



REHA ORGANIZATION

POSITION PAPER

(POLICY BRIEF)



FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION

AFGHANISTAN'S URGENT CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION AT COP29



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FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION

AFGHANISTAN'S URGENT CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION AT COP29

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document serves as a position paper and policy brief to call upon **COP29**, the international community, and then on all stakeholders to take urgent action on climate change given the current context of Afghanistan. Through this position paper the **Resilience, Environment and Humanitarian Aid (REHA) Organization**, as an Afghan environmental NGO and as part of the Afghan civil society together with its partners as members of CANSA-Afghanistan and other organizations to call on world leaders gathered at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024 for urgent climate action for Afghanistan. This document includes the following information and action points to indicate the current context of Afghanistan including an overview and introduction to the climate vulnerability, membership in UNFCCC, representation in previous COPs, exclusion from COPs in the last three years, and its urgent call for action and depoliticization of climate change in case of Afghanistan.

AFGHANISTAN VULNERABILITY



Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable and least prepared countries to climate change in the world, despite contributing only about 0.08% to global greenhouse gas emissions. Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change is influenced by a combination of environmental, economic, and socio-political factors.

The country's unique geography, characterized by its mountainous terrain and arid climate, plays a significant role in its climate risks. Additionally, Afghanistan's heavy dependence on agriculture, and fragile infrastructure further exacerbate its susceptibility to climate change impacts.

The most critical vulnerabilities and Climate-Induced Disasters and Environmental Degradation include:



1- FLOODS



Afghanistan is increasingly experiencing both frequent and intense seasonal floods as well as prolonged droughts. The combination of these disasters results in significant damage to homes, infrastructure, and agricultural lands. For example, in August 2021, heavy rainfall led to severe flooding in Nangarhar, Logar, and Kunar provinces, displacing thousands and causing extensive infrastructure damage (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2021). In 2010, catastrophic flooding affected approximately 1.5 million people nationwide, leading to severe economic losses, particularly in the agricultural sector (World Bank, 2010).

More recently, in 2024, severe flooding in Baghlan and other Northern provinces displaced thousands and damaged critical infrastructure, complicating recovery efforts (Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority [ANDMA], 2024).

2- DROUGHTS



Conversely, Afghanistan's dependence on rain-fed agriculture makes it highly vulnerable to droughts. The severe droughts of 2018 and 2019 resulted in substantial losses of crops and livestock, displacing around 300,000 people, especially in provinces like Badghis, Herat, and Ghor (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2019). The drought not only devastated agricultural productivity but also threatened food security for millions, underscoring the urgent need for effective water management strategies (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2019).

3- WATER SCARCITY



The accelerated melting of glaciers in the Hindu Kush region poses a long-term threat to water security in Afghanistan. Research indicates that glaciers have been shrinking significantly, with estimates showing a reduction of up to 50% in some areas over the past few decades (Benn et al., 2019).

This glacial melt diminishes vital water resources and increases the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). For example, concerns over Shundar Lake in Badakhshan in 2010 highlighted the risk of a GLOF that could endanger downstream communities (Khan et al., 2012). The combination of glacial melt, droughts, and rising temperatures puts immense pressure on Afghanistan's limited water resources, with over 80% of Afghans experiencing some level of water stress, which adversely affects agricultural productivity and domestic water access (World Bank, 2021). Competition for water resources has also led to conflicts, particularly where rivers cross provincial boundaries, such as the Helmand and Arghandab rivers.

4- DEFORESTATION AND LAND DEGRADATION



Afghanistan is grappling with widespread deforestation and unsustainable land-use practices that contribute to soil erosion, desertification, and biodiversity loss.

The United Nations estimates approximately 3% of the country's forest cover is lost annually due to logging and agricultural expansion (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2020).

This degradation undermines agricultural productivity, threatening the livelihoods of communities reliant on forest resources.

5- HEALTH IMPACTS AND EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS



The health sector in Afghanistan is increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Rising temperatures and erratic precipitation patterns contribute to the spread of waterborne diseases, with cholera outbreaks reported in regions suffering from inadequate water supply (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021).

Afghanistan is also witnessing extreme weather events such as heatwaves and intense rainfall.

In the summer of 2021, temperatures exceeded 50°C (122°F) in some areas, affecting crops and exacerbating water scarcity (World Meteorological Organization [WMO], 2021).

