

7th GATHERING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Monday 28 September 2009 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Varembé Conference Center
Rue de Varembé 9-11

Climate Change and Human Rights

The 7th Gathering for Human Rights will discuss the linkages between climate change and human rights.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates in its Fourth Assessment Report that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal" and mainly due to man-made greenhouse gas emissions. This IPCC report also documents how global warming will affect, and is already affecting, the basic elements of life through an increasing frequency of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, droughts, increasing water shortages, and the spread of tropical and vector born diseases.

In a report published in March 2009, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) examined the implications of climate change for the realization of human rights and notably concluded that "there is a broad agreement that climate change has generally negative effects on the realization of human rights."

Several questions arise from these conclusions, issued by two international organisations based in Geneva. Can existing international human rights standards and principles adequately respond to the impacts of climate change? What role can human rights play in national and international responses to climate change? How to integrate human rights in these responses? What obligations arise for governments under international human rights law? What are the responsibilities of the Republic and canton of Geneva, and of Switzerland?

Before the opening of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, following the Third World Climate Conference in Geneva and during what the UN Secretary-General referred to as the "climate change year", some of the best international and Swiss experts will discuss these questions.

Programme of the Day¹

- 9:00 am Opening of the 7th Gathering for Human Rights
- 9:05-9:15 am **Presentation of the Theme**
Laurent Moufinot, State Councillor, Republic and canton of Geneva
- 9:15-9:30 am **General Introduction**
Philippe Roch, Former Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Forests and Landscape
- 9:30 -10:00 am **Climate Change and Human Rights**
Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- 10:00-10:10 **Short Film**
"Climate Change and Human Development", United Nations Development Programme
- 10:10-10:30 **Break**
- 10:30-12:15 am **Climate change, migrations and human rights: what challenges for Switzerland and the international community?**

Migrations - within national borders or across an international border - are predicted to be one of the greatest impact of climate change. The Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change (2006) estimates that, by 2050, some 200 million people could be displaced by climate change-related phenomena, such as desertification, increasing water scarcity, floods or rising sea levels.

The following issues will be addressed during this round-table:

- Do existing human rights standards and principles offer sufficient protection to those displaced by climate change-related phenomena?
- How can the promotion and protection of human rights prevent migrations/displacements related to climate change?
- What are the main challenges for Switzerland, as a host country, but also towards its own population (mountainous regions, flood plains)?
- How can Switzerland integrate this issue in its national and international policies, as well as in its development cooperation?

Moderator: Vincent Chetail, Professor of International Law and Research Director, Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies

Participants:

- Gianni D'Amato, Professor and Director, Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies;
- Jean-François Durieux, Deputy Director, Division of Operational Services & Climate Change Focal Point, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

¹ Simultaneous French-English translation will be provided during the day.

- Philippe Boncour, Head, International Dialogue on Migration Division & Migration and Climate Change Focal Point, International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- Daniel Bolomey, Secretary- General, Amnesty International Switzerland.

- 12:15-12:45 **Questions and Debate**
- 12:45-14:00 **Buffet**
- 14:00-14:30 **Statement by Micheline Calmy-Rey, Federal Councillor, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs**
- 14:40-16:00 **How to integrate human rights in national and international responses to climate change?**

There is today a large consensus regarding the human impact of climate change. This being said, the promotion and protection of human rights are still to be integrated in responses addressing the causes and consequences of global warming.

The following issues will be addressed during this roundtable:

- Is it relevant to integrate the promotion and protection of human rights in current negotiations on a new international climate regime?
- How to integrate human rights in the elaboration and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at addressing the impact of climate change at the local, national and international levels?
- What role can Switzerland play in these discussions?
- How to integrate vulnerable and marginalized groups in these discussions at the local, national and international levels?

Moderator: Virginie Poyetton, journalist and collaborator at the Service for the promotion of equality between men and women, Republic and canton of Geneva

Participants:

- Muriel Berset, Minister, Head of the human rights and humanitarian affairs section at the Swiss Mission to the United Nations in Geneva;
- Christophe Bouvier, Director, Regional Office for Europe, United Nations Environment Programme
- Anne Petitpierre, Professor, University of Geneva;
- Yves Lador, Permanent Representative of Earthjustice at the United Nations in Geneva.

- 16:00-16:30 **Questions and Debate**
- 16:30-16:45 **Synthesis of the Day**
Philippe Roch, Former Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Forests and Landscape
- 16:45-17:00 **Conclusion**
Laurent Moutinot, State Councillor, Republic and canton of Geneva
Charles Beer, State Councillor, Republic and canton of Geneva

