



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2021)0245

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

European Parliament resolution of 19 May 2021 on the effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter (2020/2134(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the relevant United Nations (UN) human rights treaties, conventions and instruments, in particular the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the ‘Charter’), which specify that all human beings are entitled to the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders of 1998,
- having regard to UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/144 of 8 March 1999, adopting the Declaration on human rights defenders,
- having regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted in Rio in 1992 and signed by 168 countries, and to its resolution of 16 January 2020 on the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity¹,
- having regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),
- having regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which entered into force on 21 March 1994, to the Kyoto Protocol of 11 December 1997, and to the Paris Agreement of 22 April 2016,
- having regard to UN Human Rights Council resolution 40/11 of 21 March 2019 recognising the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development,

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0015.

- having regard to reports 31/52 of 1 February 2016 and A/74/161 of 2019 of the UN Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment,
- having regard to UN Human Rights Council resolution 41/21 of 12 July 2019 on Human Rights and Climate,
- having regard to the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) report of 10 December 2015 on climate change and human rights, and UNEP’s definition of environmental human rights defenders, ‘who are environmental defenders’,
- having regard to the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights of 17 July 2019 on climate change and poverty,
- having regard to the 2019 special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems,
- having regard to the UN report of June 2020 entitled ‘Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change’, co-authored by the UNEP, UN Women, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA),
- having regard to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,
- having regard to Article 37 of the Charter, which commits the EU to integrating a high level of environmental protection and the improvement of the quality of the environment into its policies,
- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and in particular to Part Five thereof, entitled ‘The Union’s External Action’, and Titles I, II, III, IV and V thereunder,
- having regard to the Commission’s joint communication of 25 March 2020 entitled ‘EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024’ (JOIN(2020)0005),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 May 2017 on Indigenous Peoples and the joint staff working document of 17 October 2016 entitled ‘Implementing EU External Policy on Indigenous Peoples’ (SWD(2016)0340), the Council conclusions of 19 November 2018 on water diplomacy, of 17 June 2019 on EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism, and of 20 January 2020 on climate diplomacy,
- having regard to the EU’s human rights guidelines on safe drinking water and sanitation, adopted by the Council on 17 June 2019, and to its guidelines on human rights defenders,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law,

- having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2017 on corruption and human rights in third countries¹,
 - having regard to the European Environment Agency (EEA) report of 4 December 2019 entitled ‘The European environment – state and outlook 2020: knowledge for transition to a sustainable Europe’,
 - having regard to Implementing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992, which seeks to ensure that every individual has access to information, has the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and is able to access justice in environmental matters, with the aim of safeguarding the right to a healthy and sustainable environment for present and future generations,
 - having regard to the Commission communications of 20 June 2020 entitled ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 – bringing nature back into our lives’ (COM(2020)0380), of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640), and of 23 July 2019 entitled ‘Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests’ (COM(2019)0352),
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal²,
 - having regard to the 2019 report of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization entitled ‘The State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture’,
 - having regard to the massive threat of loss of biodiversity described in the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) of 31 May 2019,
 - having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2018 on violation of the rights of indigenous peoples in the world, including land grabbing³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinions of the Committee on Development, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0039/2021),
- A. whereas all persons, local communities and populations have the right to the full enjoyment of their human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

¹ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 82.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0005.

³ OJ C 118, 8.4.2020, p. 15.

⁴ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0054.

- B. whereas the impacts of climate change and continued environmental degradation on freshwater resources, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of communities are already negatively affecting the effective enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, food security, safe drinking water and sanitation, health, housing, self-determination, work and development, as outlined in UN Human Rights Council resolution 41/21; whereas, even if the international objective of limiting global warming to a 2 °C increase above pre-industrial levels is achieved, these impacts will intensify dramatically in the coming decades; whereas countries make different contributions to climate change and have common but differentiated responsibilities; whereas climate change poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to the people of the world, mainly to the world's poor, who are especially vulnerable, as outlined in UN Human Rights Council resolution 7/23;
- C. whereas the UN, along with other international organisations and experts, is calling for global recognition of the right to a healthy and safe environment as a universal right;
- D. whereas addressing climate change raises issues of justice and equity, both at international and national level and between generations; whereas access to justice in environmental matters, access to information and public participation in decision-making are enshrined under Implementing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Aarhus Convention¹ of 25 June 1998 and the Escazu Agreement² of 4 March 2018;
- E. whereas environmental degradation, climate change and unsustainable development constitute some of the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to enjoy multiple human rights; whereas parties to the UNFCCC have an obligation to take effective measures to mitigate climate change, enhance the adaptive capacity of vulnerable populations and prevent foreseeable loss of life;
- F. whereas parties to the UNFCCC have obligations to gather and disseminate information about environmental impacts and to facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making;
- G. whereas approaching climate change from a human rights perspective highlights the principles of universality and non-discrimination, emphasising that rights are guaranteed for all persons in the world, including vulnerable groups, without distinction of any kind, such as, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;
- H. whereas governments, societies and individuals have an ethical and inter-generational responsibility to be increasingly proactive in terms of policy and cooperation with the goal of agreeing on international standards in order to protect and preserve the planet for present and future generations, with a view to guaranteeing their full enjoyment of their human rights and mitigating the negative impacts of climate change;

