



Brussels, 26 November 2015

EU Heads of State and Government
 Donald Tusk, President of the European Council
 Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission

CC: Environment Ministers of EU Member States

Dear Heads of State and Government, dear Presidents,

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned organisations and members of the Human Rights and Climate Change Working Group¹, in advance of the UNFCCC Conference of the State Parties in Paris from November 30-December 11, 2015.

We believe that the Paris climate change summit presents an important opportunity to recognize the human rights implications of climate change. Climate change affects access to water, food, health and housing, and disproportionately impacts those who are already marginalized and most vulnerable to its effects, including women, indigenous peoples and impoverished communities living in fragile ecosystems. In the absence of sufficient safeguards, certain actions designed to address climate change can result in adverse impacts on human rights.

To ensure that Paris delivers for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, robust human rights language should be included in the operative part of the Paris Agreement in order to improve the effective implementation of existing human rights obligations in all climate-related actions. This is particularly critical as the Paris Agreement will set the framework for a wide range of policies, activities and investments to be implemented in developing countries.

¹ The Human Rights & Climate Change Working Group works as part of an extensive network of civil society organisations, institutions, academic experts and practitioners that support the effort to include human rights protections in the climate regime. See <http://climaterights.org/>.

We welcome the Environment Council Conclusions adopted on 18 September 2015 setting forth the EU position for Paris, stressing “the importance of human rights, gender equality, a gender-sensitive approach, a just transition of the work force, decent jobs, education and awareness raising as well as ensuring food security in the context of climate action.”²

We also note and appreciate the European Parliament’s resolution adopted on 14 October 2015 emphasizing “the importance of maintaining human rights at the core of climate action,” and insisting that “the Commission and the Member States ensure that the Paris Agreement will contain the provisions needed to tackle the human rights dimension of climate change,” and calling insistently on them to “ensure that the Paris Agreement recognises that respect for, and protection and promotion of, human rights, encompassing gender equality, full and equal participation for women, and the active promotion of a just transition for the workforce to create decent work and quality jobs for all, are a prerequisite for effective global climate action.”³

We fully agree: actions taken to address climate change should afford full respect to human rights obligations.

Specifically, we urge the EU and its Member States to strongly support an amended version of Article 2(2) of the current draft text recognizing that the Paris Agreement should be implemented to ensure the respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, gender equality and the full and equal participation of women, a just transition of the workforce, intergenerational equity, food security, and the integrity and resilience of natural ecosystems.

As a Union founded on a strong engagement to protect and promote human rights, and committed to mainstreaming human rights in all areas of its internal and external policies,⁴ we strongly believe that the European Union should be at the forefront of efforts to ensure that the Paris Agreement recognizes the threat that climate change poses to human rights. At the upcoming climate talks in Paris, the European Union and its Member States have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to lead the international community to once again champion human rights in the framework of the international climate talks, recognising that such support will also build trust with the many developing countries that have called for this.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this pressing matter.

Yours sincerely,

ACT Alliance EU

Amnesty International

² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/09/18-conclusions-un-climate-change-conference-paris-2015/>.

³ European Parliament resolution of 14 October 2015, Towards a new international climate agreement in Paris (2015/2112(INI)), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2015-0359+0+DOC+XML+Vo//EN>.

⁴ Art. 2, Art. 3 para 5, Art. 21 TEU; EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, 2012, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/foraff/131173.pdf.

Carbon Market Watch

Center for International Environmental Law

Center for Rural Empowerment and Environment

CIDSE

European Association of Geographers

Human Rights Watch

Nature Code

Quaker United Nations Office

Stand Up For Your Rights

Transparency International

Urgenda Foundation

Women in Europe for a Common Future