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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Next Century Foundation, 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.

[21 August 2022]

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



We Do Not Inherit the Earth, We Borrow It From Our Children

The Next Century Foundation is deeply concerned with the electoral rhetoric in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland regarding the intention to drop the green levies on electricity charges. Such would make it considerably more difficult for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to achieve its net zero targets and climate action commitments. We are also deeply concerned by the degradation of the Amazon rainforest, one of the last great environmental resources that our planet has. Brazil is being irresponsible with its governance and the negligence is leading to record-breaking deforestation in the area. We urge them to reverse this trend to honour their commitment to ending deforestation by 2030 as agreed at COP26 in Glasgow.

By contrast, we welcome the Human Rights Council resolution 49/11 which reaffirms the commitment to ensure a sustainable, inclusive and just transition of the workforce in relation to climate change and the human right to work. Additionally, we also praise the decision of the United Nations General Assembly which under resolution 76/300, recognises the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. The NCF is optimistic that this resolution will facilitate climate action to limit the rise in global temperatures. Global warming is already having drastic effects on the world and further increases would only worsen the current emergency and have further negative effects on employment, limiting the human right to work.

Moreover, we also welcome the outputs of COP26 in which participating governments recognised the climate emergency, the need for greater adaptation measures and the delivery of climate finance. Nevertheless, the NCF is equally concerned with the current National Determined Contributions (NDCs), which at the moment are insufficient for achieving the goal enshrined under the Paris Agreement of keeping rising temperatures under 2° over pre-industrial levels. We are aware that the Paris Agreement works on a basis of weak enforcement mechanisms to not deter the participation of states. However, this also signifies that the pressure on nations to submit strong NDCs and comply with them is not enough, leading to the current situation.

Rising temperatures

The rise in global temperatures is already having significant effects on the world. Heatwaves, heavy precipitation and droughts have already become more frequent due to global warming, leading to a greater scarcity of resources. Furthermore, these hazards have also led to the displacement of 20 million people each year according to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees. By 2050, the total number of climate-related displacements could add up to 1.2 billion.

Nonetheless, despite the situation, current National Determined Contributions are insufficient for limiting rising temperatures to under 2° over pre-industrial levels. According to the Climate Action Tracker, with the full implementation of 2030 NDC targets, global temperatures will approximately rise 2.4° over pre-industrial levels. The dangers of rising temperatures are well-known and although the difference may seem marginal, the effects will be very significant. According to the special report 1.5 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, just a difference of 0.5 between 1.5° and 2° signify that 10.4 more million people will be directly affected by the effects of rising sea levels. The extinction of local species could double and many coral reefs will disappear. Another 61 million people will be exposed to severe droughts and 10% of the global livestock could be lost. Furthermore, twice as many will suffer from climate change-induced water stress and thousands more, especially in developing countries, will suffer from poverty and malnutrition. Hence, although differences seem marginal, they have serious effects and thus an even greater rise in global temperatures closer to 2.5° will lead to even worse consequences.

Limitations to the right to work and heightening the probability of armed conflict

Climate change has a direct negative effect on employment and the human right to work. 1.2 billion jobs in the world rely directly on the effective management of the environment. Hence, millions of jobs will be lost due to greater exposure to climate-related hazards. Sectors that are expected to be worse hit are agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Losses in these sectors will lead to global repercussions as they represent global food sources. The world has just experienced the consequences of disrupting the global food supply chain. Rising temperatures will lead to a similar effect by diminishing the available food-producing areas causing a greater scarcity of resources.

Additionally, climate action will render other jobs inadmissible due to their heavy reliance on fossil fuels, resulting in further job losses. This effect on employment opportunities will lead to migration both within and between countries out of necessity and because individuals will seek better opportunities. Due to the greater scarcity of resources, such an exodus from uninhabitable areas will place a great burden on migrant-receiving communities that without the appropriate measures in place will heighten the risk of armed conflict.

Climate-related migration will not be like any other type of mass displacement as there will also be a greater scarcity of food, fresh water, jobs and possible destinations as communities will need help adapting to the greater concentration of people. Such can foster discontent and create grievances between groups in society whilst work is done to accommodate the incoming population. Additionally, with decreased economic productivity due to the limitation on employment, the opportunity cost for individuals to participate in armed conflict will be lower and seem more attractive. Furthermore, decreased productivity will also signify that governments will have a diminished ability to react and contain violence. All of these factors result in a scenario where armed conflict is more probable. These problems will be worse in developing countries that do not have the same resources as developed ones to address these issues and adapt to changing circumstances.

Conclusion and recommendations

However, despite the situation, the emerging green economy and its industries are an opportunity as they can create millions of jobs to reallocate labour. Such can help mitigate the negative effects that climate change has on employment. Nevertheless, not all parts of society will be affected equally. Women, indigenous and poor people lack the same access to resources in land, credit and technology to adapt to the changing environment. Measures must be established to prevent rising temperatures from accentuating inequality. We highly recommend the following measures to ensure an inclusive, sustainable and just transition of the workforce to prevent possible future crises:

- Firstly, governments should work on strengthening the infrastructure and services of their larger cities so they can be prepared for the influx of migrants. Such is already happening and will only increase with rising temperatures. Thus, preparedness is key to avoiding creating grievances and discontent within communities.
- We also call upon states to deliver what was agreed in the Glasgow pact: Technology transfer and climate finance for developing countries as they lack the same portfolio of adaptation measures that developed countries have. With these in place, countries will be able to implement to a greater degree adaptation measures to limit the negative effects of climate change on employment. These resources should also be made widely available to those that need them most within societies to achieve an inclusive transition.
- Additionally, governments should also work on creating skills-developing programmes for the workers of the sectors at most risk of disappearing. This will achieve smoother transitions and a faster reallocation of labour into sectors where there is employment growth, like the green industries.

- Moreover, the United Nations should work with governments to reduce bureaucratic barriers for international migrants. Although the majority of displacement will happen within states, it will also happen between borders. Thus, ensuring this will prevent those displaced encountering further obstacles when relocating. These measures will help limit the negative effects that climate change will have on employment around the world, helping to ensure an inclusive, sustainable and just transition. Without the necessary policies in place, climate change can lead to new and heightened crises.

Finally, with regards to the Paris Agreement, we urge states to strengthen their National Determined Contributions so the goal of limiting global warming to under 2° over pre-industrial levels can be achieved and the gravity of the situation is mitigated. Considering the lack of enforcement mechanisms, the Next Century Foundation recommends introducing a reward-type system to those nations that submit strong-enough National Determined Contributions, and comply with them. By working with other UN bodies like the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund, nations that comply could benefit from lower tariffs and greater access to investment and loans not related to climate action. This mechanism, as opposed to tariffs and punishments against non-compliers, would not deter participation, and could potentially incentivise states to reach their targets.