Additionally, heavy rainfall during the winter of 2022 triggered landslides in mountainous regions, resulting in fatalities and infrastructure damage.

6- DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION



Climate-induced disasters are driving internal displacement in Afghanistan, contributing to social tensions and conflict in already fragile regions. The droughts of 2018 and 2019 displaced over 300,000 people from rural provinces, many of whom migrated to urban areas like Kabul and Herat in search of better living conditions (IOM, 2019). Flooding in 2020 further exacerbated this situation, displacing thousands and straining urban infrastructure, leading to increased competition for resources and services in host communities (OCHA, 2020).



United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change

INTRODUCTION TO UNFCCC

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in 1992 during the Earth Summit (also known as the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit or UN Conference on Environment and Development) and came into force on March 21, 1994. The UNFCCC is a global treaty aimed at addressing climate change and stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere to prevent dangerous interference with the climate system.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the decision-making body of the UNFCCC. The first COP (COP1) was held in 1995 in Berlin, Germany. Since then, the COP has convened annually to assess progress in dealing with climate change, review national commitments, and make decisions to further implement the UNFCCC's goals.

The COP meetings have evolved to include additional international agreements, like the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreement (2015), which have shaped global climate action frameworks. The COP meetings are held annually to assess global progress in addressing climate change and implementing the Convention's objectives.

1- AFGHANISTAN MEMBERSHIP IN UNFCCC AND COP MEETINGS

Afghanistan joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2002 and ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016, reaffirming its commitment to global climate goals.

Despite a fragile socio-political context, Afghanistan demonstrated proactive efforts in developing national climate strategies, adaptation plans, and resilience-building initiatives.

In addition, since 2002 membership, which is over two decades, Afghanistan has been an active member of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement (2015) that regularly attending COPs' meetings, representing its people and the nation and advocating for its rights and translation of pledges into actions that the developed world committed in this agreement.

However, in the last three years, Afghanistan has been excluded from representation and participation due to government change in 2021 and political agendas and interests, Afghanistan has not been invited and represented at COP26 (2021), COP27 (2022), and COP28 (2023).

2- EXCLUSION FROM UPCOMING COP29

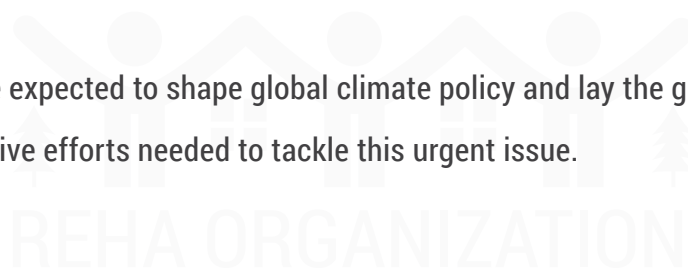
This will be the fourth consecutive year that Afghanistan has not been given the opportunity to attend COP29 that is happening in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024, gathering representatives from nearly 200 countries.

This year's conference will focus on enhancing global cooperation and implementing the commitments made in the Paris Agreement, while also addressing the urgent need for adaptation and resilience strategies.

Key themes for COP29 include:

- **Climate Finance:** Mobilizing financial resources to support developing nations in their climate initiatives.
- **Adaptation and Resilience:** Emphasizing the importance of adapting to climate impacts and building resilience in vulnerable communities.
- **Youth Engagement:** Amplifying the voices of younger generations, who are essential stakeholders in the climate movement.
- **Technology Transfer:** Facilitating the transfer of innovative technologies and practices to effectively combat climate change.

The outcomes of COP29 are expected to shape global climate policy and lay the groundwork for future actions, underscoring the collaborative efforts needed to tackle this urgent issue.



3- COST OF EXCLUSION FOR AFGHANISTAN

Exclusion from participation in COP meetings in the last four consecutive years, resulted in significant losses and missed opportunities, severely limiting Afghanistan's ability to address climate change effectively and impacting its development, resilience, and overall well-being.

Key losses include:



1- Limited Access to Funding: Afghanistan misses out on crucial financial support from international climate funds, which are essential for climate adaptation and mitigation projects.



2- Lack of Representation: Without a voice at the table, Afghanistan cannot advocate for its specific needs and priorities, leading to decisions that overlook its unique challenges.



3- Missed Networking Opportunities: COP meetings provide valuable opportunities for networking with other nations, NGOs, and stakeholders, facilitating partnerships, knowledge exchange, and collaboration on climate initiatives.



