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Written by Amina Alayout

ACHRS Statement on the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly “A Planet Fit for the Future: Restoring Trust through Climate Action”

On 16 October 2026, the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS), represented by Amina Alayout, followed online the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly “A Planet Fit for the Future: Restoring Trust through Climate Action”. Held in the ECOSOC Chamber during the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York, the event was convened by the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Khalilur Rahman, ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31), to be held in Antalya, Türkiye, from 9 to 20 November 2026. It brought together the representatives of the COP30, COP31 and COP32 Presidencies (Brazil, Türkiye and Australia, and Ethiopia), Member States, the United Nations system, scientific bodies and civil society representatives.

The event took place in the shadow of the catastrophe that struck Nepal on 26 August 2026. A rock and ice collapse claimed 1,451 lives, and nearly 6,000 people remain unaccounted for. Speakers agreed that COP31 must be an “implementation COP” that turns existing commitments into action. Their calls converged on three demands. Finance must be predictable, accessible and grant-based, and must not deepen debt. The Fund for responding to Loss and Damage must be fully capitalised. Early warning systems must reach the “last mile”. Panelists stressed that a warning is only useful if people can act on it. In low- and middle-income countries, only half of those who receive a warning are able to act. Only around 1% of humanitarian financing goes to anticipatory action. In his closing remarks, the President of the General Assembly recalled that climate impacts are not felt equally, and that equity must shape how resources are mobilised and how success is measured.

ACHRS welcomes these messages. Several speakers framed the climate crisis as a matter of justice and human rights. They recalled the 2025 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change. ACHRS shares this view. Floods, heatwaves, drought and water scarcity directly threaten the rights to life, water, food, health and adequate housing. These impacts fall hardest on those already marginalised: women, children, persons with disabilities, older people, refugees, migrant workers and low-income households.

ACHRS notes, however, that the Arab region received limited attention during the discussions. Only a few Arab States took the floor, and the region was rarely addressed as a whole, even though it faces some of the most severe climate pressures in the world. The Mediterranean is warming about 20% faster than the global average. Water scarcity is acute: in Jordan, renewable water availability is around 100 cubic metres per person per year, far below the threshold of absolute scarcity. Tunisia reported that about a quarter of its coastline could be affected by sea-level rise by 2050. Extreme heat is a major hazard across the region, yet it was largely absent from a debate focused on glaciers and floods.

The discussion on early warning speaks directly to the Arab region. The 2023 floods in Derna, Libya, and the collapse of the Arbaat Dam in Sudan in August 2024, recalled by Sudan during the event, showed how quickly a

hazard becomes a catastrophe where infrastructure is weak and institutions are fragile. In the Arab region, the last mile includes refugees and internally displaced persons, migrant workers, rural communities and people living in conflict-affected areas. Warnings must reach them in a language they understand and through channels they trust. They must also be linked to the means to act, including shelters, evacuation plans and pre-arranged finance.

Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Ireland highlighted that climate change acts as a risk multiplier in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Yet these settings receive the smallest share of climate finance. This concern is central for the Arab region. ACHRS also echoes the call to ensure that no country is forced to choose between servicing its debt and protecting the lives of its people, a dilemma faced by many middle-income and heavily indebted Arab States.

ACHRS calls on the COP31 Presidencies and all Parties to:

- **Adopt a human rights-based approach.** Integrate human rights into all COP31 outcomes, including the global goal on adaptation and the just transition mechanism. Collect data disaggregated by gender, age and disability.
- **Deliver fair and accessible finance.** Ensure that adaptation and loss and damage finance is grant-based, does not create debt, and reaches vulnerable communities, including those affected by conflict and displacement. Access to concessional finance should reflect vulnerability, not income alone.
- **Make early warning truly multi-hazard.** Include extreme heat, drought and flash floods in early warning systems. Invest in national meteorological and hydrological services and strengthen cross-border sharing of hydrological data.
- **Ensure meaningful participation.** Guarantee the participation of civil society, youth, Indigenous Peoples and affected communities at COP31, and protect environmental and human rights defenders.

ACHRS calls on Arab Governments to:

- **Implement climate commitments through a human rights-based approach.** Ensure that national climate policies, nationally determined contributions and adaptation plans take into account the impact of climate change on vulnerable groups.
- **Build people-centred early warning systems.** Cover refugees, displaced persons, migrant workers and rural communities, and link warnings to anticipatory action plans and pre-arranged finance.
- **Protect workers from extreme heat.** Adopt and enforce labour standards that protect outdoor workers during heatwaves.
- **Speak with a stronger regional voice.** Coordinate Arab positions at COP31 and at the 2026 UN Water Conference in Abu Dhabi, so that the region's water and heat vulnerabilities are heard.

As the President of the General Assembly said, COP31 should be judged not by the promises it repeats, but by the people it protects. ACHRS believes that restoring trust requires putting human rights and the most vulnerable communities at the centre of climate action. ACHRS stands ready to work with governments, the United Nations and civil society across the Arab region to make COP31 a turning point for the right to life and the dignity of every person.