

**Questionnaire in relation to Human Rights Council resolution 47/24
on human rights and climate change**

**Response by the Section on Archives and Human Rights, International Council on Archives
30 November 2021**

1. Please describe the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.

The Section on Archives and Human Rights of the International Council of Archives (SAHR-ICA) is developing a pilot project to identify and map archives in climate danger areas, focusing on memory and human right archives located in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and Santiago (Chile). The preliminary results illustrate that climate change may negatively and deeply impact the sustainability, continuity and content of several heritage institutions and organizations in the medium (2050) and long term (2100). For that reason, the study seeks to encourage archivists to create climate-focused plans for mitigating the possible negative effects on the national and local archival heritage.

The Universal Declaration of Archives, developed by the International Council on Archives and endorsed by UNESCO in 2011, recognizes the importance and value of Archives as a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another, due to their significant role in the economic, social and cultural development of societies. By preserving and providing public access to the diverse and plural national and local memories they hold, archives enrich our knowledge about our human society, promote transparency and democracy, and enhance the quality of life. In that sense, archives are vital in every area of human activity.

If the international archival community remains indifferent to this problem, climate change could provoke the total loss of relevant documentary sources or trigger serious damage to records that are extremely important to guarantee the rights of the citizens, especially the right of identity, memory, truth and social justice. In Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), 6 of 81 archives are located in threat zones; they can be destroyed or severely impacted by sea level and landslide susceptibility. If archives are not available, people will not have the evidence needed to prove and defend their rights, such as the right to retire with a pension, the title to apartment, house and land, and even their legal existence and rights as citizens.

2. Please describe any specific policy, legislation, practice or strategy that your Government has undertaken, in compliance with applicable international human rights law, to promote an approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as loss and damage that ensures the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. Please also note and identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments including their means of implementation.

In general, governments are not taking any special actions to avoid or mitigate the effects of climate change on archives. Many archives buildings are not in good condition, and even the basic requirements for preservation—secure storage, temperature and humidity controls—are not common. Very frequently electronic and digital records are not copied and reformatted in more modern software, making their use difficult or impossible. Climate changes make this scenario even worse.

3. Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected people in vulnerable situations, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e. discrimination based on a combination of multiple grounds, including disability, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, nationality and migration status).

No comments

4. Please describe any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations.

The SAHR-ICA is making efforts to create a methodology that, using material available about how the cities will be affected by climate changes and considering the location of archives, can anticipate the major

dangers for the archives in the future. The idea is to have this methodology available to be used by any archival institution in order to mitigate those dangers and also give archival authorities the information needed to call to the attention of the government and society the necessity to undertake preventive measures.

5. Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.

Some archives must be moved to better locations, buildings must have better conditions to avoid the problems caused by climate changes, holdings need to be well maintained, and digital copies must be made and kept in places and in conditions that will ensure their preservation.

6. Please include examples and good practices that highlight international and multilateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented through close consultation with and active involvement of people in vulnerable situations.

No comments

7. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations.

No comments