4- Reduced Technical Assistance: Exclusion limits access to the technical expertise and best practices shared during COP discussions, making it difficult to develop effective climate strategies.



5- Invisibility in Global Climate Discourse: Absence from these discussions renders Afghanistan's climate issues invisible on the global stage, diminishing awareness and support for its challenges.



6- Impact on National Policies: Participation in COP meetings influence national climate policies. Without this input, Afghanistan may struggle to align its policies with global climate goals and commitments.

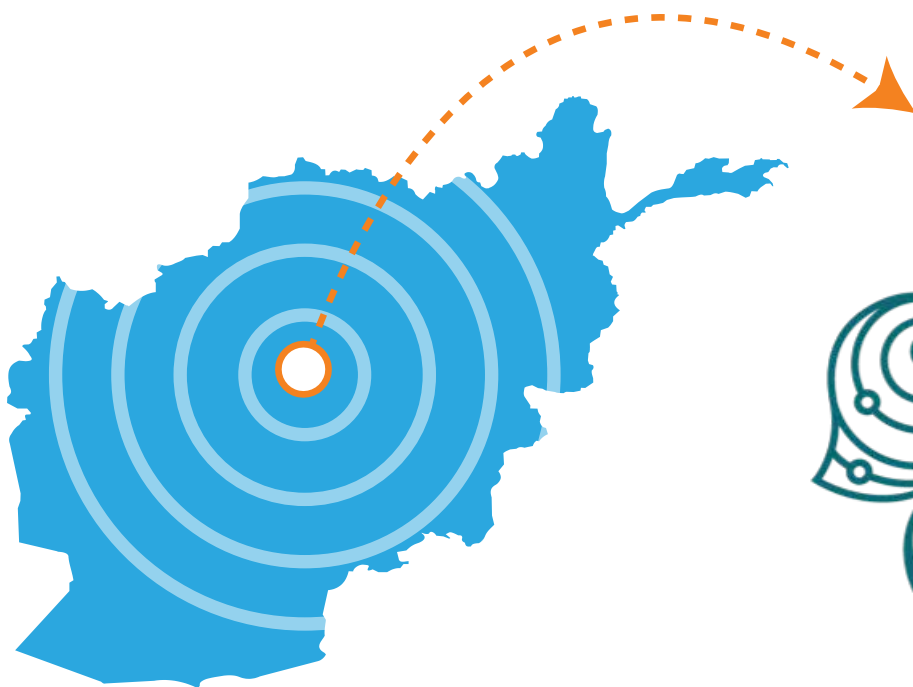


7- Increased Vulnerability: The inability to engage in global climate planning exacerbates Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate impacts, as it lacks the necessary resources and strategies for adaptation.



8- Loss of Credibility: Exclusion undermines Afghanistan's credibility in international forums, complicating its ability to advocate for its interests in other diplomatic and cooperative efforts.

REHA ORGANIZATION



FROM EXCLUSION TO INCLUSION: AFGHANISTAN'S URGENT CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION AT COP29

To address the significant missed opportunities stemming from Afghanistan's exclusion, the Resilience, Environment, and Humanitarian Aid (REHA) Organization, as a leading national advocacy NGO, has developed and launched this position paper in collaboration with its partners.

This document aims to amplify Afghanistan's voice, foster international dialogue, and advocate for essential climate action, while preventing further exclusion from critical international platforms such as COPs.

To achieve these objectives, we present the following
Critical Appeals and Crucial Calls to Action for COP29:

COP 29 Baku Azerbaijan





1- Ensure Participation: We urge world leaders to guarantee Afghanistan's participation in future COPs. The exclusion of Afghan representatives from international climate discussions silences the voices of vulnerable communities and undermines effective climate action.



2- Promote Inclusivity: We advocate for a transparent and inclusive framework that amplifies the voices of all vulnerable communities, particularly those facing dire conditions, ensuring that their needs are adequately addressed.



3- Empower Youth Voices: We call on international community and Afghan authorities for initiatives that elevate the voices of Afghan youth in climate dialogues. Engaging young people is essential for fostering innovative solutions and equipping future generations to tackle climate challenges.



4- Integrate Afghan Concerns: The international community must ensure that Afghanistan's climate issues are incorporated into global discussions. Visibility is crucial for garnering the support and resources needed to address the country's pressing climate challenges.



