

# Human Rights and Climate Change

## A joint Communiqué

### Between:

The Scottish Government, the Scottish Human Rights Commission,  
the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and BTCV Scotland

#### We agree that:

- Climate change poses an urgent and far-reaching threat to individuals and communities throughout Scotland and across the world. It is a problem requiring global cooperation and global as well as local solutions, and there are major implications for human rights.
- People must be at the centre of concerns about climate change. Nationally and internationally, the effects of climate change will be felt most acutely by people who are already in vulnerable situations because of factors such as geography, poverty, gender, age, minority status and disability. Those groups also tend to have a more limited capacity to adapt to changing situations.
- The impacts of climate change, and some of the measures needed to tackle it, will have direct and indirect implications for the effective enjoyment of human rights at home and abroad, including the right to life, the right to family life and home, the right to property, the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, the right to adequate food, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to water and sanitation, the right to adequate housing, the rights of internally displaced people and the right to seek asylum.
- All these human rights, along with the rights to information, participation and non-discrimination, are relevant to the development of climate change policies and strategies.
- National and international efforts to address climate change should be based on the principle of climate justice and the “polluter pays” principle.
- Scotland has both the commitment and the capacity to deliver local solutions and to contribute to the global effort by sharing its knowledge and its experience in finding solutions that encompass human rights as well as environmental concerns.

#### We agree to:

- Promote, support and implement the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, which reflects international best practice in setting mitigation targets by covering all the internationally recognised greenhouse gases and emissions from international aviation and shipping with a 2020 interim target of 42% emissions cut towards an ultimate goal of at least 80% emissions reductions by 2050.
- Help Scotland deliver its responsibilities for providing advice and information, and sharing its collective knowledge and expertise, as part of international assistance and cooperation in meeting the global challenge of climate change. An example of this is in relation to Scotland's significant potential for developing renewable energy and to transfer low carbon technologies and practice on preferential terms to the poorest countries.

- Support, encourage and facilitate active public and community engagement in climate change action and environmental volunteering.
- Pursue the development of a human rights based approach which emphasises participation, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment and legality in addressing climate change at the local, national and international level.
- Promote and support access to information, participation and access to justice in environmental decision making.

**To achieve this, the specific actions we (the 4 partners to this Communiqué) commit to undertake together are to:**

- Explore what a human rights based approach to tackling climate change looks like in a Scottish context
- Assess the extent to which Scottish policies and actions are already aligned to a human rights based approach and identify areas where this is scope for improvement
- Ensure public participation and engagement in contributing to the objectives of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act through awareness raising, knowledge transfer, peer mentorship and environmental volunteering
- Identify how an over-arching human rights based approach to climate change can be implemented in practical terms, taking account of the range of existing tools and assessments which are applied at policy level

*November 2009*

**For more information about the signatories visit their websites:**

Scottish Government: [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)  
 Scottish Human Rights Commission: [www.scottishhumanrights.com](http://www.scottishhumanrights.com)  
 Scottish Environment Protection Agency: [www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)  
 BTCV Scotland: [www.btcv.org/scotland](http://www.btcv.org/scotland)

**About this Communiqué**

This Communiqué is based on universal principles of human rights values and law, as established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural and Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters as well as the Scotland Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998.

The Communiqué was discussed by delegates from environmental, social, business and governmental organisations who participated in the Human Rights and Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow on 23 November 2009. In their workshop discussions, delegates considered how the principles of the Communiqué could be translated into practice in Scotland.

The conference, which was hosted by signatories to the communiqué (the Scottish Government, the Scottish Human Rights Commission, BTCV Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency), was attended by delegates from across Scotland.