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, 25 June 1998.

² Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 4 March 2018.

- I. whereas it is widely recognised that the human rights obligations and responsibilities of states and the private sector have specific implications in relation to climate change; whereas failure to protect the environment and those who defend it is contrary to the legally binding human rights obligations of states and could constitute a violation of certain rights, such as the right to a healthy environment or the right to life; whereas a growing number of business activities and operations in third countries result in serious human rights and environmental impacts;
- J. whereas the Paris Agreement is the first international treaty to explicitly recognise the link between climate action and human rights, thus allowing the use of existing human rights-related legal instruments to urge states and private corporates to reduce emissions; whereas there are no concrete instruments within the Paris Agreement to hold state and corporate actors accountable for their impact on climate change and the exercise of human rights;
- K. whereas the European Court of Human Rights has clearly established that various types of environmental degradation can result in violations of substantive human rights, such as the rights to life, private and family life, and the peaceful enjoyment of the home, and the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment;
- L. whereas climate justice aims at addressing the climate crisis using human rights law to bridge the accountability gap in climate governance, by using climate change litigation to hold states and corporate actors to account and ensure that they are responsible for their actions in terms of the preservation of nature for its own sake and in order to allow a dignified and healthy life for present and future generations;
- M. whereas several outstanding legal cases have established human rights violations and have paved the way towards accountability following failures or inaction by individuals, states and corporate actors in addressing the consequences of climate change;
- N. whereas the intensified competition over natural resources led by private companies, at times with government complicity, has placed environmental defenders and indigenous communities seeking to protect their traditional lands at the forefront of environmental action and made them targets for persecution;
- O. whereas the human rights consequences of climate change will be felt not only by the most vulnerable people, but by the whole of the world's population; whereas the most vulnerable communities and countries that cause the least pollution and environmental destruction suffer the most from the direct consequences of climate change; whereas the figures for disease and premature death resulting from environmental pollution are already three times greater than those for AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined, threatening the right to life, a healthy environment and clean air; whereas natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and long periods of drought are becoming increasingly frequent and are having damaging consequences for food security in the countries of the global south and for the enjoyment of many human rights;
- P. whereas environmental justice is part of social justice and whereas climate change impacts are asymmetric and their adverse effects are destructive for present and future generations, especially in developing countries; whereas climate change intensely affects developing countries and exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities, causing vulnerable groups to suffer disproportionately from its adverse effects;

- Q. whereas climate change is an increasingly important contributor to displacement and migration, both within nations and across international borders; whereas displacement is an imminent prospect for some communities, such as those living in areas threatened by desertification, those situated in the rapidly melting Arctic, low-lying coastal areas, and small islands or in other delicate ecosystems and at-risk territories; whereas since 2008, an average of 24 million people have been displaced by catastrophic weather disasters each year, largely within three of the most vulnerable regions — sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America; whereas 80 % of people displaced by climate change are women, according to the UNDP; whereas the growing phenomenon of climate-induced displacement may pose a direct threat to human rights, culture and traditional knowledge for the population concerned and may have a significant impact on local communities in the countries and territories where they come to settle;
- R. whereas COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns have reduced transparency and monitoring of human rights violations, and have intensified political intimidation and digital surveillance, while limiting access to justice and the abilities of environmental defenders, local actors, indigenous communities and others to effectively participate in decision-making processes; whereas lockdowns of indigenous communities and sanitary measures have limited their ability to patrol and protect their territories; whereas such restrictions should be backed by legitimate and democratic legislation; whereas the capacity of the international community to observe and investigate alleged violations has been considerably diminished due to the pandemic;
- S. whereas the ability of people to adapt to climate change is linked to a large extent to their access to basic human rights and the health of the ecosystems they depend on for their livelihoods and wellbeing; whereas mitigation and adaptation measures, such as access to and use of natural resources, such as land, water and forests, and resettlement of people, may also have an adverse effect on the exercise of human rights; whereas developing countries and regions will bear an estimated 75-80 % of the costs of climate change, according the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights of 17 July 2019 on climate change and poverty;
- T. whereas climate change could reverse human development by reducing agricultural productivity, increasing food and water insecurity, increasing exposure to extreme natural disasters, causing the collapse of ecosystems and increasing health risks;
- U. whereas according to the World Health Organization (WHO), climate change is expected to contribute to approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year, as of 2030, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress; whereas climate shocks, according to the World Food Programme, are one of the three main drivers of food insecurity worldwide; whereas in 2019, close to 750 million people – nearly one in ten people in the world – were exposed to severe levels of food insecurity;
- V. whereas the climate crisis amplifies gender inequalities, as extreme weather events, natural disasters and long-term environmental degradation threaten homes, livelihoods and community social networks and infrastructure with disproportionate impacts on women and girls, which include increased unpaid care and domestic work of women, higher prevalence of gender-based violence and marginalisation of women’s education, participation and leadership;

