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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

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

[4 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Climate change and development are inextricably linked

Climate change is no exception. As escalating droughts and flooding degrade food production, children will bear the greatest burden of hunger and malnutrition. As temperatures increase, together with water scarcity and air pollution, children will feel the deadliest impact of water-borne diseases and dangerous respiratory conditions. As more extreme weather events expand the number of emergencies and humanitarian crises, children will pay the highest price. As the world experiences a steady rise in climate-driven migration, children's lives and futures will be the most disrupted.

The number of children potentially exposed to climate risks and their effects is alarming. Currently, over half a billion children are living in areas with extremely high levels of flood occurrence, and nearly 160 million live in areas of high or extremely high drought severity. Most of them live in some of the world's poorest countries with the least capacity to manage these environmental risks. 'Relatively small changes in temperature can have major effects on ecosystems, agriculture, water resources, diseases, and human health' (1).

We have an opportunity to tackle this crisis before it's too late. That means taking decisive action to cut greenhouse gas emissions to slow, and ultimately stop, the advance of climate change. It means protecting children whose families are displaced because of climate change, and giving children's needs the highest priority in our efforts to mitigate environmental impacts. It means educating children to adapt to the immediate challenges of climate change – and to understand the role that they will be called on to play.

'The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that 88 per cent of the existing burden of disease because of climate change occurs in children under 5 years of age' (2). This is due to their particular vulnerability in the early stages of life. When it comes to the spread of disease influenced by climate change, the risk falls squarely on children.

Climate change science indicates that because of past and ongoing greenhouse gas emissions, the world's climate is already changing. It is imperative that we prepare for the impacts that are inevitable. There is, nevertheless, an opportunity for action that can stave off some of the worst effects of climate change.

It's important to listen to and act on children's perspectives on climate change and provide them with climate change awareness, education, and training. 'Children should be supported in strengthening their awareness, knowledge, skills, and engagement to promote environmental sustainability' (3).

Climate change and development are inextricably linked. Action on climate change is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and requires integrated action across social, economic, and environmental spheres.

Children deserve to live in a world free from the life-threatening effects of climate change.

1. PCC (Intergovernmental Panel on climate change) (2013) Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Stocker, T; Qin, D et al (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.

2. Zhang Y, Bi P, Hiller JE. (2007) Climate change and disability-adjusted life years. *J Environ Health*. 2007; 70(3):32–36

3. <https://www.unicef.org/media/60111/file>