

*As delivered*

**General Comment of the United States  
HRC 18 – Human Rights and Climate Change Resolution**

Thank you, Madame President.

We are sincerely thankful to the primary sponsors, Bangladesh and the Philippines, for their graciousness and flexibility in finding a way for the United States to be able to join consensus on this important matter.

The United States recognizes that all over the world people face serious risks because of climate change. No nation can escape the impacts of climate change – the security and stability of all nations and their people are at risk, especially the most vulnerable. As noted in Resolution 10/4, the effects of climate change have a range of direct and indirect implications for the effective enjoyment of human rights. And, as emphasized by the Conference of the Parties to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), countries should, in all climate change related actions, fully respect human rights. We remain firm in our conviction that discussion of climate change in the Human Rights Council must focus on ensuring that responses to climate change respect human rights. On that basis, we are very pleased to join consensus on this resolution.

We would like to note our concern about the resolution's selective quoting from the UNFCCC, to which the United States is a party. We understand the references to be acknowledgements by the Council that the FCCC contains the stated provisions, rather than endorsements by the Council itself of the content of such provisions. We also view the quotations from that Convention as a subset of relevant UNFCCC provisions, and it goes without saying that the effects of these quotations from the UNFCC and the concepts they describe are limited to the context of that carefully negotiated Convention.

While we acknowledge the desire for a seminar on impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights, we believe the seminar should not serve as an alternate negotiating forum to produce recommendations and specific text for the UNFCCC.

Fundamentally, we see a climate change-related role of this Council related to ensuring that countries respect their human rights obligations when they react to climate change. While, as the resolution reiterates, climate change is a global problem requiring a global solution, such a global solution is an issue for environmental bodies.

We interpret this resolution's reaffirmation of human rights instruments in the first preambular paragraph as applicable to the extent countries affirmed those instruments in the first place.

Regarding the preambular section's list of rights for the enjoyment of which climate change related impacts may have implications, we interpret the terms used to name economic, social and cultural rights as shorthand references to the more accurate and widely accepted terms, and we maintain our previously-stated positions on those rights. With respect to the same section, the phrase from the two Covenants should be interpreted in light of their context in the relevant covenants.

With all of these understandings and concerns noted, we recognize the importance of this issue. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the co-sponsors for their constructive approach and willingness to develop a text we can support. We look forward to constructively engaging with all delegations as we move forward to address climate change in a manner that strengthens the protection and promotion of human rights.

Thank you, Madame President.