- W. whereas violence against environmental activists, in particular women, and defenders of environmental rights and their lawyers has become a well-documented trend, including through mass media and social media coverage; whereas women activists suffer from gender-specific forms of violence and intimidation which are a source of grave concern;
- X. whereas environmental defenders are on the front line of climate action and accountability; whereas human rights bodies have increasingly drawn attention to the need to specifically protect environmental defenders; whereas the shrinking space for civil society is a global phenomenon that is disproportionately affecting human rights defenders who are working on environmental and land issues and who are often in rural and isolated areas with reduced access to protection mechanisms; whereas the vast majority of human rights abuses against human rights and environmental defenders are committed in a climate of near total impunity; whereas support for and protection of human rights and environmental defenders are among the stated priorities of EU external action around the world and in its neighbourhood; whereas the Union must use all the instruments at its disposal in this regard;
- Y. whereas in recent years, environmental defenders have been subjected to ever increasing incidences of killings, kidnappings, torture, gender-based violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, smear campaigns, criminalisation, judicial harassment, forced eviction and displacement;
- Z. whereas the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders has expressed concern for human rights defenders in all countries, as they are exposed to restrictions on freedom of movement, assembly, expression and association, and are targeted by false accusations, unfair trials, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and execution;
- AA. whereas the 2020 report of Global Witness reveals that 212 land and environmental activists were killed in 2019, a 30 % increase in comparison with 2018; whereas around 40 % of these victims were indigenous people and traditional land owners and more than two thirds of the killings took place in Latin America;
- AB. whereas indigenous peoples enjoy specific rights as regards the protection of the environment, lands and resources as enshrined in Article 7 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989; whereas Article 29 of the UNDRIP of 2007 affirms that ‘indigenous peoples have the rights to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources’;
- AC. whereas the Escazu Agreement is the first regional agreement on access to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean; whereas the Escazu Agreement, which has been open for ratification since 1 September 2019, is the first treaty to establish the right to a healthy environment (Article 4); whereas the Escazu Agreement, which reiterates the importance of regional cooperation, may serve as inspiration for other regions facing similar challenges; whereas the Aarhus Convention establishes a number of rights of individuals and civil society organisations with regard to the environment, including access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice; whereas the parties to the Convention are required to make the necessary

provisions to ensure that public authorities (at national, regional or local level) contribute to these rights, making them effective;

The impact of climate change on human rights

1. Stresses that the enjoyment, protection and promotion of human rights rooted in human dignity, and a healthy and sustainable planet are interdependent; calls on the EU and its Member States to act as a credible and reliable partner on the global stage through the adoption, strengthening and implementation of legislation aligned with a comprehensive human rights-based approach to climate action (HRBA), to guide policies and measures of climate change mitigation and adaptation and ensure that they are adequate, sufficiently ambitious, non-discriminatory and compliant with fundamental human rights obligations; notes that principles and standards derived from international human rights law should guide all policies and programming related to climate change, and at all stages of the process; call on the EU and its Member States to encourage non-EU states, companies and local government authorities to implement and adopt solutions and measures that will contribute to the protection of the environment and address the consequences of climate change;
2. Calls on the Union and its Member States to strengthen the linkage between human rights and the environment throughout their external action as well as to assist and support international, regional and local human rights mechanisms in addressing environmental challenges, notably the impact of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights; calls on the Commission to ensure the integration of the issues of climate change and human rights within all relevant EU policies and to ensure the coherence of these policies; notes the importance of supporting activities that raise awareness of the consequences for human rights impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss; calls on the Union, furthermore, to support and strengthen collaboration with third countries in order to integrate a human rights-based approach in environmental laws and policies;
3. Highlights the indispensability of human development opportunities for all; stresses the risks of human rights violations in international commodity supply chains for both conventional and ‘green tech’ renewable energy, such as child labour in cobalt mines catering to the global lithium-ion battery chain; calls on the Commission to take human rights implications into account when assessing the Union’s energy and transport technology pathways;
4. Stresses that water scarcity as one of the consequences of climate change is affecting many people around the world; calls for EU and its Member States to address water scarcity as a key priority of its legislative and policy agenda; notes that the mismanagement of land and natural resources is contributing to new conflicts and obstructing the peaceful resolution of existing ones; recalls that increasing competition over diminishing resources is on the rise and that it is further aggravated by environmental degradation, population growth and climate change;
5. Recalls the legal obligation to respect the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment which is, among other things, a condition for sustainable economic activities which contribute to the well-being and livelihoods of individuals and communities; recalls that international human rights law provides legal remedies to redress the damage caused by climate change to individuals, indigenous communities

