



Report on the REDESCA'S working visit to Brazil

Impacts of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul

Observations and recommendations for the guarantee of
economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights

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**IMPACTS OF THE FLOODS IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL:
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
GUARANTEE OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS**

REPORT ON THE REDESCA'S WORKING VISIT TO BRAZIL

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INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Preliminary considerations

1. The Office of the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (REDESCA or Special Rapporteur) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) carried out a working visit to Brazil between December 2 and 6, 2024. The mission, led by Special Rapporteur Javier Palummo Lantes, focused on assessing the impacts of the floods that occurred in April and May 2024 in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, one of the biggest socio-environmental tragedies in Brazil's recent history, which affected more than 2.3 million people.

2. During the visit, the REDESCA conducted a series of activities in Brasília, Porto Alegre and other particularly harmed regions, such as the Taquari Valley and the municipalities of Estrela, Lajeado and Eldorado do Sul. The delegation met with federal, state and municipal authorities, representatives of civil society, academia and directly affected communities. In addition to the meetings, the delegation visited places severely affected by the floods, documenting the impacts on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights (ESCER), as well as the challenges related to emergency response, mitigation, adaptation and reconstruction. The mission also sought to identify relevant initiatives and aspects that require greater attention, with a view to strengthening resilience and the protection of human rights in the face of climate change and its increasing impacts. The preliminary observations of the visit were published on December 13, 2024, in a press release.¹

3. Regarding the socio-economic aspects of the region visited, it is important to note that Rio Grande do Sul plays a significant role in Brazil's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2023, the state accounted for 5.9% of the national GDP.² Rio Grande do Sul's industrial sector accounts for 6.1% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) of Brazilian industry, according to the latest data available for 2021, with the fifth highest industrial GVA among the states.³ Among the main segments of the state's industry are civil construction, food production, public utility industrial services, the chemical industry and the manufacture of machinery and equipment.⁴ The state's economic growth in 2023 was mainly driven by agribusiness, consolidating Rio Grande do Sul as one of Brazil's main agricultural hubs.⁵

4. The capital of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, is located in the Guaíba basin region, which covers approximately 82,000 km² and is made up of nine sub-basins, whose waters converge into Lake Guaíba.⁶ This lake, in turn, flows into Lagoa dos Patos, which is connected to the Atlantic Ocean by a single channel.⁷ The hydrology of the region is influenced by various factors, including the flow of the Jacuí River delta, which plays an essential role in draining the waters into Lake Guaíba. In this context, differences in level between Lake Guaíba, Lagoa dos Patos and the Atlantic Ocean affect water flow. The direction and intensity of the winds can slow down the flow of water, contributing to rising river levels and increasing the risk of flooding. In addition, the sedimentation of water bodies reduces their flow capacity, increasing the

¹ REDESCA/CIDH, REDESCA apresenta observações preliminares sobre a visita de trabalho ao Brasil, Comunicado de imprensa RD318/24, December 13, 2024.

² Governo do Rio Grande do Sul, PIB gaúcho tem crescimento de 1.7% em 2023, March 26, 2024.

³ Atlas Econômico Rio Grande do Sul, VAB da Indústria. O RS apresenta o quinto maior VAB industrial entre as unidades da federação, November 2024.

⁴ Confederação Nacional da Indústria, Rio Grande do Sul, January 2025.

⁵ Governo do Rio Grande do Sul, PIB gaúcho tem crescimento de 1.7% em 2023, March 26, 2024.

⁶ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), Relatório Final - Porto Alegre, Brazil, August 2024.

⁷ O eco, Chuvvas no Rio Grande do Sul: o que as águas barrentas que tudo arrastam sinalizam?, May 20, 2024; Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), Relatório Final - Porto Alegre, Brazil, August 2024.

region's vulnerability to flooding.⁸ These conditions make Porto Alegre and surrounding areas particularly susceptible to extreme weather events.⁹

5. Between 2003 and 2021, Rio Grande do Sul recorded 4,230 occurrences of natural disasters, encompassing extreme or intense phenomena that caused significant damage.¹⁰ In the period from 2017 to 2021, approximately 4.44 million people in 482 of the 497 municipalities were affected by events such as droughts, floods and heavy rainfall. Over the course of 17 years (2003 to 2021) there were 256 floods, with 133 municipalities issuing decrees. These disasters resulted in economic losses estimated at R\$22.9 billion, 97.6% in the private sector and 2.3% in the public sector.¹¹ This data demonstrates the frequency and severity of natural disasters in the state and highlights the need to implement environmental resilience programs with an intersectional focus, to mitigate future impacts and protect the most vulnerable populations.

