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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 "ECO-FAWN" (Environment Conservation Organization - Foundation for Afforestation Wild Animals and Nature), 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.

[26 May 2025]

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

Accelerating Sustainable Energy in India: Mitigating Climate Change and Protecting Human Rights

Climate change poses a profound threat to the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water, housing, and an adequate standard of living. The accelerating frequency of heatwaves, erratic rainfall, declining agricultural productivity, and extreme weather events disproportionately affect marginalized communities, particularly in developing nations such as India. As per HRC resolutions 50/9 and 56/8, the UN Human Rights Council underscores the urgency of adopting ambitious, rights-based climate action. In this context, India's transition toward sustainable sources of energy emerges as a critical pillar of both environmental justice and human rights protection.

From Renewable to Sustainable Energy: A Holistic Approach

While the term "renewable energy" often refers to resources like solar, wind, and hydro, a broader and more inclusive term—sustainable energy—is increasingly used to capture not only renewability but also social, environmental, and economic equity in energy development. Sustainable energy solutions in India are being framed with a view to climate resilience, energy access, and ecological balance, acknowledging the right of every individual to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Climate Change and the Human Rights Implications in India

India is among the most climate-vulnerable countries globally. According to the Climate Risk Index, millions of people in India are affected annually by climate-induced disasters. The agricultural sector, which employs over 50% of India's rural workforce, faces unpredictable monsoons and rising temperatures, resulting in crop failures and food insecurity. Urban slums bear the brunt of heatwaves and water shortages, while tribal and forest-dependent communities suffer from biodiversity loss and land degradation.

These impacts are not just environmental; they directly infringe upon basic human rights. Thus, India's shift toward sustainable energy must be seen as both a climate mitigation strategy and a human rights imperative.

Carbon Credits and Market Incentives

India has emerged as a leader in the carbon credit market, offering innovative pathways for climate finance and sustainable energy transitions. Through mechanisms such as the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) scheme and the Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) system, Indian industries and governments are incentivized to reduce carbon emissions. Small-scale renewable projects in rural areas are also gaining access to international carbon markets, generating funds that can be reinvested in community development and climate adaptation efforts.

The carbon credit system not only curbs emissions but also provides rural and low-income communities with opportunities to participate in the green economy—reinforcing the right to development.

Pioneering Solar Initiatives Across India

India ranks among the top five countries globally in solar power generation. The government's flagship National Solar Mission has catalyzed the production and deployment of solar panels across multiple states, including:

- Rajasthan, home to the Bhadla Solar Park, the largest solar park in the world, covering over 14,000 acres with a capacity exceeding 2,245 MW.

- Gujarat, which pioneered the canal-top solar panel innovation to prevent water evaporation while generating clean energy.
- Tamil Nadu and Telangana, which have aggressively scaled up solar installations in both urban and agricultural areas.
- Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, now emerging as major hubs for solar panel manufacturing under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for high-efficiency solar PV modules.

These large-scale solar deployments not only reduce dependence on coal but also help ensure cleaner air, reduce respiratory diseases, and lower energy costs—delivering tangible human rights benefits in health and economic well-being.

Subsidies for Households and Farmers

The Government of India, under the PM-KUSUM (Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan) Scheme, has rolled out targeted subsidies to promote the adoption of solar-powered irrigation pumps. This reduces farmers' reliance on diesel and ensures more stable access to water without contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Similarly, the Rooftop Solar Programme, supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), provides financial support and easy loans to households—especially in urban and semi-urban areas—to shift to solar electricity. These efforts directly empower low-income families to achieve energy independence, lower their electricity bills, and access a cleaner living environment.

By addressing energy poverty and ensuring equitable access to clean energy, these initiatives reinforce the right to housing, health, and livelihood, especially in climate-affected regions.

Private Electric Vehicles and Sustainable Public Transport

India is witnessing a rapid transformation in the transportation sector, which is among the largest contributors to urban pollution and carbon emissions. The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme has bolstered the entry of electric vehicles (EVs) into the Indian market. Private players such as Tata Motors, Mahindra, and Ola Electric are expanding EV offerings for middle-income and budget-conscious consumers.

Simultaneously, metro rail projects in Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune are integrating solar power and introducing electric buses and e-rickshaws to decarbonize public mobility.

This transition plays a pivotal role in reducing air pollution—currently a major public health crisis—and thereby supports the right to health, clean air, and freedom of movement, particularly for children, the elderly, and low-income commuters.

Exploring New Frontiers to Meet Green Targets

India has pledged under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to achieve 50% of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy sources by 2030. To meet this goal, India is exploring emerging technologies like green hydrogen, offshore wind farms, and bioenergy.

Public-private partnerships, international climate finance, and community participation are being tapped to strengthen these efforts. Furthermore, India is advocating for climate justice on the global stage, urging developed countries to provide technology and financing support as part of their historical responsibility under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR).

Sustainable Energy as a Human Rights Enabler

India's growing shift from fossil fuels to sustainable sources of energy represents not just an environmental strategy, but a transformative human rights approach. By expanding clean energy access, reducing climate vulnerabilities, creating green jobs, and improving public health, India is addressing the root causes of climate injustice.

As we reflect on the mandates of HRC Resolutions 50/9 and 56/8, India's experience illustrates that climate action grounded in sustainable energy is not only achievable but essential for protecting and promoting human rights in an era of climate emergency.

Gramin Kshetra, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

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