and environmental human rights defenders, to implement measures to combat climate change and to hold states, businesses and individuals accountable for their actions which impact climate change and human rights; in this respect, calls on the EU to make the fight against impunity one of its key priorities by creating instruments which allow for the full, effective and sustained implementation of human rights and environmental laws and their enforcement;

6. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the concrete commitments on human rights, environment and climate change already established in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 are effectively implemented and monitored, and that a gender perspective is included in the plan's implementation;
7. Supports the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment to push for global recognition of the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right; calls on the Union and the Member States to support, at the next UN General Assembly, the global recognition of this right; considers that this recognition should serve as a catalyst for stronger environmental policies, improved law enforcement, public participation in environmental decision-making, access to information and justice and better outcomes for people and planet;
8. Urges the Commission to continue to monitor the situation of human rights and climate change and to assess the progress in integrating and mainstreaming human rights into all aspects of climate action at domestic and international level in close cooperation with the UN Human Rights Council / UN High Commissioner on Human Rights; calls for the Union, in this regard, to take action to introduce the right to a safe and healthy environment in the Charter and to fully comply with Article 37 thereof; stresses, in this regard, the importance of close cooperation with states and all relevant institutional actors involved in ensuring the proper implementation of human rights and environmental provisions;
9. Stresses that all people should be granted the fundamental right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and to a stable climate, without discrimination, and that this right must be delivered through ambitious policies and must be fully enforceable through the justice system at all levels;
10. Believes that integrating the human right to a healthy environment in key environmental agreements and processes is critical to a holistic response to COVID-19 that includes a reconceptualisation of the relationship between people and nature that will reduce risks and prevent future harm from environmental degradation;
11. Encourages the EU and its Member States to take a bold initiative with the active support of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to fight impunity for the perpetrators of environmental crimes at global level and to pave the way within the International Criminal Court (ICC) towards new negotiations between the parties with a view to recognising 'ecocide' as an international crime under the Rome Statute; calls on the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to establish a programme to build the capacity of national jurisdictions of Member States in these fields;
12. Calls for the Union and its Member States to regularly assess how the external dimension of the European Green Deal can best contribute to a holistic and human

rights-based approach with regards to climate action and biodiversity loss; calls for the EU to leverage the broad range of external policies, tools and political and financial instruments at its disposal to implement the European Green Deal; calls for the EU to review its climate finance mechanisms and propose to amend them where appropriate, in order to ensure full respect for human rights and to establish strong safeguards for this purpose; calls for the establishment of climate focal points within the relevant services of the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), whose tasks would include climate-proofing all of the EU's external dealings; calls for transparent and informative communication on these issues in EU development cooperation programmes with third countries;

13. Calls for the gender perspective to be integrated into sustainable development policies and programmes to ensure that the rights of women and girls – including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and necessary healthcare services –, the promotion of gender equality and climate justice are mainstreamed through strategy programmes;
14. Calls on the Commission to 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 in order to ensure that climate change objectives do not interfere with the exercise of human rights in those countries; notes the interinstitutional agreement reached on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), under which 30 % of the funding will support climate and environment objectives; insists that all activities of European Financial Institutions in third countries, notably the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, are consistent with the EU's climate commitments and follow an HRBA; calls for the reinforcement and deepening of their respective complaint mechanisms¹ for individuals or groups who believe their rights have been violated by such activities and that they may be eligible for remedy;
15. Strongly supports the integration of human rights in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in line with the Commission's recent communication entitled 'EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 – bringing nature back into our lives'; believes that in order to embed human rights in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, new targets should address the recognition and implementation, nationally and globally, of the right to a clean, healthy, safe and sustainable environment;
16. Reiterates the importance of protecting the Arctic from climate change and the necessity of EU Arctic policy;
17. Acknowledges the impact of the nexus of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters as a driver of migration and climate-induced displacement and regrets the lack of human rights protection at international level for individuals who are suffering as a result; considers that such displacement should be addressed at international level; calls on the Commission and the Member States to cooperate on the development of an international framework for addressing climate-induced

