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Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

United Nations Human Rights

Re: Analytical Study on the Impacts of Climate Change on the Right to Health

Thank you for your invitation to stakeholders to contribute inputs to a detailed analytical study on the impacts of climate change on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

OraTaiao: The NZ Climate and Health Council wishes to offer the following publications and documents.

Climate and the right to health (questions 1 and 2 of the questionnaire)

Here are three publications in health and medical journals by some of our members on climate and the right to health in New Zealand Aotearoa.

Jones, R., Bennett, H., Keating, G., & Blaiklock, A. (2014). Climate Change and the Right to Health for Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, 16(1), 54–68.

<http://www.hhrjournal.org/2014/07/01/climate-change-and-the-right-to-health-for-maori-in-aotearoanew-zealand/>

Bennett, H., Jones, R., Keating, G., Woodward, A., Hales, S., & Metcalfe, S. (2014). Health and equity impacts of climate change in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and health gains from climate action [Special Article]. *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 127(1406), 16–31.

<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2014/vol-127-no-1406/6366>

Keating, G. (2015). COP21 SERIES: Tackling Climate Change is Great for Global Health. Health and Human Rights Journal.

<http://www.hhrjournal.org/2015/10/22/cop21-series-tackling-climate-change-is-great-for-global-health>

We have taken a particular focus on ethnic equity because that is a pre-existing profound challenge for the right to health in New Zealand. Consequently the New Zealand Medical Journal article, for a local medical audience, used the language of equity rather than the language of rights.

One group with substantially poorer health and poorer enjoyment of the opportunities necessary for good health is indigenous Māori. Another group is Pacific people. This second group is of particular concern because of the vulnerability of Pacific islands to sea level rise. Climate change threatens obliteration of Pacific countries. New Zealand has historical and territorial relationships with a number of south Pacific nations. Climate migration of Pacific peoples is most reasonably to neighbouring countries such as New Zealand because of these historical and other relationships.

This provokes a triple risk to the right to health for Pacific peoples

- inundation of their lands from sea level rise from climate change;
- potential migration into a country where the right to health of their ethnic community is already less respected;
- the anticipated climate-induced retrogression of the right to health of Pacific people (along with Māori and low income citizens) in New Zealand

National responses (question 3)

The submission of OraTaiao: The NZ Climate and Health Council to the New Zealand government's consultation on setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target identifies the gaps we see in the existing national responses.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/orataiao/pages/152/attachments/original/1442181887/MfE_INDC.pdf?1442181887

plus appendix

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/orataiao/pages/152/attachments/original/1442181912/Appendix_INDC.pdf?1442181912

We look forward to the results of your study on this urgent and severe question.

Yours sincerely

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About OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate & Health Council

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council comprises health professionals in Aotearoa/New Zealand concerned with:

- The negative impacts of climate change on health.
- The health gains that are possible through strong, health-centred climate action.
- Highlighting the impacts of climate change on those that already experience disadvantage or ill-health (equity impacts).
- Reducing the health sector's contribution to climate change.

We are part of a worldwide movement of health professional authorities urgently focusing on the health challenges of climate change and the health opportunities of climate action. The Council is a not-for-profit, politically non-partisan incorporated society.

<http://www.orataiao.org.nz/>