FWCC Oral Statement to be delivered at the 48th session of the Human Rights Council

Environmental justice, the climate crisis and people of African descent

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), in collaboration with Quaker organizations worldwide, thank the Working Group of Experts for this impressive Report. The Report demands an honesty in us all, in our communities and countries. An honesty in the relationship between racism, colonialism, and climate justice. No one is exempt, including Quakers.

Systemic racism exists in our political, social, and economic systems – which - as the Report states, are ‘heavily reliant on extraction, exploitation and accumulation through dispossession’. These systems perpetuate environmental injustice and drive human activities destroying nature and destabilizing the climate. The window to avoid catastrophic climate change is closing due to insufficient and often unjust climate action.

The COVID-19 experience highlights unsustainable and unjust systems that perpetrate human rights violations against communities facing vulnerable situations, including people of African descent. As we recover, we can place justice, equality, sustainability, and human rights at the core of our governance and economic systems. Environmental justice, grounded in human rights-based approaches, can result in more coherent, legitimate and sustainable climate policy.¹ Overcoming systemic racism and inequality is fundamental to healing the climate crisis.

We ask, “How can the High Commissioner’s agenda for transformative change strengthen future efforts as we all do the work needed for environmental justice that helps achieve racial justice?”