¹ Independent Project Accountability Mechanism from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Complaints Mechanism of the European Investment Bank Group.

displacement and migration both at international forums and in the EU's external action; encourages the Commission and the Member States to work together on increasing their support for resilience measures in regions prone to the detrimental effects of climate change and to support people who have been displaced due to climate change and who are no longer able to live in their places of residence; underlines that the UN Human Rights Committee has ruled that states must take into account the human rights impacts of the climate crisis in the country of origin when considering the deportation of asylum seekers; welcomes the inclusion of climate-induced migration and displacement in the Cancun Adaptation Framework;

18. Supports a human rights-based approach to migration governance in third countries and giving consideration to any human rights protection gaps in the context of migration; recalls, in this context, existing tools for legal pathways and considers that such tools should be further established for persons in need of protection; supports the identification and promotion of good practices on human rights obligations and commitments that support and strengthen policymaking at EU and international levels on environmental protection;
19. Insists on fulfilling the rights of all individuals without any discrimination based on the place where they live or their social condition, notably of those most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change; stresses the importance of ensuring and facilitating public participation of such vulnerable groups in decisions that affect their livelihoods;
20. Recalls the fact that the inequality, violence and discrimination experienced by women are amplified by climate change; calls for the EU and its Member States to design and implement policies with a transversal gender perspective in the fields of trade, cooperation, climate and external action, promoting the empowerment and participation of women in the decision-making process and recognising the specific constraints faced by girls and women;
21. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the role and capacity of regional human rights bodies and other mechanisms in addressing the nexus of climate change and human rights, promoting environmental rights and protecting environmental rights defenders; calls on the Commission, in particular, to initiate a programme in support of the Escazu Agreement, with the aim, inter alia, of assisting state parties in ratifying and implementing the Agreement, assisting civil society in engaging with the Agreement and contributing to its implementation, and providing support for the voluntary fund established under the Agreement;

COVID-19 response

22. Stresses that the global COVID-19 pandemic perfectly illustrates the impact of environmental degradation in creating the conditions for an increase of zoonosis with severe health, social, economic and political consequences; calls on the Commission and the Member States to commit to including environmental rights, and the defence of those who protect them, in any response to the COVID-19 pandemic; encourages the Member States and other stakeholders to take account of the Commission's Global Monitor of COVID-19's Impact on Democracy and Human Rights;
23. Expresses its deep concern that a global recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic might lower, delay or shift states' commitments in terms of international climate

objectives and human rights standards; calls on the EU and its Member States to ensure that policies envisaged for the economic recovery will be fully in line with the promotion and the protection of human rights as enshrined in Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty as well as with environmental protection and sustainable development;

24. Urges the VP/HR, the Commission and the Member States to advocate for an effective response to the COVID-19 crisis which fully takes into consideration the importance of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as a bulwark to prevent future environmental and health crises which have the potential to put basic human rights at risk; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to increase their climate and environment ambition in the light of the COVID-19 crisis and to shape an ambitious strategic approach to climate diplomacy;
25. Expresses concern that emergency and lockdown measures taken in response to COVID-19 may have been misused in several parts of the world by political authorities, security forces, and non-state armed groups to limit, intimidate and murder human rights defenders including environmental and land defenders; recalls, in this regard, how indigenous defenders have also been disproportionately vulnerable to COVID-19 as a result of weak health infrastructure in remote areas and government neglect;
26. Notes that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world, as global food supply chains have been affected, at a time when food security and food systems are already under strain due to climate change and natural disasters; highlights that the pandemic crisis could serve as a turning point for the rebalancing and transformation of food systems, making them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient;

