

News Release: Civil Society Groups Call on Nations to Address Inequalities in Climate Policy**CONTACT:**

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Civil Society Groups Call on Nations to Address Inequalities in Climate Policy

Civil society organizations around the globe are calling for nations to address inequalities and social justice in the accord to be adopted at the upcoming COP21 climate policy meetings in Paris late November and early December. According to the “International Civil Society Call to Address Inequalities and Social Justice in Climate Policy,” drafted by global network *Initiative for Equality* and co-signed by over 200 civil society organizations, inequality is a “key driver of the climate crisis,” and “blocks agreements and pathways that could lead to sustainability.”

Most of the organizations endorsing the Statement represent poor or marginalized populations in the developing world, although several prominent organizations have endorsed, including the *International Social Science Council*, *Climate Action Network (CAN)* – Europe, the *American Psychological Association*, *Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)*, and *Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)*. *Initiative for Equality (IfE)* is a global network itself, including nearly 300 civil society groups in 90 countries advocating for greater social, economic and political equality. IfE’s Field Hearings project has collected input from thousands of poor or socially excluded people in marginalized communities around the world, many of whom cited the harmful impacts of changing weather on their livelihoods and well-being.

“Any initiative to address climate change and climate justice must place inequality at the center of the discussion,” said Bhola Bhattarai, Chairperson of National Forum for Advocacy, Nepal

(NAFAN), and member of the drafting committee. By disempowering or destroying the culture of indigenous groups, inequalities cause the loss of environmental knowledge and deprive communities of potential models for more sustainable ways of life, Bhattarai said.

According to IfE President and Stanford University researcher Deborah Rogers, “inequality lies at the root of unsustainable behaviors. By making it socially acceptable for some people to have far more than others, and tying consumption to social status, inequality promotes overconsumption.” She also noted that the globalized economic system helps drive the climate crisis because its “emphasis on growth, short-term incentives, and profit motives contradicts sustainability.”

“Climate change puts women and girls at risk,” said Richard Osaliya, Field Hearings Regional Coordinator and member of the Statement’s drafting committee from Uganda. He noted that women and girls in many parts of the world are more likely to care for children, the sick and the elderly, and to prepare food, fetch water, and work the soil – all of which become more difficult as the climate degenerates.

“There is a serious ethical problem when those who suffer the most from climate change are those who generate the least emissions,” according to Kavya Michael, Indian researcher on relative carbon emissions by activities of the poor and by elites in India, and member of the drafting committee. Michael said that her research shows that well-off urban elites generate approximately twice as much carbon emissions per person as do poor agricultural workers in India.

Roberto Guimaraes, Brazilian member of the drafting committee and author of the UN’s groundbreaking 2005 report, *The Inequality Predicament*, said that current consumption patterns put excessive pressure on the planet’s dwindling resource base, as a wealthy minority “appropriates more than their share of resources.” “Because rich and poor are affected

differently, it's much harder to find equitable and effective incentives for reducing carbon emissions," he said.

"Those most likely to bear the brunt of climate change are those who suffer from marginalization, whether on the basis of income, wealth, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, health, ability, legal or migration status, or other characteristics or identities," according to Daniela Antons, queer-feminist advocate for climate justice from Germany and member of the Statement's drafting committee. "These communities do not have the resources to respond or adapt, and often lack the influence to demand necessary changes," she said.

Carmit Lubanov, member of the drafting committee and director of The Association of Environmental Justice in Israel, stated that inequalities block cooperation and collaborative problem-solving by creating lack of trust and social fragmentation. "Communities and nations are far less likely to make the necessary agreements to address climate change when they are aware that they do not share the same interests, benefits, and responsibilities," she said. Her group works with disadvantaged communities, including Arab Israelis, for environmental empowerment, and develops policy indicators to incorporate justice and equity into environmental and climate policy.

The signatory groups plan to use their network members to put the "International Call to Address Inequalities and Social Justice in Climate Policy" into the hands of national climate negotiators before they arrive in Paris for the COP21 Climate Summit at the end of November. "If we don't address inequalities in climate change, the game is over," said Rogers. "This isn't just a nice idea – this is essential to achieving global agreements and workable solutions," she said.

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