

# **Key Messages<sup>1</sup>**

## **ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS FOR COP29**

IASC Sub-Group on the Climate Crisis

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<sup>1</sup> These expanded key messages reflect the position of IASC member humanitarian organizations.

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## I. A growing Climate Emergency

### The climate crisis is also a humanitarian crisis

Climate change is having a profound impact on our planet. 2024 is set to be the hottest year in recorded human history steaming past 2023, the previous record holder. In July, global temperature rose above 1.5°C - the mean warming target set by the Paris Agreement. Over the past year, 6.3 billion people (about 78 per cent of the global population) experienced at least 31 days of extreme heat.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to rising temperatures, we are also seeing increases in extreme weather events, such as violent storms, floods, landslides, and droughts, amongst others. The situation is only set to get worse, as greenhouse gases continue to rise. According to the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, a heatwave that previously occurred only once every 50 years would be nearly 9 times more likely under 1.5 degrees of mean warming. Under 2 degrees of mean warming, it would be nearly 14 times more likely. Half a degree of warming between 1.5 and 2 degrees could cause the permanent inundation of communities currently home to about 5 million people.

Climate change is also contributing to a rise in humanitarian need through impacts on human health and wellbeing. The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report highlights that climate change is substantially impacting food and water insecurity, infectious disease outbreaks, malnutrition, mental health and displacement. During 2023 a resurgence in cholera led to outbreaks in 29 countries.

Those who historically contributed the least to carbon emissions are already among the most affected by climate-related disasters. As climate-related disasters increase in frequency and intensity, highly vulnerable populations who are already exposed to a multitude of risks, including conflict, fragility and high humanitarian needs, are being further driven into a vicious cycle of compounding shocks and increasing needs. Of the 16 countries assessed to be most at risk from the impacts of climate change, 11 have humanitarian appeals for urgent assistance (GHO 2024). Although the humanitarian community is providing assistance at unprecedented levels and to the best of its ability, persistently high needs are increasingly difficult to meet, especially at a time when the funding landscape is increasingly stretched.

## II. The role and relevance of the humanitarian sector

The humanitarian community has the responsibility to advocate for communities on the frontlines of this crisis, as well as to ensure it is taking measures to better protect and assist the growing numbers of people in need. There is evidence of many effective measures available to avert, minimize and address loss and damage from climate-related disasters and to help people adapt to a changing climate. Successful climate action is possible even in situations of fragility, conflict and severe humanitarian needs, setting a pathway to resilient and sustainable development.

**However, there is no humanitarian solution to the climate crisis.** Mitigating climate change, accelerating adaptation, reducing disaster risk, and addressing loss and damage require major new investments and commitments from a range of political, economic, scientific, development and peacebuilding actors. But working in closer partnership across this spectrum, humanitarians have a critical role to play in supporting communities to prepare for and respond to disasters, and to build their resilience to future shocks. Complementary efforts driving progress towards long-term solutions for sustainable resilience should be developed with state and non-state actors.

**The first responders in any crisis are local communities themselves.** Local organizations, including women's and youth organizations, are working with governments and communities to avert, minimize

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<sup>2</sup> World Weather Attribution, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, and Climate Central.

and respond to the humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis. In many contexts where local capacities are overwhelmed, international support is needed but must fully complement local efforts.

**Who we are:** The Inter-Agency Standing Committee supports a coordinated response to humanitarian crises. Its members include United Nations organizations, members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as well as major networks of international and national Non-Governmental Organizations.

**Our commitment to act:** More than 445 humanitarian organizations representing local, national and international NGOs, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, UN agencies, IFRC and ICRC have adopted the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#). The Charter outlines our commitment to be part of the solution and help people adapt to a changing environment and climate, while also increasing our own environmental sustainability. Building on the charter, this year the [IASC issued a Roadmap to the Climate Crisis](#), guiding our collective priorities.

**Types of climate action:** Humanitarian organizations are working to support protection and assistance to people in need due to disasters and other crises. We engage in disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, anticipatory action, adaptive response, and early recovery, aiming through our life-saving programmes to build resilience to future shocks. We support communities to take anticipatory action before and after shocks. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, humanitarian organizations, together with other partners, are working to address the compounding risks and impacts of climate shocks and stresses on people's lives and livelihoods.

**Understanding risks and vulnerabilities and supporting local capacities:** Because of our work and partnerships at the local level, humanitarian actors have a wealth of knowledge and data that can be critical to effective climate action. We undertake community-level assessments of vulnerabilities, capacities, and needs, ensuring equal participation of women, men, boys and girls in their diversity. Humanitarians aspire to work in a participatory manner, ensuring we are accountable to affected populations. We also support and seek to build capacities for local leadership in humanitarian action, including of local women-led organizations, as outlined in the Grand Bargain commitments.

