

EXPLAINER

# THE SUMAÚMA PLEDGING TREE

## for Human Rights Based Climate Action



For decades, the environmental justice movement, international human rights experts and the people on the frontlines of the climate crisis have been demanding action, guided by human rights, to stop climate change, build climate resilience and remedy climate harms.

[The Sumaúma Pledging Tree for Human Rights-Based Climate Action](#), an initiative launched by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the COP30 Special Envoy on Human Rights and Just Transition, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, and the Brazilian Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship [at UNFCCC COP30](#), seeks to bring hope and inspire meaningful, rights-based climate action. It will do so by identifying and advancing human rights solutions to address the undeniable devastation created by the impacts of climate change and interrelated environmental crises including pollution, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, and water and food insecurity. The Pledging Tree supports action aligned with the **Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice** which found that States have human rights obligations relative to climate change and a duty to prevent significant harm to the environment, including the climate system.

The initiative bears the name of the Sumaúma tree, referred to by many Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon rainforest as the tree of life, and invites different change-makers to share their work and innovations to catalyze the human rights-based climate action humanity needs to stop climate change, remedy its worst impacts and protect life. The Sumaúma Pledging Tree also echoes the main purposes of the COP30 Presidency's Global Mutirão - a global open call for everyone, from individuals to governments, to help catalyse meaningful climate action and realize a better world for current and future generations.



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# Goals, benefits, and outcomes

The [Sumaúma Pledging Tree](#) for Human Rights-Based Climate Action will bring together diverse actors to identify and showcase transferable human rights solutions to the climate crisis. As a shared platform for pledges, practical learning, and collaboration, the Pledging Tree will seek to mobilize, identify and catalyze transformative climate action across regions, and support fair, inclusive transitions through policy, knowledge and practice. Through the co-development of new pledges, States and other relevant stakeholders, including businesses, will be supported from the ground up to meet their respective human rights obligations and responsibilities relating to climate change.

To help our tree grow strong and flourish, different actors will be invited to share stories and experiences based on existing human rights-based climate initiatives. All Pledging Tree partners will be expected to take effective measures to advance human rights-based climate action and support mutual learning with others.

Through shared learning, the Pledging Tree can inspire and motivate efficient, participatory and groundbreaking climate action at all scales. From small communities to international networks and organizations, from actions developed by grassroots movements to government policy, from regional to global, there are transferable learnings. Agents of change truly committed to human rights are invited to be part of the Sumaúma Tree.

## Changemakers will benefit from:

- 1** A shared and curated space for exchange and learning amongst different change-makers committed to transformative human rights-based climate action
- 2** Advisory support from peers, human rights experts, and other relevant actors, including a dedicated advisory board, that are seeking to advance human rights-based climate action in their respective areas of work and support mutual learning across sectors and levels.
- 3** Working with diverse actors — including Member States, UN agencies, rights-holders, civil society, NHRIs, and the private sector — to support whole of society action and transformative change towards greater enjoyment of human rights, including the right to a healthy environment, for all - present and future generations.
- 4** A space designed to ensure the voices of marginalized groups and communities are meaningfully heard, supported and acted upon.



# Human Rights - Based Approaches to Climate Action

A human rights-based approach (HRBA) refers to the design and implementation of policies, programs, and initiatives based on international human rights standards. It aims to address inequalities and achieve well-being and dignity for all, and is guided by, inter alia, the principles of non-discrimination, equality, participation, inclusion, accountability, and the rule of law.

A HRBA focuses on strengthening the capacities of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and of right-holders to claim their rights. It recognizes that human rights empower all people, particularly those that, due to geography, poverty, gender, age, disability, cultural or ethnical background, or other factors, are marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded and are bearing disproportionate impacts of climate change.

A HRBA ensures inclusive and informed decision-making aligned with scientific evidence and the needs of individuals, groups and Peoples that have experienced systemic discrimination in the enjoyment of their rights. It also ensures that measures are assessed regarding their implications for human rights, including to health and a healthy environment, guaranteeing that they are not misleading, short sighted and do not lead to further harm. Crucially, the HRBA recognizes the distinctive knowledge and expertise of those human rights holders who have been bearing the brunt of climate change and meaningfully reflects their lived experiences and needs to guide effective and inclusive climate action<sup>12</sup>.

Overall, this approach supports more effective and sustainable climate action at the nexus of nature, water, food, health and culture, reducing inequalities through participatory and locally owned processes. By empowering people, particularly those in vulnerable situations, as agents of transformative change, human rights-based climate action leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes protecting people and the planet now and in the future.

<sup>1</sup> [A/HRC/56/46: Scene-setting report - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [A/79/176: Access to information on climate change and human rights- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.](#)



## What are pledges for human rights-based climate action?

Pledges can involve, inter alia:

- Legal, policy or administrative changes.
- Community-led, bottom-up, and inter-generational initiatives.
- Changes in business practices
- Developing and strengthening research and other partnerships to support the codevelopment of human rights-based climate solutions with the people most affected by climate change, including environmental human rights defenders and Indigenous Peoples.
- Changes in funders' practices to better support human rights-based climate action.
- Efforts to prioritize the needs of the people and ecosystems most affected by climate change including through equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of the transition to sustainable societies and economies.
- Measures to increase accountability for climate harms and explore the transformative potential of effective remedies.
- Reinforcement of the environmental justice movement, taking into consideration the present impacts of historical inequalities and unfair burdens on present and future generations.

Pledges should be transformative, innovative, and catalytic, aimed at ensuring positive impacts for the enjoyment of human rights. They can be based on, inter alia, enhancing efforts already taking place and better aligning them with human rights, sharing lived experiences and effective actions, and prioritising the implementation of climate change-related recommendations made by international, regional or other human rights mechanisms within a certain timeframe and with an action plan.

States and other relevant actors are urged to take action and encouraged to convene internal dialogues, share learning, and seek support, including from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the COP30 Special Envoy on Human Rights and Just Transition and the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, to develop and implement their pledges. Actions planned can be at the local, national, regional and global levels, should have human rights at their core, and should be accompanied by specific approaches, timelines and ways to distill and share knowledge iteratively through the Pledging Tree.

The Pledging Tree's dedicated space for knowledge-sharing and collaboration will support scale, visibility, innovation, networking and partnerships across regions. This will increase and improve pledges and offer practical guidance on aligning climate action with human rights standards. It will also make available untapped transferable learning, ultimately leading to more ambitious, widespread and mutually reinforcing, and effective climate



## How do you contribute

All relevant actors are invited to help the Sumaúma Pledging Tree grow strong by sharing their stories, ongoing initiatives and pledges, and seeking support to shape and advance human rights-based climate action.

Pledges can be shared through two different questionnaires 1) for nascent initiatives, like seeds being planted in the soil and 2) for more advanced initiatives (the sustenance of our Sumaúma). Contributions accepted by 30 July 2026 will be made public during the COP31 high-level pledging event provided effective steps have been taken to implement them by 31 October 2026. Pledging Tree partners will be asked to demonstrate and share the steps they have taken to put their commitments into action.

In order to access the questionnaires, please go to ['The Pledging Trees landing page'](#) or write to Julia Rocha ([julia.deoliveirarocha@un.org](mailto:julia.deoliveirarocha@un.org)), copying Ana Paula Souza ([ana.souza@un.org](mailto:ana.souza@un.org)) if you have any questions.



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