



# The Global Initiative *for* Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

## Summary of report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights: Climate change, culture and cultural rights

At the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights presented a report addressing the relationship between cultural rights and the climate emergency ([A/75/298](#)). The report emphasises that tackling climate change “cannot wait until the pandemic is over” and firmly makes the point that “the climate emergency remains an existential threat to life, to human rights and to human cultures.”

Despite this reality, the Special Rapporteur worries that the threat to cultural rights has “not been adequately acknowledged in current climate change initiatives.” Seeking to overcome this deficit, the report identifies the specific groups, cultures and places that are affected by the climate emergency, and works to uncover the nexus that exists between climate change and cultural rights.

The report proceeds with a deeper reflection on the negative impacts of climate change on cultural rights. Adverse effects that relate to cultural heritage, cultural diversity and cultural survival, traditional knowledge and ways of life, and the cultural rights of women and indigenous persons, are each considered. The report also draws attention to the human rights impacts of measures designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, stating for example that the “displacement of indigenous peoples...might be caused through well-intended ecological or other conservation programmes”.

The report continues with a section dedicated to the positive potential of culture, cultural heritage and cultural rights to enhance responses to climate change. Here, the Special Rapporteur stresses that women are “change agents for combating the climate crisis” and often hold invaluable local knowledge that can be deployed towards climate adaptation.

The report concludes with a call for a “holistic approach to culture, cultural rights and climate change” and provides a set of recommendations that would enable this. With more than a hint of exasperation, the Special Rapporteur also stresses that she is “not sure what she can say that others have not already said to convince the international community to take action”. Nevertheless, she added one final word, which she borrows from Dr. Seuss’s mythical creature the Lorax, who was left for a child along with the last remaining seed for a disappearing tree in an environmentally degraded world. That word: “unless”.

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