**Faster finance and response:** Humanitarians have developed important tools and finance mechanisms to provide rapid support to the local level, including through pooled funding mechanisms such as the CERF, DREF, START and Country Based Pooled Funds. We are innovating in areas such as climate-risk informed humanitarian action, anticipatory action, and multi-hazard risk management. We are committed to building more effective partnerships with relevant authorities, development, and climate finance partners to ensure that international support is coherent, coordinated, respects human rights, is pivoted on gender equality and women's empowerment, and responds to the needs and priorities of affected people.

**Engaging in global decision-making on climate action:** We recognize that humanitarian actors have a critical role and responsibility to raise the alarm and amplify the voices of affected people, in particular women and girls, about the impacts of the climate crisis. We are therefore seeking to engage more and in a coordinated way in the climate policy arena to explain what we do, convey the needs and priorities of affected people, learn from others, share lessons learned, and highlight critical gaps as well as the urgent need for action.

### **III. Critical Issues for COP29**

#### **a) New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG)**

The climate crisis demands a step change in the provision of climate finance: developing countries need trillions of US dollars annually to mitigate climate change, and adapt and respond to its

impacts.<sup>3</sup> The new climate finance goal should be commensurate with these needs, and be regularly updated to keep up with changing realities.

Climate finance is increasing, but a large gap remains. The gap is even greater for adaptation funding, which is essential to safeguard people from climate impacts, save lives and reduce the costs of climate-related disasters. Current adaptation finance gaps are estimated at US\$194-366 billion per year, leaving food and water systems, healthcare and education, poverty reduction and livelihoods, and infrastructure and human settlements unprotected.

The NCQG should ensure a balanced distribution of finance between mitigation, adaptation, and Loss & Damage. Climate finance has historically favored mitigation, while communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis need support to adapt and respond to climate impacts. The goal should ensure adequate finance for all areas of climate finance.

The goal should not exacerbate existing debt crises by excluding debt-inducing instruments from climate finance. It is important that developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, can invest in mitigation, adaptation, and Loss & Damage, without adding to their existing financial strain, and taking away from other development priorities. Currently, countries in the Global South repay more in debt to the Global North, than that they receive in grants and loans.<sup>4</sup>

The financing gap is even more pronounced for countries experiencing both climate change and situations of conflict and fragility, and where funding remains largely siloed between humanitarian and climate programming. From 2019-2021, only 3 percent of adaptation funding was used for emergency contexts. Conflict-affected communities receive one-third of the climate adaptation finance that goes to people in non-conflict settings on average<sup>5</sup>.

There are a number of barriers to climate financing reaching conflict affected and fragile states. Unlike Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), FCAS are not formally recognized under the Paris Agreement. FCAS also struggle to meet the demanding criteria and lengthy application processes required by climate funds and multilateral development banks climate finance, while conflict erodes the institutional capacity needed for implementation<sup>6</sup>.

At COP 29, parties will be working towards a New Collective Quantified Goal to 1) transform energy systems, 2) reduce the vulnerability of developing countries to climate change, and 3) protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity. For the humanitarian sector, there are several key asks and priorities<sup>7</sup>:

- 1) Adaptation must be planned, financed and implemented at a scale that matches the worsening climate crisis. This includes a commitment to double adaptation financing from 2019 levels by 2025, and ensure that at least half of all climate finance goes to adaptation.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/2ndNDR\\_ES\\_SCF35\\_unedited20version\\_0.pdf](https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/2ndNDR_ES_SCF35_unedited20version_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> David Ainsworth, (2024) Global south now repays more in debt than it gets in grants and loans. <https://www.devex.com/news/global-south-now-repays-more-in-debt-than-it-gets-in-grants-and-loans-107490>

<sup>5</sup> International Crisis Group, Giving Countries in Conflict Their Fair Share of Climate Finance, 2022 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/fair-share-of-climate-finance> and Cao, Y., Alcayna, T., Quevedo A. and Jarvie, J. 2021. Exploring the conflict blind spots in climate adaptation finance - synthesis report.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Reeve and Lyndsay Walsh, (2023) Forgotten Frontlines: Looking at the Climate Finance Going to Fragile and Conflict Affected States in 2019-2020, Oxfam.

<sup>7</sup> These recommendations draw on the UN System Common Messages for COP 29, IRC How to Make the New Climate Finance Target Work for Conflict-Affected Communities, Loss and Damage Collaboration Key Messages and UNICEF Policy Briefs for Climate Finance and COP 29.

