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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the environment: The Negative Impact of Unilateralism on the Right to Environment

Greed, a never ending journey to further profit, has caused a disastrous situation on the environment, which seriously threatens the living of Mankind today and tomorrow.

Conflicts and climate change intensify human suffering, create unprecedented displacement of people cause rapid deterioration of land and water ecosystems. Some extreme weather and climate events such as heat waves, floods, and droughts have increased in recent decades, and new and stronger evidence confirms that these increases are related to human activities.

In addition, more than 6 billion people, one-third of them children, are regularly inhaling air which is so polluted that it puts their life, health and well-being at risk. And yet, this pandemic receives inadequate attention.

It is the right of all citizens and the future generation to have safe, clean and healthy air, water, food and environment. Guarding the natural environment must be given top priority in all economic and industrial activities.

ODVV welcomes the Special Rapporteur's report on good practices followed by States in recognizing the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. These good practices show that environmental progress and the protection of human rights from environmental harm are possible. For example, Ghana is now implementing a national climate education strategy, and lessons on climate change will be included in the primary school curriculum. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Croatia, Singapore, Slovakia and Turkmenistan recently enacted stronger air quality laws. Some states now include responsibilities relating to climate change in their Constitutions. ODVV admire all the works done by states to protect our planet.

As it's been highlighted in the report of the Special Rapporteur, governments must be accountable for the present and future society and at national, regional and international levels observe their collective responsibility for the advancement and strengthening of sustainable development, to which clean environment is a part of.

Furthermore, we see that some countries, through unilateral measures and to get their financial interests, easily damage the collective fate of other people. The United States of America's exit from the Paris Agreement – as the biggest producer of pollution – dealt a heavy blow to international unity and efforts for the protection of the environment and prevention of global warming. Trump's decision to pull the US out of the Paris Accord will without a doubt have terrible impacts on both Americans and the world. With this act, not only did he show that he is ignorant towards the realities of his country, but at the same time it further showed America's lack of commitment to international agreements.

Another problem that Mankind is struggling with are wars which have huge destructive impacts on the environment. Countries which for the domination of the resources and wealth of other countries, use various weapons against them, which result in collective destruction of cities and people, must be held accountable towards the destruction of the environment as well as war crimes.

Destruction of wildlife, loss of biodiversity, poor air quality, and contamination of soil and water, are some of the destructive effects of modern warfare, which has negatively affected the Middle East region and its people. In the ongoing conflicts such as Yemen, Iraq and Syria, military machinery and explosives have destroyed forests and habitats on an unprecedented scale. Negative effect of war stays on environment years after the conflict is over. This is the case of southern area of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) which is seriously affected by the Iran-Iraq (1980-88) war, causing widespread sand storms in the region, affecting the people's normal routine.

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) calls on the international community to further help developing countries on commitments towards the protection of the environment.

The ODVV calls on the international community to arrange mechanisms to fulfil their commitment and promote cooperation on climate change.

The ODVV calls on the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment to address ecosystems in the Middle East region in the reports submitted to the HRC and the General Assembly.

We call on the states to cooperate with countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen to reconstruct their destroyed environment.
