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Human Rights in the Paris Agreement

Abstract

The Paris Agreement contains the first mention of human rights in a climate change treaty. This article recounts the build-up of human rights advocacy since the Cancun Agreements. It then discusses the significance of the inclusion of a provision on human rights in the preamble to the Paris Agreement and explores other relevant provisions adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris in December 2015.

Keywords

Paris Agreement on climate change – human rights

1 Introduction

The preamble to the Paris Agreement includes an acknowledgement “that climate change is a common concern of humankind” and that “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights”.¹ The latter statement, in particular, has no equivalent in the UNFCCC or in the Kyoto Protocol. Its insertion in the Paris Agreement is, largely, the outcome of years of advocacy by civil-society organizations. Also adopted were provisions to promote gender equality, and participation, sustainable development, and poverty eradication as