

## From Background Noise to Alarm Bells: Towards Inclusive Climate Action

Date: 4th December 2020



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“We are facing intersectional crises. Our results must be multifaceted, holistic, and strengthen the interconnectedness of all of us who have a reciprocal relationship to mother earth”, spoke Ontario Regional Chief, RoseAnne Archibald on Friday 4 December, at the Chair of UN Studies virtual seminar entitled “From Background Noise to Alarm Bells: towards inclusive climate action”.

The event focused on contemporary challenges caused by climate change and the perspective of the UN’s lesser-known actors, such as indigenous communities, small island states, and youth actors. The panelists addressed the impact of climate change on small island states and highlighted the need for urgent climate action from individuals and governments. Together with the audience, the representatives and experts discussed their views and explored visions of a truly inclusive global climate action.

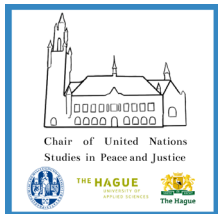
The event opened with an inspiring presentation by Ontario Regional Chief, RoseAnne Archibald, on the detrimental impact that climate change can have on the first-nations in Ontario, Canada, and the barriers on climate action. Climate action has a disproportionate impact on the first-nations, negatively affecting the practice of traditional knowledge and its know-how. A lack of respect for land rights and rights to natural resources exacerbates the vulnerabilities of indigenous people. Alongside climate change, this causes grave cultural losses for indigenous communities. Many cultural policies lack reference to the environment and similarly most environmental policies fail to address culture. This inability to establish an inclusive, holistic and interdependent approach forms a barrier to climate action. As first nations have known for decades, everything is connected. As RoseAnne Archibald emphasized, “we are facing intersectional crises, our solutions must be multifaceted, holistic, and strengthen the interconnectedness of all of us who have a reciprocal relationship to mother earth”.

This call for a holistic and interdependent approach to climate change was complemented by the vision of Miguel van der Velden, Caribbean Regional Coordinator at World’s Youth for Climate Justice. As a youth activist focused on climate change and indigenous rights, Miguel’s aim is to succeed in bringing climate change to the International Court of Justice. The pathway taken by World’s Youth for Climate Justice is climate action through intergenerational justice, incorporating the notion that justice runs through cultures and generations. The route towards inclusive climate justice for current and future generations requires working together with youth all around the world, connecting people through human stories, and combining top-down and bottom-up approaches to achieve climate action.

Just like Miguel and many other young individuals around the world, the government of Vanuatu, a small island state located in the South Pacific Ocean, has also been pushing to receive an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice. Member of Parliament of the Republic of Vanuatu, Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, provided insights on the political will to realize this International Court of Justice advisory opinion. The United Nations has ranked Vanuatu as the most disaster prone country. The costs of dealing with climate change are too high for the national budget, and the climate financing avenues are insufficient. Several major companies, as well as responsible governments, are contributing to the cause of climate change, but fail to provide financial aid for recovery, adaptation and mitigation measures. This causes a dire situation where Vanuatu contributes the least to global climate change, but is the prime country being affected by its financial, economic, and environmental consequences.

Right after that, the fourth panelist at the event, Molly Kellogg, Gender, who is a Peace and Security advisor at UNEP, presented her visions on a report published by the coalition of 4 UN agencies: UN Women, UNEP, UNDP, DPPA. The report, entitled “Gender, Climate and Security”, explores the different dimensions of security, and the impacts of climate change in these respective areas. Climate change hazards exacerbate drivers of insecurity and impacts the reliability of agriculture, causing potential conflicts and faltering livelihoods. Increasingly feminized communities have also led to women taking on roles traditionally dominated by men. Although the presence of women in informal governance structures is common, women are often underrepresented in formal structures. Bringing in women’s knowledge in both formal and informal governance structures is important since their inclusion would amplify their capacities into other areas to overcome structural inequalities.





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Youth & Policy development expert at the Global Challenges Foundation, Anja Olin-Pape was the last panelist at the event to present her views on inclusive climate action. She explained that youth representatives and activists across the globe, their grassroots actions and experiences should be brought in at local and international institutions and organizations. However, young people often lack access to networks and influential people. Access to those platforms and processes should be provided to youth affected by climate change by building structures where young people are involved in decision making processes and providing a platform for youth movements who are pushing for these topics.

After the panelists shared their visions, they addressed various in-depth questions submitted by the participating students on climate action, youth activism, and indigenous issues. The panelists highlighted the importance of youth participation and the need for youth movements to gain access to platforms and impact the outcome of negotiations. From a community level to a global level, people can be connected and inspired to participate in climate action through listening to the stories from people whose lives have been directly affected by the effects of climate change.

We would like to thank the panelists for taking the time to engage with young people and provide insights on these important issues.



**Top Left:** Molly Kellogg, Gender, Peace and Security advisor, UNEP; **Top Right:** Miguel van der Velden - Caribbean Regional Coordinator, World's Youth for Climate Justice; **Bottom Left:** Szilvia Csevár, The Chair of UN Studies in Peace and Justice; **Bottom Right:** Anja Olin-Pape Climate Governance Commission, Global Challenges Foundation