6. The floods in Rio Grande do Sul between April and May 2024 resulted in 183 deaths, more than 800 injured and 27 people missing. It is estimated that more than 2.3 million people were affected in some way by the impact of the floods, with more than 580,000 climate displaced persons during the tragedy,¹² of whom many have already returned, but others have lost their homes and communities permanently. This context led to the declaration of a state of public calamity by the state of Rio Grande do Sul.¹³ REDESCA deeply regrets the human losses caused by the floods and expresses its solidarity with the families and friends of the victims, some still missing.

7. REDESCA expresses its sincere gratitude to the Brazilian government for its openness and cooperation during this working visit. In particular, we highlight the support provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the Organization of American States (OAS). REDESCA also extends its appreciation to the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), the State Human Rights Council of Rio Grande do Sul (CEDH-RS), the Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU), the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF), and the Labor Public Prosecutor's Office (MPT), among other public bodies, as well as to the many individuals, civil society organizations, and local communities that actively participated by providing information, testimonies, and statements.

B. Objectives of the visit

8. The mission's main objective was to document the impacts of the floods that occurred between April and May 2024 in Rio Grande do Sul on ESCER, analyzing their effects on access to basic goods and services, with an emphasis on health, education, housing, the environment and livelihoods, especially for vulnerable groups. In assessing the impacts of the floods in the state, the mission also sought to understand the causes of this disaster and analyze the challenges in state response, prevention, mitigation, adaptation, planning and reconstruction.

9. Through this working visit and this report, REDESCA is issuing recommendations on repairing, mitigating and preventing the impacts of the disaster and is seeking to contribute to strengthening Brazil's capacities to respond effectively, sustainably and inclusively to the challenges generated by the climate crisis. In addition, REDESCA intends to promote a special follow-up mechanism with the Brazilian

⁸ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), already cited.

⁹ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), already cited.

¹⁰ Brasil, Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Estudo inédito detalha ocorrências de desastres naturais no RS entre 2003 e 2021, November 22, 2022.

¹¹ Brasil, Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, already cited.

¹² CBN, Refugiados da chuva em outros estados, gaúchos não sabem se ou quando vão voltar para o RS, May 25, 2024

¹³ Secretaria de Comunicação Social, Investimentos e dedicação: ações do Governo Federal asseguram a reconstrução do Rio Grande do Sul diante do desastre climático, September 11, 2024; Brasil, Enchentes de maio de 2024, January 2025.

State, aimed at monitoring and strengthening actions to protect ESCE rights in the face of the increasingly severe impacts of climate change.

C. Flood-affected regions covered by the visit

10. Between December 2 and 6, 2024, REDESCA visited different regions to talk to representatives of federal entities, international organizations, institutions and civil society about the impacts of the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul. The visit began in Brasília, the country's capital, where the Rapporteur's delegation stayed from December 2 to 3. In addition to meetings on the flood, the Special Rapporteurship took part in the launch of the "Parliamentary Observatory of the Universal Periodic Review".¹⁴

11. On December 4, work continued in the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, with meetings with government institutions, civil society and participation in the Rio Grande do Sul State Justice Forum. Afterwards, the delegation began visiting the communities affected by the floods, to directly verify the consequences of the climate disaster and the current situation of the guarantee of ESCER in Rio Grande do Sul.

12. The first region visited was the Taquari Valley, an area heavily harmed by the floods in 2024. This area has 36 municipalities¹⁵ and is located in the central part of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. In 2021, the latest data available, its population was 386,281 inhabitants.¹⁶ The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Taquari Valley reached R\$ 19.1 billion in 2021, corresponding to 3.28% of Rio Grande do Sul's GDP.¹⁷ With this result, the region ranked eighth out of the state's 28 regions.¹⁸ Agriculture and livestock farming has been an important part of the region's GDP, especially rice, soy and beef production.¹⁹

13. The first municipality visited by REDESCA on December 5 was Estrela, with an estimated population of 33,243.²⁰ The city was one of the worst affected by the flood of 2024, with 75% of its territory submerged according to the town hall.²¹ One of the purposes of the visit was to check on the situation in the Marmitt neighborhood, also known as Moinhos, whose houses were destroyed by the flood.²² Next, the residents of temporary shelters in Estrela were visited.