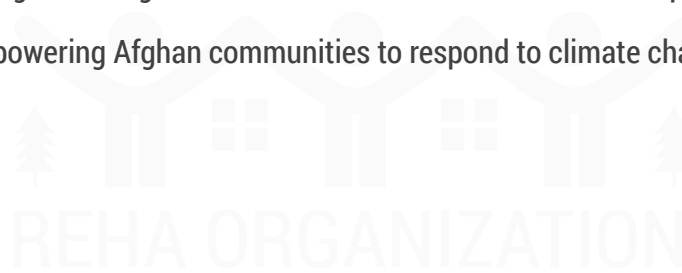
5- Mobilize Climate Finance: We urge developed nations to mobilize and deliver climate finance specifically for Afghanistan. Access to these funds is vital for implementing adaptation and mitigation projects that enhance resilience and support sustainable development.



6- Demand Impartial Climate Aid: We call for climate aid that is impartial, transparent, and focused on building resilience within Afghan communities. Given Afghanistan's heavy reliance on international aid, the politicization of assistance must be addressed to facilitate effective implementation.



7- Enhance Technical Support: We request increased technical support from international partners to facilitate knowledge exchange and the transfer of effective climate adaptation strategies. This support is crucial for empowering Afghan communities to respond to climate challenges effectively.





8- Recognize Unique Vulnerabilities: We demand that the international community acknowledge Afghanistan's unique vulnerabilities in global climate policies and prioritize its needs in adaptation plans. This should include tailored technical assistance and community-based approaches that leverage local knowledge to address the specific needs of vulnerable populations.



9- Align with Sustainable Development Goals: We call on the international community to align climate action with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the context of Afghanistan. Sustainable development is essential for building resilience and addressing the multifaceted impacts of climate change.



10- Unified Appeal from National Stakeholders: Over 700 representatives from universities, youth organizations, women's groups, media, provincial authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, and activists, gathered at REHA's advocacy events, have united in urging the international community to:

- o Revive and unlock Afghanistan's suspended climate initiatives, which are critical for addressing urgent climate challenges.
- o Build local resilience through tailored physical interventions and comprehensive approaches to resilience-building.
- o Increase access to technology, technical assistance, and financial resources to empower local communities in their climate adaptation efforts.
- o Depoliticize climate discussions and financing related to Afghanistan as it is a humanitarian issue rather than political, focusing on collaborative solutions that prioritize human welfare over geopolitical interests.



11. Women Voice: Women are among the most affected and vulnerable groups to the impacts of climate change. They are urgently calling on stakeholders, including COP29 leaders, to provide timely and appropriate financial and technical assistance to support Afghanistan in building community resilience.



12. Call from Religious Leaders: In a recent event involving over 50 Islamic scholars in Kabul, a collective call for action was made to address climate change from an Islamic perspective. They urged responsible parties, including international partners, to support Afghanistan in facing this climate calamity.





13. Facilitate Networking Platforms: We advocate for the establishment of platforms that connect Afghan civil society organizations with international stakeholders. These networks are vital for sharing best practices, fostering partnerships, and enhancing collaborative efforts on climate initiatives.



14. Effective National Climate Policies: We urge all national stakeholders, particularly government authorities, to develop and implement effective climate policies and initiatives that specifically address the needs of vulnerable communities. To achieve this, it is crucial to engage all stakeholders and partners to create a collaborative platform that fosters cooperation with international partners for collective action in tackling climate challenges in Afghanistan.



15. Collective Action at COP29: Finally, we urge all stakeholders at COP29 and the Afghan Authorities to unite in a concerted effort to address the climate crisis in Afghanistan. Collective action is necessary to ensure a sustainable and equitable future, especially for those most affected by climate change.

Through this position paper, the Resilience, Environment, and Humanitarian Aid (REHA) Organization, along with our partners in CANSA-Afghanistan and other civil society organizations, seeks to elevate these critical appeals and calls to action at COP29. Together, we can advocate for meaningful change and secure a brighter future for Afghanistan in the face of climate adversity.



KABUL 8 NOVEMBER 2023



HERAT 5 OCT 2023



KANDAHAR 18 OCTOBER 2023



BAMYAN 29 OCTOBER 2023



CANSA
AFGHANISTAN



"REHA THANKS UNDP FOR SUPPORTING
THE PUBLICATION OF THIS POSITION PAPER"



REHA ORGANIZATION

“LET’S
BE
RESILIENT”

