



General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 March 2024

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-fourth session

11 September–13 October 2023

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Youth Parliament for SDG, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP28): Contradiction or Integration of Business Mindset and Social Justice

The concept of applying a business mindset to tackle the climate crisis is not without its merits. The involvement of the private sector, innovation, and sustainable business practices can undoubtedly contribute to a more effective response.

The ability of businesses to mobilize resources, implement strategies, and drive technological advancements has the potential to make a substantial impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainability.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that a business-oriented approach alone cannot adequately address the climate crisis. Climate change is a complex issue that affects every aspect of society, including social justice, human rights, and environmental stewardship.

What Is the Importance of COP28?

The significance of UNFCCC COP28 lies in its role as a crucial platform for reviewing progress on previous initiatives like the Paris Agreement and assessing advancements towards its goals. The conference's objective is to mobilize actions that expedite emission reduction while ensuring energy security.

Moreover, COP28 Negotiations holds importance as the culmination of the inaugural Global Stocktake, which began during COP26 in Glasgow. Furthermore, this conference addresses critical issues surrounding Global Climate Action and its consequential natural disasters. Consequently, the consensus reached at COP28 is said to profoundly influence future climate-related efforts and progress discussions.

Position of Environmental Organisations and the United Arab Emirates Record of Human Rights

Over 400 climate and environmental organizations have expressed their concerns to the UN Secretary-General about the human rights record of the hosting country of COP28, highlighting the potential impact of this appointment on the legitimacy and effectiveness of the summit. Participating in the upcoming conference would potentially undermine the environmental goals. Therefore, it is imperative for the countries who support the human rights agenda and democracy to make the decision to withdraw from the conference. By doing so, the world can uphold its steadfast commitment to environmental sustainability and ensure that its moving toward achieving the goals.

The United Arab Emirates has long been criticized for its human rights record, with numerous reports documenting a range of violations, including restrictions on freedom of speech, labor abuses, and gender inequality.

Migrant workers, who form a significant portion of the country's workforce, often face exploitative working conditions, passport confiscation, and inadequate access to healthcare and legal protections. These widespread and systematic violations cast a shadow over the United Arab Emirates' claims of progress and development.

The United Arab Emirates and Human Rights Defenders

One of the modern challenges that activists and human rights defenders have to deal with at COP28 is cyber-security. Cyberspace is becoming another arena for people to fight for their rights. Their privacy and therefore, safety is being violated by the misuse of modern technologies. The United Arab Emirates is known for its atrocious human rights record and its treatment of dissidents. The Report of the United States of America on Country's Human Rights Practices not only details its surveillance procedures but also incidents of torture, arbitrary arrests, and denial of a free trial.

The freedom of speech, press, and assembly are all extremely limited in the country. Emirati activists work tirelessly, campaigning for human rights in their country and now they must work even more carefully.

Unless the UN and other governments demand that the United Arab Emirates ease its grip on civic space and uphold rights, there's a real risk that many participants at COP28 will stay silent for fear of reprisals. This could disastrously impact the summit's success and its stated aim of delivering solutions for an increasingly urgent climate crisis, including a reference to phasing out all fossil fuels in the COP28 outcome document.

Yet authorities of the United Arab Emirates appear to be doubling down on silencing critics. The Abu Dhabi Judicial Department recently warned that "harming the reputation of the state and its institutions" in the form of news, data, or visual images could incur a 5-year jail term and 500,000 Dirham fine. "Everyone must pay attention before talking about their experiences or publishing pictures so as not to put themselves in harm's way."

Abu Dhabi's allies in North America and Europe should openly contest the United Arab Emirates' self-promotion as a tolerant, rights-respecting country, and urge it to turn that falsehood into reality.

Governments should take every opportunity, in public comments and private huddles, to press Emirati authorities, which hold the COP28 presidency, to end its persecution of rights defenders and peaceful dissidents and free them.

To effectively address the climate crisis, we need a holistic approach that considers the intersectionality of issues. Climate change cannot be tackled in isolation; it requires acknowledging and addressing the human rights violations that often go hand in hand with environmental degradation. The Guardian's promotion of Cop28 without adequately addressing the United Arab Emirates' human rights record undermines the credibility of its stance and obscures the full picture. Their position refer directly to a political promotion more than an environment oriented strategy.

Conclusion

A clampdown on the freedom of the press to ask questions about Al Jaber's role as President-Designate is becoming noted internationally. There have been incidents of airbrushing out unwanted comments about Al Jaber on Wikipedia, and that there have been multiple fake Twitter profiles made to amplify and promote Al Jaber's green credentials. There have also been media reports that the United Arab Emirates' state oil company has been filtering and reading emails coming in and going out of the COP28 climate summit office – a gross offense to a multitude of freedom rights for so many reasons.

The first direct reference to human rights in the context of the UNFCCC was made when decision 1/CP.16 (2010) referred to HRC resolution 10/4, which recognizes the adverse effects of climate change on the effective enjoyment of human rights and calls upon States to ensure respect for human rights in their climate actions. The Preamble to the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC (1/CP.21) expands upon this language calling on States, when taking action to address climate change, to "respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights".

The following are actions and resources related to OHCHR's efforts to integrate human rights in climate change mitigation and adaptation, particularly with regard to the UNFCCC.

Integrating Human Rights in the Implementation of the Paris Agreement

OHCHR advocated for the integration of human rights in the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement. OHCHR's submission to the 46th meeting of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies in 2017 outlined key priorities in this regard. The briefing note prepared by the Human Rights and Climate Change Working Group provides a useful analysis of key priorities and entry points for human rights in the implementation guidelines.

Advocating a Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change at the COP

The HRC has highlighted the importance of addressing human rights in the context of ongoing discussions related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. OHCHR has repeatedly made the results of HRC debates, studies and activities available to the sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP).

The United Arab Emirates Uses COP28 to Lobby For its Climate Reputation

The United Arab Emirates wants to show its concern about climate change. With this conference hosted by the United Arab Emirates, they will show the world their soft and clean face regarding Climate Resilience. The United Arab Emirates is already employing malpractices to whitewash its face by swarm of fake social media accounts, hiring PR firms and incorporating mislead information in Wikipedia.

However, the Climate Change Conference 2023 event in the United Arab Emirates is expected to bring attention to and foster appreciation for the nation's efforts towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the United Arab Emirates' ongoing actions towards this cause will persist in the background.

Media outlets such as The Guardian are vital in uncovering and highlighting such contradictions, ensuring that human rights violations are not overlooked or overshadowed by other events. Promoting transparency, accountability, and justice is essential, encouraging the United Arab Emirates and other nations to uphold human rights and contribute to global peace and stability.

Therefore, we firmly believe that the international community including the European Union should not participate in COP28 and instead boycott the conference. We also urge the European Union to call upon its partners, stakeholders, and citizens to join the boycott, as it aligns with the principles of integrity and promotes environmental responsibility.

These contradictions are a clear sign of a lack of commitment to COP28 objectives, while once again prioritizing commercial interests and profits. which raised many questions,

- How to act effectively in the fight against global warming, when economic interests are clearly a priority?
- What tools are available to more effectively hold countries accountable polluters on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

It is crucial to investigate and rectify the involvement of parties that contradict the objectives of the COP28, in order to avoid yet another failure this, due to a lack of ambition, support, trust and cooperation.
