

CALL FOR PAPERS

Human Rights and the Climate Change Crisis Ethical Implications and the Human Rights to Development and a Healthy Environment

University of Geneva, Thursday 26 and Friday 27 November 2020

The current pandemic highlights the urgent need for global measures to deal with common threats and the risk that such measures could be taken at the expense of individual freedoms. These uncertain times may present an opportunity to rethink society and the economy to combat climate change more effectively, exploring whether a new balance between individual freedoms and collective goals could be sought. This workshop will examine the relationship between climate change and human rights from three angles:

1) How should the promotion of collective interests be balanced with individual freedoms?

The first session will set out the philosophical and ethical challenges raised by policy measures to mitigate climate change, focusing on the impacts of the collective fight against climate change on individual freedoms. On the one hand there is the risk of a possible irreconcilable tension between the liberal approach of minimal interference in individual freedoms and the need for urgent action at national and global level to combat climate change. On the other hand, there is a collective as well as individual moral responsibility that could justify limitations on personal freedoms to prevent environmental harms that threaten humanity as a whole.

2) Is the human right to development compatible with the human right to a healthy environment?

The second session will address another possible conflict which may appear in the context of the relationship between the right to development and the right to a healthy environment. Although the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development does not include any specific duties on environmental protection, it is today well accepted that development and environment cannot be separated, and that they are two faces of the same coin. The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change link economic and social development with the protection of human rights and climate change. Although the concept of sustainable development is extensively used to avoid addressing potential conflicts, its implementation in the context of specific economic projects raises challenges.

3) How should the human right to a healthy environment be enforced?

The third session will focus on the enforcement of the human right to a healthy environment. This panel will build on the work of the former and current UN Special Rapporteurs on the right to a healthy environment as well as on the practice of the Human Rights Council and the UN human rights treaty mechanisms, notably the UN Committee on Human Rights. It will also consider how this right may be enforced through judicial mechanisms – both domestic and international – and what the implications of a global recognition of this right are.



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Organised under the auspices of the Global Studies Institute (University of Geneva), the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Canton of Geneva, this workshop brings together graduate and postgraduate researchers (selected on the basis of their proposals) with experienced academics and practitioners (by invitation).

Eligibility: Graduate and postgraduate researchers having obtained their PhD within the past 10 years.

Deadlines for proposals and papers:

- Applicants are invited to submit proposals of up to 500 words, in English, plus a short biographical note of 100 words, and 5 keywords to Alice Breathe (alice.breathe@unige.ch) by **Friday 29 May 2020**.
- Applicants whose proposals have been selected will be informed by **Monday 15 June 2020**.
- Draft papers, of about 8,000 words in English, to be submitted by selected applicants will be due by **Wednesday 30 September 2020**.

An academic publication will follow the conference.

Funding: Researchers whose proposals have been selected may be eligible for assistance with travel and accommodation costs upon request.