Environmental human rights defenders and the role of indigenous populations

27. Recalls the obligation of states to protect environmental defenders and their families against harassment, intimidation and violence, as enshrined in human rights law, as well as to guarantee their fundamental freedoms, and their obligation to recognise the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, and to acknowledge the contribution of their experience and knowledge to the fight against biodiversity loss and environmental degradation; underlines their specific role and expertise in land management and preservation and calls for increased cooperation with and inclusion of indigenous peoples as well as for efforts to strengthen their democratic participation in relevant decision-making processes, including those related to international climate diplomacy; welcomes the efforts of the Commission to support the participation of indigenous peoples through its specific support for several projects such as the Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Documentation, Research and Information (DOCIP); encourages the Commission to continue to promote dialogue and collaboration between indigenous peoples and the European Union as well as with international forums, notably in relation to climate change;
28. Highlights the fact that while attacks and threats happen everywhere in the world, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders outlines that the situation is particularly dramatic in Latin America and Asia, where some international investors, companies and local governments ignore the legitimate concerns of populations; notes that in many cases, conflicts and violations take place within a context of economic inequality and social exclusion; denounces the judicial persecution

and criminalisation of environmental activists in the Amazon region, where attacks, killings and persecution of environmental activists are on the rise; denounces the increased number of attacks against, and the persecution of environmental activists in Honduras and the recent killing of Guapinol environmental activists; notes that over the last three years, 578 killings of environmental, land and indigenous peoples' rights defenders have been recorded; stresses that the Philippines is consistently top of the list of countries where it is most dangerous to be an environmental rights defender; reiterates its call on the Commission, given the seriousness of the human rights violations in the country and in the absence of any substantial improvement or willingness to cooperate on the part of the Philippines authorities, to initiate the procedure that could lead to the temporary withdrawal of preferences under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+);

29. Recommends that EU Member States which have not yet done so, ratify ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples;
30. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the EU does not support initiatives and projects that would lead to illegal land grabs, illegal logging and deforestation or other such damaging impacts on the environment; condemns any attempts to deregulate environmental and human rights protections in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises;
31. Strongly condemns the increase in the number of murders, defamatory attacks, acts of persecution, criminalisation, imprisonment, harassment and intimidation against indigenous people and environmental human rights activists and land defenders worldwide and calls for those responsible to be held accountable;
32. Stresses that women environmental human rights defenders face additional challenges in their work, communities and homes as they are targeted for or exposed to gender-specific threats and gender-specific violence; notes that women defenders are more at risk of being subjected to certain forms of violence and other violations, prejudice, exclusion, and repudiation than their male counterparts;
33. Calls for the EU and its Member States to support all human rights defenders, notably environmental rights defenders and their legal representatives, and to draw attention to their cases when necessary; is convinced that support for environmental rights defenders should be increased and that any reprisal or attack against them by corporate or state actors should be condemned by the EU through public statements and local actions when appropriate; reiterates its position on the need for the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to invest in and strengthen specific gender-responsive accessible protection mechanisms and programmes for environmental rights defenders, including local and indigenous defenders, and to involve them in any investigations into violations;
34. Is deeply concerned by the steady deterioration in the situation of environmental defenders, whistleblowers, journalists and legal professionals specialising in the environment throughout the world; calls for the EU and its Member States to protect freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism and the right to assembly, and to ensure the safety and protection of journalists and whistleblowers both in the EU and through its external relations; expresses its deep concern at the abuses, crimes and deadly attacks still being committed against journalists and media workers on account

- of their activities; points out that whistleblowing is a form of freedom of expression and information and plays a key role in exposing and preventing breaches of Union law and in strengthening democratic accountability and transparency; calls on the Commission, in this context, to monitor the transposition and guarantee the full application by the Member States of Directive (EU) 2019/1937¹; regards freedom of information as an important instrument for people who may be affected by the consequences of climate change to be properly informed at an early stage about the harmful effects of climate change and adaptation measures; demands respect for freedom of information;
35. Recognises that the actions undertaken by environmental defenders are essential as they search for, devise and disseminate viable solutions and mechanisms for prevention, resilience and adaptation to climate change to the people living in affected territories;
 36. Calls on the Commission to pay specific attention to the differentiated protection needs of women human rights defenders, acknowledging their role as powerful agents of change, in particular for climate action; stresses, in this regard, the need to support capacity building and women's role as educators and promoters of change and to ensure adequate financing for these organisations; recalls how often women community leaders and environmental activists are victims of repression and even murder, as in the case of the valiant activists nominated and shortlisted for the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, namely Marielle Franco from Brazil, assassinated in 2018, and Berta Cáceres from Honduras, assassinated in 2016;
 37. Calls on the EU and its Member States to request and ensure that the right to free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples is respected, without coercion, in any agreement or development project that may affect the lands, territories or natural assets of indigenous peoples; stresses that the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples and their traditional practices is important to achieving sustainable development, combating climate change and preserving and restoring biodiversity, whilst also assuring adequate safeguards;
 38. Calls on the Commission and the Council to use all instruments at their disposal, along with the provisions concerning the implementation and enforcement of human rights in the framework of the Union's foreign policy and Association Agreements, to effectively support and protect human and environmental rights defenders in the EU's neighbourhood, as well as to encourage EU candidate countries to effectively converge with European values and standards;
 39. Calls for the adoption of an annex to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders dedicated to the specific challenges and needs of environmental defenders and EU policy in this regard; stresses the importance of ensuring the continuation of the ProtectDefenders.eu project with increased levels of funding as well as of other existing EU tools for supporting human rights defenders;
 40. Calls for the adoption of an EU list of priority countries in which the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States would step up their action in support of environmental rights defenders and engage with local authorities in introducing or