14. After the visit to the municipality of Estrela, also on December 5, the Special Rapporteurship headed to another municipality in the Taquari Valley, the city of Lajeado, with an estimated population of 96,651,²³ which has one of the highest GDPs in the state, ranking among the top 20 in 2021.²⁴ The team visited the Beira Rio neighborhood, where residents had their houses destroyed and are trying to return to their homes amid the rubble.

15. After, the REDESCA team met with community leaders from various municipalities in the Taquari Valley. The leaders are part of a group supported by the Movement of People Affected by Dams

¹⁴ Brasil. Câmara dos Deputados, Observatório da revisão periódica da ONU de direitos humanos, January 2025.

¹⁵ Rio Grande do Sul, Perfis Regionais 2015: Vale do Taquari. Porto Alegre: Secretaria de Planejamento, Mobilidade e Desenvolvimento Regional, 2015.

¹⁶ Rio Grande do Sul, Fundação de Economia e Estatística, Corede Vale do Taquari, 2021.

¹⁷ A Hora, Vale tem o oitavo maior PIB entre regiões do RS, December 22, 2023.

¹⁸ A Hora, already cited.

¹⁹ A Hora, already cited.

²⁰ Brasil, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE, Estrela, 2022.

²¹ BBC News Brasil, As imagens do antes e depois de uma das cidades mais atingidas pelas enchentes no RS, May 24, 2024.

²² Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos, Descaso e lentidão ainda marcam a resposta às enchentes no Vale do Taquari, December 6, 2024; Movimento dos atingidos por barragens, Após um ano da primeira enchente, moradores do Vale do Taquari ainda aguardam por moradia fixa, September 10, 2024

²³ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE, Lajeado, 2022.

²⁴ A Hora, already cited.

(Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens), which brings together around 500 families.²⁵ During the meeting, the delegation was able to listen to the people harmed by the flood and their demands.

16. Also on December 5, REDESCA visited the quilombola communities of Porto Alegre.²⁶ There the Special Rapporteur was able to see that among the traditional peoples and communities affected by the flooding are indigenous peoples, quilombolas, *terreiro* communities²⁷, peoples and communities of African descent, Roma people, artisanal fishers, among other groups.

17. The meeting with representatives of quilombola communities took place at Quilombo dos Machados, located in the Sarandi district,²⁸ in the northern part of the city of Porto Alegre, where the Special Rapporteur heard their demands. During the floods, Quilombo dos Machados played a fundamental role in supporting the other communities by developing activities to assist those in need. The main demand of the communities in Rio Grande do Sul is to speed up the land regularization process and recognize the ownership of their territories. Press reports state that in Brazil there are around 1900 processes for the regularization of quilombola land at the federal agency responsible, the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).²⁹ By 2024, the Federal Government had secured title to 31 territories.³⁰ In addition to the Union, states and municipalities can also regularize territories, for example, the states of Piauí, Ceará, Maranhão and Pará were responsible for titling quilombola territories in 2024.³¹

18. On December 6, in order to assess the impacts of the 2024 floods on indigenous communities and settled workers, the REDESCA team visited the municipality of Eldorado do Sul, a city located in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre,³² with an estimated population of 40,954 people,³³ and which stands out in the economy for its activities in tourism, real estate, rice cultivation, fruit and vegetables and livestock.³⁴

19. The first visit to Eldorado do Sul was to the Mbyá-Guarani people of Tekoha Pekuruty.³⁵ According to the Indigenous Missionary Council, before the flood of May 2024, the community suffered at least three floods in 2023 and no measures were adopted by the state to prevent recurrence and to support the community in the event of floods.³⁶ According to law suit (ação civil pública) filed by the DPU, in 2024, the community was made up of around 40 people, who lived in wooden houses and had a school equipped with resources from the state.³⁷ In April 2024, the rains flooded the region, forcing the community to take refuge in a shelter in Eldorado do Sul. Despite the fact that the houses and the school withstood the flood, they were destroyed on May 3, 2024, by the National Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DNIT), along with all the goods of the Mbyá-Guarani people of Tekoá Pekuruty, including handicrafts, tools and animals. The DNIT works changed the course of the stream, which prevented the indigenous people from returning to the area. As a result, the community had to move close to the highway, 1km from the original

²⁵ Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens – MAB, <https://mab.org.br/>

²⁶ Quilombolas are one of the Traditional Peoples and Communities, alongside 27 others, recognized by Brazil under the terms of ILO Convention 169, Brazil. Decreto nº 10.088 of November 5, 2019.

