

Statement by UN Human Rights Experts*

Belem, 18 November 2025

Statement on civic participation at the Climate COP30

We salute and fully support the over 70 thousand people who marched peacefully in Belem last Saturday, to ask for climate justice and for the protection of human rights from climate harm of present and future generations, through meaningful outcomes of the 30th UN Climate COP that are aligned with the 1.5C global temperature increase limit.

We take this opportunity to recall States' obligations and international institutions' responsibilities under international law to protect human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs in multilateral fora.

In that connection, we note that protests by Indigenous Peoples were carried out at COP30 over the last days and that the COP30 Presidency and Brazilian government met and heard the legitimate demands of Indigenous Peoples. The protection of Indigenous Peoples' human rights is essential, as they are facing widespread violations not only because of the continued expansion of fossil fuels in their territories, but also just transition projects, mining and carbon credits that do not respect their rights or harm biodiversity, water, food and health. Indigenous Peoples seek to be heard and ask that solutions affecting them are co-developed with them. Critically, these solutions also benefit everyone's human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including a safe climate.

For now none of the protesters has been harmed or criminalized. We hope that there will be not attempts to press charges or legal reprisals for participation in these mobilizations. Both the host state and the UNFCCC Secretariat must ensure the respect of international standards protecting the right to protest.

We express deep concern about requests to increase security, which have been met by a visible increase in armed security presence at COP30. First, this is not warranted by the circumstances of the protests that happened at COP30. In general, any restrictions on the right to protest must meet the strict requirements of legality, legitimacy, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination and may be imposed only for the shortest time possible as highlighted in [Guidelines on the Right to Peaceful Environmental Protest and Civil Disobedience](#) by the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention. And, second, this securitization contributes to create a chilling effect and feeling of insecurity for all participants. Third, it represents a form of [stigmatization](#) of environmental human

rights defenders, and Indigenous Peoples in particular. Rather, their actions should be understood in the context of global trends of increasing and increasingly vicious attacks to defenders and their support organizations, as well as illegitimate limitations to the resources and support systems they can rely upon and generally shrinking of civic space.

Besides, it is problematic to create exclusion zones for demonstrations, in contravention of the “sight and sound” principle for the right to peaceful assembly (CCPR/C/GC/37, para 22). All these trends affect the guarantee of the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, the right of access to information and other relevant rights. In addition, these attempts undermine democratic processes to the benefit of the economic interests that have benefited and continue to benefit from the climate crisis and are increasingly in an effort to delay climate action necessary to protect human rights, as underscored by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in its Advisory Opinion on the Climate Emergency.

We recall that each State at COP30, individually and collectively, as well as the UNFCCC Secretariat as an organ of the UN subject to the UN Charter, have obligations to respect and protect human rights, including freedom of expression and association. “Multilateral institutions, as do States, bear the responsibility to recognize the positive role of peaceful protests and to create space in which civil society organizations can strengthen human rights and democracy. Indeed, multilateral institutions play a key role in stimulating global public debate by strengthening the visibility of civil society organizations and by facilitating peaceful assembly within their structures and programmes” (A/69/365).

We also note that at COP 30, fossil fuel lobbyists continue to significantly outnumber most country delegations in Belém, with one in every 25 attendees representing the industry. We thus reiterate our [call](#) “to curb the presence of fossil fuel lobbyists at the Climate COP, and ensure transparency, public participation, meaningful dialogue with civil society, and effective protection of environmental human rights defenders and their associations.” We also recall that when designing multilateral fora, “sectoral equity is key: civil society representatives should be given the same access, input and power as the private for-profit sector” ([A/69/365](#)).

Further, while we welcome more openness of negotiating meetings to observers compared to previous Climate COPs, the practice of allowing observers only to speak at the end of negotiating sessions does not allow meaningful participation. In other multilateral environmental negotiations, observers can take the floor in real time and make textual suggestions to Parties; these suggestions can then be taken into account if at least one State supports them and then the usual process of seeking consensus among Parties continues. This practice does not undermine in any way a Party-driven process. Rather, it supports Parties in making sure that they are considering the best available science and expertise of observers in their deliberations, which reflects their international obligations under multiple sources of international law. Changing dominating practices of closed-door negotiations and ineffective inclusion of civil society, other observers and scientists in the climate negotiations is overdue.

In conclusion, we urge all States and the UNFCCC Secretariat to uphold human rights in the process and substance of the COP30 negotiations in line with their international obligations as clarified by several UN and regional human rights experts and most recently by the International Court of Justice. We remain available to advise the UNFCCC Secretariat on how to best advance the human rights-based approach in the process at COP30 and beyond.

ENDS

***The experts:**

- *Elisa Morgera, [Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change](#)*
- *Albert K. Barume, [Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples](#),*
- *Astrid Puentes Riaño, [Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#)*
- *Gina Romero, [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#)*
- *Mary Lawlor, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#)*
- *Michel Forst, [Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention](#) (*The Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention is elected by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention*).*

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For more information and media requests, please contact: Frederique Bourque, frederique.bourque@un.org or hrc-sr-climatechange@un.org