¹ Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law (OJ L 305, 26.11.2019, p. 17).

improving protection mechanisms and specific legislation that defines environmental defenders, recognises their work and guarantees their protection; insists that this priority list should be prepared by the EEAS, in close consultation with stakeholders and with Parliament, and updated on an annual basis; also calls on the VP/HR to provide an annual public report on actions carried out in the priority countries, as well as on the protection of environmental defenders worldwide;

41. Urges the UN to assume a greater role in protecting global ecosystems and environmental defenders, in particular where climate change has a severe impact on indigenous and local communities; calls, therefore, for the EU to promote a UN-level initiative for international observers to monitor serious environmental damage, severe environmental crises or situations where environmental rights defenders are most at risk and to engage with and assist the authorities in establishing a protective environment for these defenders;
42. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote, through policy dialogue, the adoption of national action plans that guarantee a safe and free environment for environmental defenders by integrating a wider perspective of collective protection, including political measures to legitimise communities and groups involved in the protection of the environment; calls on the Commission to address explicitly the human rights of indigenous peoples and local communities under forest law, governance and trade voluntary partnership agreements (FLEGT VPAs);
43. Recalls that, in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, states must protect biodiversity defenders as human rights defenders; expresses its satisfaction at the design of international treaties such as the Escazu Agreement, which is a key instrument for Latin America and the Caribbean – the region with the most recorded killings of environmental human rights defenders;

UNFCCC, justice and accountability

44. Regrets the fact that, even if fully implemented by all states, current nationally determined contributions (NDCs) would lead to a disastrous global temperature rise of 3 °C above pre-industrial levels, violating the Paris Agreement; warns that such a scenario would result in extreme climatic and environmental impacts and widespread adverse effects on human rights;
45. Welcomes the inclusion of human rights in the Preamble to the Paris Agreement and calls for effective measures to respect and promote human rights obligations when implementing the Agreement and taking climate action; regrets, however, that there are no concrete provisions to hold state and corporate actors accountable for human rights violations linked to climate change;
46. Urges 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 NDCs and their adaptation communication; calls on the secretariat of the UNFCCC to develop guidelines on how to integrate human rights protections into NDCs and adaptation communication in collaboration with the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights; encourages the parties to revise intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) and NDCs and to develop monitoring mechanisms for NDCs, with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples;

47. Stresses the need to strengthen synergies across climate and human rights reporting obligations; considers that the guidelines on the transparency framework of the Paris Agreement (Article 13) should ask the parties to provide information concerning not only greenhouse gas emissions but also whether climate policies are implemented in line with other societal objectives and existing legal frameworks, and therefore to include information on good practices, including rights-based approaches to mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as support;
48. Urges the EU institutions to actively cooperate in the promotion of a human rights approach in the ongoing international climate negotiations, notably in the Sustainable Development Mechanism (SDM) and other guidelines for mechanisms under Article 6(4) of the Paris Agreement that ensure meaningful and informed participation of rights holders, adequate environmental and social safeguards, and independent redress mechanisms; stresses that the SDM should aim to finance projects that benefit those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and that projects financed under the SDM should undergo a human rights impact assessment, with only projects that have a positive impacts being eligible for registration;
49. Calls on the Commission to draft eligibility criteria for EU grants that would enable environmental NGOs, which may otherwise not be eligible for funding due to their size, to gain more inclusive access to funds;
50. Stresses that in order to ensure accountability for all actors, new mechanisms such as the SDM must integrate institutional safeguard policies and grievance mechanisms to guarantee the effective protection of rights;
51. Calls on the Secretariat of the UNFCCC to develop, together with the parties to the Convention, a common legal framework for climate justice;
52. Stresses that the global stocktake referred to in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement should be used to review progress towards the integration of human rights and other principles into climate action; notes that it should include opportunities for civil society and intergovernmental organisations to provide their input; considers that the implementation assessment of the Paris Agreement should help to identify good practices and barriers to its implementation, as well as to inform future NDCs and international cooperation;
53. Stresses that all effective rights-based climate actions should guarantee free, active, meaningful and informed participation; recommends that mitigation and adaptation plans should be publicly available, transparently financed and developed with affected and/or potentially affected groups, especially the most vulnerable;
54. Emphasises the fact that developing countries cannot deal with the effects of climate change by themselves and that they are often dependent on international assistance in relation to their crisis management capacity and their capacity to adapt to and anticipate the effects of climate change;
55. Underlines its view that human rights laws and institutions that are commonly used to bridge the governance accountability gap can by no means replace effective measures to prevent and redress harm caused by climate change; considers that National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and civil society may play an effective role in national