²⁷ *Terreiro communities*. "It refers to families that practice and are connected to Afro-Brazilian religions. These are people who formed a family around the father and/or mother of saints and share the space of the "terreiro," understood not only as a religious space but, above all, as a space for the reproduction of ancestral African values".

²⁸ PEREIRA, Patrícia Gonçalves Pereira, O Quilombo dos Machado e a Pedagogia da Ginga: deslocamentos em busca de vida, 2019.

²⁹ Observatório Terras Quilombolas, Como evoluíram os processos de titulação de Terras Quilombolas em 2024, December 2024.

³⁰ Brasil, Gov.br. Historic: 31 decrees in 2024 consolidate the regularization of quilombola territories in Brazil, record, 24 December 2024.

³¹ Observatório Terras Quilombolas, Como evoluíram os processos de titulação de Terras Quilombolas em 2024, December 2024.

³² Prefeitura de Eldorado do Sul, Dados do Município, January 29, 2025.

³³ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE, Eldorado do Sul, 2024.

³⁴ Prefeitura de Eldorado do Sul, already cited.

³⁵ Tekoha/Tekohá is a word from the Guarani language used by indigenous peoples to describe their territories and means the physical place where teko, the state of life, develops. TierraViva. Tekohá, el lugar donde somos naturaleza y espiritualidad, September 28, 2022.

³⁶ Conselho Indigenista Missionário, Relatório Violência Contra os Povos Indígenas no Brasil - Dados de 2023, 2024.

³⁷ DPU, Justiça determina a aquisição de área para aldeia indígena afetada pela enchente em Eldorado do Sul (RS), January 15, 2025.

site. In this context, the Federal Court issued a preliminary injunction, which is currently being enforced, for the acquisition of an area for the village, the construction of houses and schools.³⁸

20. During the visit to the Mbyá-Guarani people of Tekoha Pekurutyos, the indigenous people reported the consequences of living on the edge of the highway, such as the impact on their mental health due to the noise, the risk of being run over and violence. The main demand of the indigenous population was the demarcation of their lands. They also highlighted the need to combat racism, environmental recovery of their lands, access to education for children, health and drinking water. According to data from CIMI, in 2023 there were 80 indigenous lands in the state of Rio Grande do Sul with some kind of administrative pending issue.³⁹ Among the challenges to the demarcation of indigenous lands in Brazil is the “Temporal Framework” (“Marco Temporal”) thesis, which argues that indigenous peoples would only have the right to demarcation of lands that have been under their continuous possession since the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution. In September 2023, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) rejected the temporal framework thesis.⁴⁰ However, the debate persists, considering that the following month the National Congress approved Federal Law 14.701,⁴¹ that establishes the temporal framework, and is currently being challenged before the STF.

21. Finally, the REDESCA team met with the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) at the Porto Alegre Region Settled Workers' Cooperative (COOTAP) in Eldorado do Sul. The MST highlighted the Popular Land Reform as its main demand, with an emphasis on environmental protection and the promotion of agroecological production. It stressed that the expansion of the agricultural model in Brazil has affected agroecological production, especially due to the aerial spraying of pesticides.⁴²

22. The visits carried out by the Special Rapporteur allowed for an in-depth diagnosis of the impacts of the floods in the different affected regions, highlighting structural challenges and the need for integrated and sustainable responses. Direct contact with local communities and organizations made it possible to identify specific vulnerabilities, reinforcing the importance of public policies aimed at preventing and mitigating climate disasters and adapting and rebuilding the most harmed communities.

D. Meetings with civil society groups and the scientific community

23. In addition to direct contact with various local organizations, community leaders, artists and cultural rights defenders, REDESCA held meetings with civil society organizations in Brasília and Rio Grande do Sul.

24. In Brasília, the importance of placing human rights at the center of debates on climate change was highlighted, in particular in the Climate Plan.⁴³ The impact of floods on vulnerable populations was emphasized, with special attention to women, children and adolescents, indigenous people, quilombolas, recycling workers, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ and persons deprived of liberty.

25. The importance of the Indigenous Protocol for the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery of Risk and Disaster Situations was also mentioned,⁴⁴ which should guide the actions of the bodies

³⁸ DPU, already cited.