- 2) Adaptation financing must be sufficiently resourced and fully operationalized across sectors and responding to UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience's thematic targets, and prioritize funds for disaster resilience, including disaster mitigation and preparedness, early warning, anticipatory action, and resilient recovery and rebuilding.
- 3) Access to adaptation finance needs to be increased for countries (LDCs and SIDs) experiencing conflict, extreme poverty and humanitarian crises, by prioritizing grants for adaptation and loss and damage, streamlining processes, and expanding access for civil society organizations and local actors.
- 4) When taking adaptation action, governments should ensure country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and human rights-based approaches, as well as equity for current and future generations equity and social justice, taking into consideration vulnerable ecosystems, groups and communities, and including children, youth and persons with disabilities.
- 5) Establish mechanisms to ensure regular, transparent reporting on mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and gender- and age-sensitive climate finance with disbursements per country.

### **b) Mitigation and 2025 NDCs**

Without significantly increasing mitigation ambition and action, the humanitarian impacts of the climate emergency, already immense, will be catastrophic. Keeping the global temperature rise to below 1.5°C is a humanitarian priority.

Nevertheless, the COP 28 Global Stocktake concluded that we are off track to limit global warming to 1.5°C. New scientific analysis shows there is an 80 per cent chance that the global mean near-surface temperature in at least one of the next five calendar years will exceed 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, and a 47 per cent chance that the 2024-2028 five-year mean will exceed this threshold. Under the present approach to GHG emissions, global warming will exceed 1.5°C in the 2020s and 2°C before 2050. Beyond these thresholds, adaptation and resilience options are increasingly limited, and losses and damages will rise. The burden will exacerbate growing inequalities between and within countries.

Governments are preparing to submit new Nationally Determined Contributions in early 2025, which will largely determine whether we will collectively meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. The humanitarian community must advocate for high ambition NDCs aligned to Paris Agreement goals. NDCs should<sup>8</sup>:

- 1) Include an explicit commitment to end fossil fuel expansion and foster a just economic transition;
- 2) Include a clear 2035 Greenhouse gas reduction target;
- 3) Include economy wide and sector specific targets;
- 4) Incorporate clear adaptation and loss and damage objectives;
- 5) Align with the COP 28 agreement on expansion of renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- 6) Be transparent and be supported by government policies to ensure urgent, effective implementation, developed through inclusive and participatory processes that involve Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth.

### **c) Adaptation**

Humanitarians welcome the establishment of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience adopted at COP 28. It is critical to ensure the framework supports adaptation that is locally led and informed by the views of communities, but also by age, ability, and gender-disaggregated data on climate impacts and adaptation benefits. Inclusive mechanisms to engage women, youth, children,

<sup>8</sup> <https://350.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/FINAL-NDC-LETTER-1.pdf>

displaced people, Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups in adaptation and risk-informed decision-making, implementation and monitoring should be incorporated.

Humanitarian organizations are engaged in ongoing discussions related to the UAE-Belém work programme on indicators for measuring progress achieved towards the targets in the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience. Indicators need to be flexible to support and encourage locally and nationally specific adaptation actions to adjust to physical, economic, social and community requirements and capabilities. As part of the Framework, indicators should support and track decision-making processes to foster effective action at the local level. Global indicators, where possible, should draw on existing relevant indicators, for example from the Sustainable Development Goals and Sendai Framework to reduce the reporting and collection burden.

#### **d) Loss and Damage (L&D)<sup>9</sup>**

COP29 should focus on the activation of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), which should be adequate, effective, and prompt, aimed at supporting particularly vulnerable developing countries to avert, minimize and address loss and damage. The fund and funding arrangements should channel new and additional resources, and should incorporate measures to specifically target the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The new fund should ensure the meaningful inclusion of women, children and youth, displaced people, and other groups in vulnerable situations in decision making and subsequent delivery of technical support and funding to address loss and damage must put human rights, dignity, and agency at the centre of the approach.

It will be critical that the new Fund operates in coherence with new and existing funding arrangements, including those in the humanitarian sector and funding should support actions complementary to life saving humanitarian actions, for both economic and non-economic loss and damages.

The Fund must also work in tandem with the Warsaw International Mechanism and the Santiago Network.

Recognizing that governments are central in responding to loss and damage, a comprehensive approach must be integrated across local, regional, and national levels. This will require arrangements to mobilize financial, technical, and capacity support for climate-vulnerable and at-risk countries and communities and people in vulnerable and fragile situations.

As humanitarians, we can act to:

- Minimize losses and damages by strengthening and investing in gender- and age-responsive disaster risk reduction, early warning, preparedness, anticipatory action, shock-responsive social protection systems and resilient health and education systems.
- Address key aspects of losses and damages through humanitarian response, and recovery in ways that effectively manage climate risks and help to build resilience.
- Support those countries most vulnerable to climate change with technical expertise and resources to avert, minimize and address loss and damage due to impacts of climate change, as well as investment in capacities that will enable action in response.

