

62nd Human Rights Council Session

Annual panel discussion on the adverse impacts of climate change on human rights

19 June 2026

Thank you, Mr. President

I make this statement on behalf of the International Service for Human Rights and the Institute for Political Economy Sri Lanka. We emphasise the crucial importance of examining climate financing through a human rights lens as central to efforts to address climate change effectively and equitably.

Sri Lanka emits less than 0.05 percent of global carbon. Yet 85 percent of government revenue services debt. Adaptation and disaster response remain unfunded. Smallholder farmers, coastal fishing communities, plantation workers descended from indentured Tamil labourers are living the consequences of a crisis they did not cause.

This is the debt-climate trap. And the international financial architecture is not solving it, it is deepening it. For instance, in early June, UNDP publicly called for operationalising carbon markets to attract private capital in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's National Climate Finance Strategy, funded by the United Kingdom and implemented by UNDP, proposes debt-for-nature swaps and carbon markets as its core instruments. These instruments reproduce colonial dispossession by translating complex socio-ecological relationships into monetised units, erasing the relational and custodial knowledge systems through which Indigenous and local communities have historically understood and governed nature.

The UNFCCC is also not fully responding to this context. The Loss and Damage Fund is not delivering and military emissions remain excluded from UNFCCC reporting.

For a human rights perspective to climate financing, this Council must establish standards ensuring: a) debt cancellation without conditionalities; b) grant-based climate finance that creates no new debt; and c) an end to market mechanisms that commodify nature, displace communities and exacerbate human rights violations, d) and accountability for regional and international financial institutions.

Furthermore, States that seek climate financing also restrict civil society and criminalise environmental HRDs. An enabling environment for civil society and the protection of human rights defenders are prerequisites for effective, equitable and rights-based climate finance. This requires:

1. **Meaningful participation** of civil society and affected communities in climate finance decisions.
2. **Human rights safeguards and defender protection** attached to all climate finance mechanisms.
3. **Direct, accessible, and flexible funding** for local and community-led actors.

Rights-based climate finance is not a theory. It exists. It must become the standard.

Thank you.