³⁹ Indigenous Missionary Council. *Report on Violence Against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil - Data for 2023*, 2024.

⁴⁰ Câmara dos Deputados, *Decisão do STF que derrubou marco temporal das terras indígenas gera repercussão na Câmara*, 21 de setembro de 2023.

⁴¹ Brasil, *Law no. 14.701, of October 20, 2023*.

⁴² 9ª Vara Federal de Porto Alegre, Caso de deriva de agrotóxicos nos assentamentos de Nova Santa Rita e Eldorado do Sul (Tutela Cautelar Antecedente n. 5006718-81.2021.4.04.7100, Ação Civil Pública n. 50676365120214047100 e Ação Indenizatória n. 50675464320214047100); Supremo Tribunal Federal, *Partidos contestam venda de agrotóxicos importados no RS sem aprovação nos países de origem*, August 18, 2021; Supremo Tribunal Federal. *ADI 6955*, January 30, 2025.

⁴³ Brasil, Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima, *Plano Clima*.

⁴⁴ Arayara, *Levante pela Terra lança protocolo indígena de prevenção, preparação, resposta e recuperação em situação de risco e desastre*, July 2, 2024.

responsible for preventing climate disasters. Concern was also expressed about legislative proposals that represent a step backwards in environmental protection standards. Finally, it was stated that Brazil's ratification of the Escazú Agreement could have minimized the impacts of the floods by strengthening environmental transparency, public participation and the protection of environmental defenders.

26. At the meeting in Porto Alegre, civil society representatives expressed particular concern about the socio-environmental impacts of economic activities in the state, such as titanium mining and thermoelectric power plants.⁴⁵ Another prominent issue was the situation of fishers and riverside dwellers, who are still facing the consequences of the flooding. The availability of species for the harvest, for example, was hampered by the high level of Lagoa dos Patos.⁴⁶ With regard to disaster response planning, the need to prioritize attention to the vulnerability of children, adolescents and women in shelters was emphasized, guaranteeing their rights to safety, privacy and health, as well as the implementation of effective protocols to assist victims of violence. The issue of religious racism and its impact on people of African descent was also raised, as they require public policies to preserve their culture and way of life, especially after the flood.⁴⁷ In addition, the need for visibility for the migrant population and climate displaced people, indigenous peoples and Roma people, quilombola and riverside communities, and LGBTQIA+ people were highlighted. They also mentioned the damage caused by misinformation during the floods,⁴⁸ the impact of the tragedy on the solidarity economy, concretely on handicrafts produced by women, and the consequences of the floods for the mental health of the population.⁴⁹

27. During the meeting with civil society in Brasília, REDESCA noted the concern of several organizations about the protection of waste pickers, who play a key role in tackling climate change, but still receive little recognition for this contribution. The same concern was highlighted in meetings with civil society in Rio Grande do Sul, where the impact of flooding on their activity was highlighted, resulting in the loss of recyclable materials, the interruption of their sources of income and the worsening of their conditions of vulnerability. They also highlighted the urgent need to increase support for the homeless population, which faces risks aggravated by the impacts of climate change.

28. At the meeting with civil society in Rio Grande do Sul, the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into the response to environmental disasters was once again highlighted. The women present emphasized how the floods impacted them unequally, especially affecting black women, who, in addition to facing material losses and economic difficulties, take on the responsibility of caring for their families in a context of crisis. This has reinforced the need for gender-sensitive public policies that guarantee specific support for women in situations of vulnerability, including access to housing, decent work, health and protection from violence in emergency and reconstruction scenarios. In addition, REDESCA noted with concern the issue raised by civil society about the increase in violence against women, children and adolescents in environmental disaster scenarios, highlighting the urgency of strengthening prevention, reception and effective response measures to guarantee the safety and dignity of these groups in crisis situations.

⁴⁵ Brazil de fato, [Retiro Project: extraction of titanium and other minerals threatens territories of life in São José do Norte \(RS\)](#), April 23, 2024; Globo.com, [Installation of the country's largest thermoelectric plant to be discussed in public hearings this week](#), July 2, 2024; BBC News Brasil, [The uncertain future of the city in Rio Grande do Sul powered by the world's most polluting fuel: 'We are not against the planet'](#), July 11, 2024.