accountability and oversight mechanisms designed to ensure access to remedy for those who suffer human rights harms as a result of climate change;

56. Believes that the EU must play an active, strong and ambitious leadership role in the preparations for the 26th UN climate change conference (COP26), putting the inclusion of human rights principles at the heart of international climate change policymaking in order to avoid irreversible damage to current and future human development and generations;
57. Acknowledges the active role and involvement of civil society including non-governmental organisations and environmental defenders in advocating for human rights-based approaches to climate action and calls for the EU to support such activities; stresses the need to guarantee civil society participation in the transparency framework laid out in Article 13 of the Paris Agreement;
58. Notes the Commission's proposal for a regulation on amending Regulation (EC) No 1367/2006¹ (the so-called Aarhus Regulation), which should improve the implementation of the Aarhus Convention at EU level; further encourages the Member States to ensure adequate transposition of relevant EU legislative acts (e.g. Directive 2011/92/EU²) and international legally binding provisions (Aarhus Convention) into their legal orders in order to guarantee inclusive access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters;
59. Stresses that the actions of environmental activists are absolutely in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals and that the systemic implementation of these goals should be pursued locally, nationally and internationally;
60. Recalls that Member States are required to regulate corporations to ensure that they do not cause human rights abuses and that private and corporate actors have the obligation to address the human rights implications of climate change, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;
61. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to be active players in the design, establishment and promotion of safeguards and accountability processes within the internationally recognised bodies to ensure that the structural changes made in order to achieve the drastic cut in emissions by 2030, as provided for by climate policies, are designed, implemented and monitored in a manner that protects the rights of the people and communities affected, including the right to work and to promote fair and equitable working conditions; emphasises that the green transition should be fair and leave no-one behind;
62. Stresses the importance of corporate due diligence and sustainable and accountable corporate accountability as significant and indispensable means by which to prevent and

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 September 2006 on the application of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters to Community institutions and bodies (OJ L 264, 25.9.2006, p. 13).

² Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment Text with EEA relevance (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1).

protect against severe human rights and environmental violations; calls on the EU to support sustainable and accountable corporate governance as an important element of the European Green Deal; calls on the Member States to implement effective regulatory measures to identify, assess, prevent, cease, mitigate, monitor, communicate, account for, address and remediate potential and/or actual human rights abuses, and to hold businesses accountable when it comes to ensuring that they fulfil their due diligence obligations regarding the impact of climate change on human rights, in line with UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights;

63. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to develop a legislative proposal on mandatory human rights and environmental corporate due diligence for companies throughout their supply chains; recommends that this legislative proposal should support and facilitate the development of common impact measuring methodologies for environmental and climate change impacts; stresses the importance of effective, meaningful and informed consultation and communication with all affected or potentially affected stakeholders, including environmental defenders; urges the EU to support and effectively engage in the ongoing negotiations for a UN binding treaty on business and human rights to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises; considers that any such instrument must encourage corporate actors and investors to assume their responsibilities with regard to the human right to a healthy environment; considers that any such instrument must include solid environmental protection provisions and encourage corporate actors as well as financial institutions, but also regional investment or development institutions, to assume their responsibilities with regard to the human right to a healthy environment;
64. Underlines the importance of fighting corruption at global level as it harms the enjoyment of human rights and has specific negative repercussions for and disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable groups in society, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the poor, indigenous people or people belonging to minorities, inter alia by barring them from equal access to natural resources, including land;
65. Calls on the Council and the EEAS to include corruption-related crimes among the acts punishable under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, the so-called the European Magnitsky Act, and to ensure its swift adoption and implementation;
66. Believes that the current EU trade policy review should be an opportunity to redefine, promote and reinforce the protection of human rights in trade policy; stresses that the sustainable development chapters of future trade agreements must be covered by the dispute settlement mechanisms of these agreements;

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67. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, the President of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly, the

President of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EU Heads of Delegation.