

We are in a Climate Emergency

By Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim

I am an environmental activist, indigenous peoples' rights defender and Indigenous woman of the Mbororo people in Chad. For more than twenty years, I've worked to advance international recognition of the importance of indigenous peoples in the fight against climate change. It is very important to see how global governance can engage the national and local levels to lead in this fight. Let me start by sharing some examples from the local and community level that show how we can do it. First, we know that the Paris Agreement established the goal to limit global warming to a maximum of 2 degrees, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. Let me share an example from my indigenous community in the Sahel region. We have already experienced an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius. Imagine, if the world sees an increase of 2 degrees Celsius, for my peoples in the Sahel region it's going to be 3 or 4 degrees Celsius. Climate change is uniquely impacting island states and the most vulnerable around the world. That is why we are already engaged at the national and local level. We will continue to push for global leadership, but we can't afford to wait to take action.

It is critical for indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities to take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In my community and across the Sahel region, more than 70 percent of the people are farmers, pastoralists and fishermen. They depend on the rainfall. If there is not enough rainforest and fertile land, they cannot find the necessary pastures for their cattle or wealth land for agriculture. If there is not enough water in the rivers, they cannot catch fish. Climate change is changing the life and livelihoods of these communities. Action starts with local organizations at the community level who can help tackle climate impact and equally important is the national determined contribution. The Climate Policy Initiative said local organisations work very hard to see which specific term we can include to help communities to get recognised. One example – I work with my organisation to see how they can include a human-rights-based approach in work on climate change.

We cannot talk about climate change at the local level without putting human rights at the heart of the discussion because this is also about the right to healthcare, the right to water, the right to food and shelter, the right to land development, and the right to self-determination. So human rights are very important for us. It is also especially important for us to consider at the local level how we can stress and empower global leadership on gender equality. Women are more than half of the population. When we are talking about how the rural areas are impacted by climate change, we know that women are at the frontline of those who are most impacted they often, for example, have to walk to retrieve water. We have also to become innovators and build solutions from the local level to help create our national adaptation plans. Our action at the national and community level informs our advocacy at the international level.

How can we make sure the new technology and science of present day see eye to eye with the traditional knowledge of the indigenous peoples? The solutions we develop need to include indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge already recognized in the agreements. While it is true these agreements are established at the international level, we need to translate these agreements at the national level and help governments set up a dialogue between indigenous peoples, scientist,

government officials and other relevant stakeholders. This will help enable us to translate these agreements to include traditional knowledge in national policies and national plans for adaptation and respect our rights.

We need urgent action on adaptation and resilience to protect our communities from extreme weather events. Through all the different actions we are doing, I think we have a lot of lessons to learn about how we can contribute to and make the most of COP 26 in Glasgow.

We need to share and learn how we can increase the resilience and adaptation of communities at the local level. We also need to figure out how governments can collaborate with each of the civil society groups – local communities, indigenous peoples, women, youth and other stakeholders – to create inclusive national adaptation plans and how these plans will be fully financed. We have seen how the resources have been marshalled to fight Covid-19 and how governments are listening to the scientists. They must use the same lesson -for climate change - at the local level to see what resources they need for action at the local level.

The amount of the funds that the international community is going to commit in Glasgow to climate adaptation and mitigation will be critical to our fight for climate justice.

When we have all the human and financial and technical resources that are needed at the local level secured, we need fast action to secure our adaptation and resilience.

We are in a climate emergency.

People are already dying, and we need to make sure we are leaving no one behind.