⁴⁶ Empresa Brasil de Comunicações, [In Pelotas, fishers fear prolonged crisis in economic activity](#), May 28, 2025; Zero Hora, [Conditions for shrimp development in the Patos Lagoon become more favorable for the next harvest](#), November 21, 2024; A Hora do Sul, [Fishers face another start of scarce catches](#), October 17, 2024.

⁴⁷ Brazil, [Decree No. 10.088](#), of November 5, 2019; Zero Hora, [Flood in Rio Grande do Sul affected around 750 Afro-Brazilian religion terreiros: 'Material and spiritual losses'](#), July 2, 2024.

⁴⁸ Democracia Em Xequê, [Narratives and disinformation in the context of the climate crisis in Rio Grande do Sul #2](#), 2024.

⁴⁹ Zero Hora, [After the flood: survey reveals that 42% of gauchos interviewed have developed symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#), August 30, 2024.

29. The Special Rapporteur met with the scientific community in Porto Alegre, where researchers from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) developed a geographic information repository to support decision-making during the crisis. Economic issues in the state were also addressed, such as the consequences of farming, recurring climate disasters in the region and the disproportionate impacts on historically vulnerable populations, such as persons of African descent, quilombolas, indigenous people and women.

30. In this sense, the Special Rapporteurship highlights the importance of promoting a debate on the need for community protocols to respond to the effects of climate change, as well as regional monitoring of environmental risks based on the best scientific techniques. REDESCA hopes that these initiatives will be developed and strengthened with the commitment and support of the State. Technical and flood risk mitigation measures, including the adoption of best engineering practices, must be carried out and monitored inter-institutionally, especially by the Federal, State and Labor Public Prosecutors' Offices and by the Federal and State Public Defenders' Offices, with transparency and social participation, especially by the regional and national scientific community.

E. State authorities and sectors involved in the mission

31. During the visit, REDESCA met with representatives of the federal and state governments, international organizations, civil society organizations and community leaders. Among the state bodies, meetings were held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, the Civil Office of the Cabinet of the President of the Republic, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Integration and the Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family and Fight against Hunger, Public Defenders' Offices and Public Prosecutors' Offices.

32. At the meeting with the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship (MDHC), attended by Minister Macaé Evaristo and her team, REDESCA was informed about the initiatives led by the Ministry to protect the rights of children and adolescents, the older persons and persons with disabilities in areas at risk. In addition, the MDHC coordinated inter-federative efforts to draw up a specific form for shelters during the emergency, with a view to ensuring inclusion and adequate assistance for people with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ population, the older persons, homeless people, indigenous people, quilombolas and traditional peoples and communities.

33. At the meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Special Rapporteur received information about Brazil's commitment to fulfilling its obligations and standards related to climate change. Also discussed was the National Adaptation Plan,⁵⁰ structured on two fronts: mitigation and adaptation, each with specific sectoral plans. In addition, topics such as the just climate transition, the importance of social participation, transparency and monitoring, as well as an intersectional approach were addressed.

34. The meeting with the other ministries mentioned took place in the context of an inter-ministerial meeting on Monday, December 2. On that occasion, REDESCA learned that Rio Grande do Sul would receive a total of R\$98.7 billion, including extensions, advance payments and new funds from loans and transfers from the Federal Budget, of which R\$42.3 billion had already been released. REDESCA was also informed about the Brazilian state's efforts in areas such as housing and infrastructure to prevent further tragedies, as well as measures aimed at directly supporting the affected population. Among these initiatives, we highlight the payment of Reconstruction Aid, the authorization of additional installments of Unemployment Insurance, the anticipation of resources such as income tax refunds and social security

⁵⁰Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima, Plano Nacional de Adaptação, May 10, 2016.

benefits, the release of the FGTS Disaster Draw and the inclusion of more than 67,000 families in the Bolsa Família program, which resulted in the transfer of R\$ 47 million in new benefits.

35. The Ministry of Indigenous Peoples shared that, from the start of the floods, it had been observing how indigenous communities were treated, identifying whether they were demarcated territories and reported that all indigenous communities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul had been directly or indirectly affected. He pointed out that there had been reports of discrimination against indigenous people in shelters, for not respecting their way of life.

36. Also on Monday, December 2, the Labor Prosecution Service (MPT) received the Special Rapporteur to present their actions aimed at reducing labor impacts following the floods in Rio Grande do Sul. The meeting was attended by the Prosecutor General of Labor, José de Lima Ramos Pereira, and his team, who highlighted the institution's initiatives. During the meeting, initiatives adopted by both the Working Group (WG) "Climate Disaster in Rio Grande do Sul" and the Crisis Office created by the Attorney General's Office were discussed. To contain the effects of the rains in the state, the WG issued three recommendations aimed at the municipalities affected by the public calamity and at companies in the region.

