

26 October 2021

Rt Hon Alok Sharma
COP26 President Designate
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall,
London
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CC: Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Dear President Delegate, Rt Hon Alok Sharma

How can COP26 address climate change and modern slavery?

The world is experiencing climate breakdown and an era where the provision of human rights and dignity is stalling. Something is broken and the status quo will not fix it.

This is the decade in which we must both collectively limit climate change and make our societies more equal and just. Otherwise, we will emerge from the global pandemic locked into a climate and poverty emergency in which already marginalised people become exploited through forced labour, child slavery and forced marriage, and human trafficking.

COP26 must deliver on the vision of a global, just and transformational recovery that integrates, defends and expands human rights; and reduces inequality by prioritizing the needs of the most affected, marginalised and discriminated people.

COP26 is also an important test of the Paris Agreement and an opportunity for governments of the world to raise their ambition in response to the climate crisis.

Our recommendations for COP26 are that governments should:

- Recognise the link between climate-induced migration and modern slavery and include it as an action in climate targets and create provision in the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for migration and modern slavery related responses.
- Include and track the progress of climate-induced migration/displacement and anti-slavery actions in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans through Adaptation Committees.
- Consider the need to address climate-induced risks of modern slavery in the Warsaw International Mechanism Task Force on Displacement (WIM TFD) recommendations to avert, minimise and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.
- Use the opportunity of a Just Transition to sustainable renewable energy to provide decent work for all workers in the renewable energy sector, and tackle instances where forced labour is used in mineral extraction and manufacture of solar panels and renewable energy supply chains.

Evidence shows that climate change impacts are already increasing vulnerability to modern slavery. While several overlapping socio-economic, political, cultural and institutional risks shape vulnerability, they are increasingly evidenced to be made worse by climate change impacts and environmental degradation.

Forced labour is also often found in climate destructive industries. In many parts of the world, development models based on resource extraction and export-oriented agribusiness are worsening vulnerability to exploitation and modern slavery by monopolising land and resources, polluting the soil, air and water, destroying ecosystems, and driving displacement.^{1 2}

In addition, low-income countries are exposed to some of the most severe climate impacts, and have the least capacity to adapt and find it hardest to recover from the loss and damage caused by devastating floods, droughts, heatwaves, cyclones, and rising sea levels.

In many cases these conditions lead to people being forced to migrate and leave the lands or the jobs that can no longer provide them with a living.³ In an increasing number of cases this makes them open to exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery.⁴ The [World Bank](#) predicts that as many as 143 million people will migrate within their own borders in just three regions of the world by 2050 unless action is taken to address climate change. 30.1 million weather-related displacements took place in 2020, including 9.8 million affecting children according to IDMC and UNICEF UK.

An integrated social, economic, and environmental response is needed that builds the resilience of vulnerable populations to climate impacts and modern slavery together.

Yours sincerely,

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¹ Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy makers. Anti-Slavery International and International Institute for Environment and Development (2021). Available at: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021_low_res.pdf

² From a Vicious to a Virtuous Circle: Addressing climate change, environmental destruction and contemporary slavery, Executive Summary. Anti-Slavery International (2021). Available at: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ASI_ViciousCycle_Report_ExecSummary2.pdf

³ Migrants and their vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Exploitation. International Organization for Migration (2019). Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migrants_and_their_vulnerability.pdf

⁴ Murky Waters: A qualitative assessment of modern slavery in the pacific region. Walk Free (2020). Available at: <https://www.walkfree.org/reports/murky-waters/>

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