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<sup>9</sup> IPCC Glossary, Loss and Damage entry clarifies the usage of terminology on climate and this document follows the IPCC practice. Research has taken Loss and Damage (capitalized letters) to refer to political debate under the UNFCCC following the establishment of the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage in 2013, which is to 'address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events, in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.' Lowercase letters (losses and damages) have been taken to refer broadly to harm from (observed) impacts and (projected) risks. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/glossary/>

Humanitarian actors play a unique role, reaching the worst-affected communities in crisis-affected situations. However, we recognize that humanitarian action does not, should not, and cannot, deal with a significant portion of losses and damages (such as threats to entire ecosystems, the devastation of livelihoods and economies, and the need for reconstruction of homes and infrastructure). Therefore, loss and damage funding arrangements have a much broader scope than humanitarian funding.

### **e) Early Warning and Anticipatory Action**

One third of people, mainly in least developed and small island developing states, are not covered by effective early warning systems. There is a need to dramatically scale-up the coverage of early warning systems and make actionable early warning information available at the local level to the most at-risk people and communities, in line with the Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative. As humanitarians, we urge Parties to commit to ensuring that actionable early warning information reaches communities in time for them to act on it. This means not only investing in forecasting, but also in necessary structures to ensure action in 'last mile' communities.

Advances in science and technology and stronger coordination mean that when early warning is available, we have time to act before disaster strikes. Over half of all humanitarian crises are at least somewhat predictable and 20 per cent are very predictable, yet less than 1 per cent of humanitarian appeals funding is channeled to anticipatory action.<sup>10</sup> Anticipatory action – acting ahead of predicted crises to prevent or reduce impacts – saves lives and livelihoods, prevents suffering, protects development gains, and cuts costs. It can also lead to a more dignified, faster response. Research by FAO demonstrates that in some situations, for every USD 1 invested in anticipatory action, rural families can gain up to USD 7 in benefits and avoided agricultural losses<sup>11</sup>. Scaling up anticipatory approaches requires that humanitarians, local government, and other partners work together to establish pre-agreed action plans that can be activated rapidly when an early warning trigger-point is reached, supported by predictable, pre-arranged financing. Adaptive social protection is also an effective approach for building resilience for children and their families, by addressing child poverty in the context of climate shocks. Around the world, only one in four children aged 0-14 years receives a child or family benefit.

It is critical for early warnings to be linked to shock-responsive social protection and other emergency preparedness and response measures. These can help save lives and livelihoods, particularly when they empower people through participatory and inclusive decision-making.

At COP29, national and local governments can commit to developing forecast-based action, financing mechanisms and multi-year operational plans for emergency preparedness and response. Investments in Early Warning Systems must be accompanied by complementary finance enabling anticipatory action. Donors can commit to scaling up their contributions to anticipatory action and to provide sufficient, predictable, and flexible financing, particularly through unearmarked funding and contributions to existing humanitarian pooled funds that can most effectively take swift action.

#### **Practical steps that can be taken in relation to early warning and anticipatory action**

- National and local governments can commit to ensuring that actionable early warning information reaches communities in time for them to act on it. This means not only investing in forecasting, but also assessing and mitigating access barriers to early warning information especially of women and girls, and investments to ensure action in 'last mile' communities, including through

<sup>10</sup> High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the Secretary-General, *Too important to fail – addressing the humanitarian financing gap*, January 2016, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/%5BHLF%20Report%5D%20Too%20important%20to%20fail%E2%80%94addressing%20the%20humanitarian%20financing%20gap.pdf>, [accessed 11 December 2020].

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc7900en>



the inclusion of refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people in their Early Warning Systems.

- National and local governments can commit to developing policy frameworks that include anticipatory action as part of national disaster management systems.
- National and local governments can commit to developing forecast-based action and financing mechanisms and multi-year operational plans for emergency preparedness and response.
- Humanitarian actors, donors and other partners can commit to scaling-up collective anticipatory action to reach more people ahead of predictable shocks and stresses.
- Humanitarian actors can commit to integrating data-driven decision-making into all humanitarian action. This can include, for instance, integrating data on risk in humanitarian planning, coordination, and financing decisions, and ensuring all humanitarian data is sex- and age disaggregated.
- Investments in Early Warning Systems must be accompanied by complementary finance enabling anticipatory action. Donors can commit to scaling up their contributions to anticipatory action and to provide sufficient, predictable, and flexible financing, e.g., through unearmarked funding to agencies or existing humanitarian pooled funds that can most effectively take swift action.
- Humanitarian organizations can commit to working more closely together with local organizations, including women-led organizations, who are the first responders in crisis and crucial in ensuring assistance equitably reaches people in need, as well as with development and climate institutions to analyze long-term risk informed by climate science, seasonal climate outlooks, weather forecasts and other hydrometeorological services.