity of older persons was at stake because they were still invisible. She spoke of the need to strengthen the human rights framework in this regard, noting that a binding convention would be the best instrument to do so.

54. Mr. Huq shared three concluding thoughts regarding how the climate change world had changed over time. Initially, climate change had been seen as an environmental problem and the international community had focused on mitigation: limiting greenhouse gas emissions. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, climate change had been linked to development. Climate change impacts were going to particularly affect poor countries and poor people in poor countries, and the international community was focused on the need to support their adaptation. We were now about to enter, or had already entered, the third era of climate change, where it had become a globally recognized human rights problem: a problem created by rich people in rich countries primarily that was going to disproportionately affect poor people in poor countries – including the elderly as a particularly important subgroup. It was a matter of injustice and it was a human rights violation.

55. He concluded by describing the situation in Bangladesh, which had a population of 170 million people, many of whom were very poor – including many elderly – and very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Bangladesh had been preparing its climate change strategy action plan and now chaired the group of 48 vulnerable countries called the Climate Vulnerable Forum. The countries of the Climate Vulnerable Forum were preparing their climate prosperity plans, the first one of which would be prepared by Bangladesh. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan would include support for the most vulnerable communities – among them older persons – to tackle the impacts of climate change.

56. Ms. Rall, in her concluding remarks, stressed the importance of addressing the impacts of climate change on marginalized groups and the rights of older people. Responding to a question about how to protect the rights of older people effectively in the face of climate change, she noted the need for better policies that would address the intersection of climate change and the rights of older people. States should integrate human rights into climate change policies, but should also integrate climate change into human rights policies. This required more coordination and collaboration between the relevant ministries, at the national level, the subnational level, and internationally. More coordination was also needed to integrate the international human rights and climate change communities.

57. She reiterated the importance of governments living up to their human rights obligation to address climate change. One key issue was the obligation to monitor the human rights impacts of climate change on the most marginalized groups, including older people. This would include closing the gap identified in terms of data disaggregation by age and other factors that made people more vulnerable. This was an opportunity for governments to do

more and to collaborate with research institutions looking at climate change impacts more broadly.

58. She emphasized that the empowerment of older persons, their effective participation, and access to information, were key. Lastly, as pointed out in the OHCHR analytical study, one of the most effective ways of protecting the rights of older people was to scale up mitigation commitments. Staying below 1.5 degrees was the only way to avoid the worst impacts of climate change on the human rights of older people. Ms. Rall concluded by reiterating that States could contribute to addressing the impacts of climate change on older persons and to closing the data gap by establishing a new Human Rights Council mandate on climate change and human rights.

59. Mr. Mohamed noted that older persons were a group that required particular attention. He highlighted the importance of promoting and reinforcing the legal framework for the protection of the human rights of older persons, both through international conventions and at the national level. Mr. Mohamed concluded by stressing the importance of protecting indigenous peoples, given that the loss of indigenous peoples would lead to a loss of traditional knowledge. This knowledge was very important for protecting biological diversity and for combating climate change – for which the preservation of traditional knowledge was key.

60. Following the concluding remarks, the President of the Human Rights Council closed the discussion.

IV. Recommendations

61. **Speakers made several recommendations during the discussion. They emphasized the importance of treating the impacts of climate change as human rights violations and of empowering those whose rights had been violated to exercise their rights, paying special attention to older persons. Time was of the essence to use human rights to help stop the climate crisis. States were called upon to take urgent climate action, end reliance on fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global warming to no more than 1.5°C. This was highlighted as the most efficient way of preventing the adverse impacts of climate change on the human rights of older persons.**

62. **Speakers called for an age-inclusive, gender-responsive and human rights-based approach to climate action that included the meaningful and informed participation of older persons in decision-making processes. They called upon States to recognize older persons as agents of change, to include the voices and perspectives of older persons when developing, implementing and monitoring climate policies, to make information about climate change accessible to older persons, and to provide capacity-building in order to build resilience and empower older persons to engage in climate action. States were also called upon to recognize and protect all persons' ability to access courts, in order to vindicate through legal systems their rights that were directly impacted by climate change.**

63. **States should protect the human rights of indigenous peoples, including indigenous elders, and their traditional knowledge about how to preserve the environment and adapt to changes in it – which was highlighted as key to protecting biological diversity and combating climate change.**

64. **Speakers called upon States to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic, which had shown clearly the disproportionate impact of disasters on the human rights of older persons. They highlighted the need for States to adopt national strategies for disaster risk reduction in line with the Sendai Framework, and to ensure the inclusion of older persons therein.**

65. **The impacts of climate change on the rights of older persons should be monitored and data should be collected and disaggregated – including by age – in order to inform and guide climate policymaking. Better data and more research were needed for States to develop evidence-based and age-inclusive climate policies. States were recommended**

to systematically consider the rights and requirements of older persons in their assessments of climate change impacts and in the implementation of their climate change adaptation and mitigation policies.

66. States were called upon to honour their commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals. Speakers highlighted the key role of climate finance to achieve these goals, including in relation to older persons. States were urged to take measures to build the resilience of older persons and to account for climate change-related loss and damage through the use of climate finance. It was recommended that human rights be included in the finalization of the Paris Agreement rulebook.

67. Several speakers called for the adoption of an international binding instrument specifically dedicated to the human rights of older persons in order to enhance the protection of their human rights – also from climate change impacts – both at the international and the national levels.

68. Speakers emphasized the need for solidarity, multilateralism and international cooperation in climate action – including to address the adverse impacts of climate change on the human rights of older persons in the countries that were disproportionately affected by climate change.

69. States were called upon to contribute to climate action and to protect the human rights of older persons by supporting global recognition of the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

70. Speakers called for the implementation of recommendations on human rights and climate change in the work of the Human Rights Council and at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The organization of a dedicated dialogue on the rights of older persons at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was also proposed. Multiple speakers highlighted the need for a more systematic engagement on climate change at the Human Rights Council and called for the establishment of a dedicated special procedure mandate on human rights and climate change.
