The effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter

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The European Parliament adopted by 518 votes to 97, with 77 abstentions, a resolution on the effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter.

As stated in UN Human Rights Council resolution 41/21, the impacts of climate change are already having a negative impact on the effective enjoyment of human rights. Restrictions and containment measures related to COVID-19 have reduced transparency and monitoring of human rights abuses while limiting access to justice and the ability of environmental defenders to effectively participate in decision-making processes.

The impact of climate change on human rights

Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to strengthen the link between human rights and the environment through their external action and to act as a credible and reliable partner on the world stage by adopting legislation that integrates a **comprehensive human rights-based approach** to climate action. The Commission is called upon to ensure the integration of climate change and human rights issues into all relevant EU policies.

The resolution highlighted the risks of human rights abuses in international commodity supply chains for both traditional and green/renewable energy, including child labour in cobalt mines to supply the global lithium-ion battery chain. It also called on the EU to put water scarcity high on its legislative and policy agenda.

The Commission is invited, inter alia, to:

- ensure that the concrete commitments on human rights, environment and climate change already set out in the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 are effectively implemented and monitored and that a gender perspective is integrated into the implementation of the plan;

- continue to monitor the situation of human rights and climate change and to assess progress in mainstreaming and integrating human rights into all aspects of climate action at national and international levels;

- increase financial and technical assistance and capacity building activities to support third countries in the integration of human rights in their national climate actions and programmes and in complying with international environmental regulations;

- cooperate on the development of an international framework to address climate-induced displacement and migration in international fora and in the EU's external action;

- strengthen the role and capacity of regional human rights bodies and other mechanisms in addressing the nexus of climate change and human rights.

Parliament encouraged the EU and its Member States to pave the way, within the International Criminal Court (ICC), for new negotiations between the parties with a view to having ‘ecocide’ recognised as an international crime.

COVID-19 response

Members pointed out that the global pandemic has highlighted the effects of environmental degradation, which creates conditions for an increase of zoonosis, with serious health, social, economic and political consequences. They are concerned that a global recession caused by the pandemic could weaken states' commitments to international climate goals and human rights standards.

The resolution called on the Commission and Member States to commit to including environmental rights and the defence of the people who protect them in any response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Environmental rights defenders and the role of indigenous people

Parliament strongly condemned the increasing number of murders, defamatory attacks, persecution and criminalisation and intimidation of indigenous people, environmental rights activists and land rights defenders, particularly in Asia and Latin America. It called for those responsible to be held accountable.

Members called on the EU and its Member States to ensure that the right to **free, prior and informed consent** of indigenous peoples is respected, without coercion, for any development agreement or project that may affect the lands, territories or natural assets of indigenous peoples. The EU should not support initiatives and projects that would lead to illegal land grabs, illegal logging and deforestation.

The resolution called for the adoption of a **European list of priority countries** where the EEAS, the Commission and Member States would intensify their action in support of environmental rights defenders and work with local authorities to introduce or improve protection mechanisms and specific legislation that defines environmental defenders, recognises their work and ensures their protection.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), justice, accountability

Members urged the parties to the UNFCCC to continue increasing their mitigation and adaptation ambition in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement and to integrate the human rights dimension in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and their adaptation communication. They called on the EU institutions to actively collaborate in promoting a human rights-based approach in the ongoing international climate negotiations.

The resolution also called on the EU to support **sustainable and accountable corporate governance** as an important element of the European Green Deal. The Commission is called on to develop a legislative proposal on mandatory human rights and environmental corporate due diligence for companies throughout their supply chains.