

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



September 9, 2019

Ambassador Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Ambassador,

I am writing on behalf of Amnesty International USA, a non-partisan human rights organization with over 1 million members and supporters in the United States. We understand that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs will be representing U.S. government with respect to the upcoming United Nations Climate Action Summit on September 23, 2019 and therefore urge the U.S. delegation to:

- Announce ambitious new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at the Summit, or at the latest by early 2020, which will align their emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2050 with the imperative to keep the increase of global average temperature as low as possible and no higher than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Plans to achieve the NDGs should:
  - Include clear timelines to rapidly end fossil fuel subsidies and the use of all fossil fuels as soon as possible and to shift to 100 per cent renewable energy generated in full compliance with human rights standards as quickly as possible
  - Aim to establish regulations and policy measures and ensure that businesses move towards net zero emissions;

- Ensure that the transition towards a zero-carbon economy and a more resilient society is just, fair, human rights compliant and reduces inequality. Such a transition is necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Respect, protect and fulfill the rights to information, participation and to effective remedies, as well as to freedom of expression and assembly in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NDCs and all climate policies and strategies in line with SDG 16: peace, justice and strong institutions. Human rights defenders protecting their land, territory and the environment must be allowed to continue their legitimate work without fear of reprisals;
- Take the lead in announcing emission reduction targets that would enable the United States to halve emissions well before 2030 and reach net zero emissions well before 2050, given your greater capacity and greater contribution to the climate crisis;
- Substantially increase funding and support for human rights-consistent climate initiatives, including technology transfer, in less wealthy countries that would not be able to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change themselves;
- Provide financial means, support and access to legal remedy to people whose rights have been negatively affected as the result of loss and damage caused by climate change, particularly in less wealthy countries.

Climate change is a global human rights issue; impacting the rights to life, food, health, housing, water, sanitation, among others. It disproportionately affects individuals and communities that are marginalized or subject to discrimination – including women and girls and Indigenous communities and with young people bearing the brunt of future impacts - but no one is exempt from the risks associated with climate change. Millions of people are already suffering from the catastrophic effects of extreme disasters exacerbated by climate change – estimated at one climate-related disaster per week according to Mami Mizutori, the UN SG’s Special Representative on

Disaster Risk Reduction. These range from prolonged drought in sub-Saharan Africa and India to devastating tropical storms sweeping across Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, southern Africa, and the Pacific, and intense heatwaves in the northern hemisphere.

The 2018 Special Report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirmed that limiting global warming below 1.5°C is an absolute imperative to avoid the worst consequences for human rights in the coming years. This compelling wake-up call made clear that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by 45 per cent from their 2010 levels by 2030 to avoid reaching and surpassing 1.5°C. The report also showed how current pledges under the Paris Agreement are utterly inadequate as they would lead to a 3°C increase of average global temperature by 2100.

Wealthy nations – such as members of the G20 - are currently failing to set sufficiently ambitious climate targets. All UN member states – and in particular the wealthiest and most polluting states - must take the most ambitious measures possible to prevent or reduce greenhouse gas emissions as fast and as humanely as possible in order to keep the increase in global average temperatures as low as possible and no higher than 1.5°C. They must publicly recognize the need to act immediately, collaboratively seek progress and urge other states to follow suit. Such efforts must not directly or indirectly violate human rights and should learn from the experience of previous conservation or renewable energy projects, for example where Indigenous land has been made use of without any the free, prior and informed consent of the affected Indigenous peoples. Conversely, climate change policies and measures must have human rights at their heart, thereby advancing equality, justice and dignity for all, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We urge the United States government to acknowledge the climate crisis and put in place a plan to help stop it.

We look forward to your response. Please contact my colleague Zeke Johnson, Senior Director of Programs at Amnesty International USA, with any questions: (212) 633 – 4256 / zjohnson@aiusa.org.

Sincerely,  
  
Margaret Huang  
Executive Director  
Amnesty International USA