37. In addition, the MPT pointed out that it has entered a partnership with the Fund for the Reconstitution of Damaged Assets, managed by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rio Grande do Sul, to allow for the swift reversal of amounts to victims of the floods in the state. In all, more than R\$70 million has been earmarked for funds and programs to help victims of the rains in Rio Grande do Sul and for the reconstruction of the state.

38. Also on December 2, REDESCA met with representatives of the United Nations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). There it was pointed out that the floods that devastated Rio Grande do Sul in April and May 2024 affected more than 2.3 million people, including more than 43,000 refugees and others in need of international protection who were in Rio Grande do Sul during the tragedy.⁵¹ In response to this crisis, the UNHCR and the IOM promoted efforts to support the affected populations. According to the information provided, Rio Grande do Sul had three reception centers run by the IOM in partnership with the state government and city halls: Centro Vida, in Porto Alegre, and the Recomeço and Esperança centers, in Canoas. Together, these centers have the capacity to care for up to 2,311 people.

39. REDESCA also met with the European Union delegation, which included the Head of the European Union in Brazil and representatives from Belgium, Spain, Norway, Poland, Hungary and Sweden. In the meeting they discussed relevant issues related to extreme weather events and flooding in Rio Grande do Sul and stated the relevance of promoting international cooperation to strengthen disaster response and resilience in the face of climate change.

40. REDESCA met with the DPU's Federal Public Defender, Leonardo Cardoso Magalhães, to discuss the initiatives developed by the DPU to protect human rights in the context of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul. Faced with the serious situation resulting from the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the DPU created the Caravan of Rights program in the Reconstruction of Rio Grande do Sul in collaboration with other institutions. The program aimed to guarantee access to rights, the promotion of human rights and free legal assistance for the affected population. 90 missions were carried out in 111 municipalities in the state, as well as virtual assistance for residents of 400 municipalities via the DPU Citizen app and WhatsApp.⁵² The institution reported that more than 52,000 administrative proceedings were opened, benefiting 32,640 families. The teams worked directly in shelters, helping to issue lost documents, register for emergency benefits, provide

⁵¹ UNHCR, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, January 2025.

⁵² DPU, DPU Technical Operational Manual. September 4, 2024; DPU, Monitoring of the Caravan of Rights program in the Reconstruction of Rio Grande do Sul, January 2025.

effective and speedy extrajudicial and administrative solutions, and actively search for people in vulnerable situations. 15,000 “Booklet[s] on Benefits for People Affected by the Floods in Rio Grande do Sul” were also distributed, strengthening access to information.

41. In addition, the DPU participated in coordinating with governments and city halls to make structural and administrative solutions feasible for municipalities in a state of calamity and filed “*ações civis públicas*” and other lawsuits to protect individuals and groups in situations of social vulnerability, such as indigenous people.

42. During the visit to Rio Grande do Sul, the Rapporteur and his team met with the Army Command, which provided REDESCA with information on the joint operation in response to the floods in the state, with state actors, civil society, international organizations and support from other countries. The meeting highlighted the need to adopt technical measures to mitigate the risk of flooding, such as improving the drainage system and cooperation between the federative entities and their agencies to ensure a faster and more efficient response to future climatic events.

43. At a meeting with representatives from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, REDESCA learned that the Rio Grande Plan had been created, and structured around three main axes: Emergency, Reconstruction and RS of the Future. This plan seeks disaster mitigation and climate resilience, with actions coordinated by the Reconstruction Secretariat. Biodiversity was also the focus of attention, especially in the Jacuí Delta, with preservation efforts conducted in partnership with IBAMA and ICMBio. In addition, the state said it is promoting popular consultations, including with indigenous and quilombola communities, through the plan's councils. The State also created the Scientific Committee on Climate Resilience, which guides public policies aimed at climate adaptation. The State of Rio Grande do Sul informed REDESCA about joint initiatives with other agencies to facilitate access to documents for the affected population, assistance to migrants, humanitarian support, and actions to address the state of calamity, including consumer protection. Reported measures included efforts focused on ethno-racial equality, and the rights of children, adolescents, youth, women, persons with disabilities, and sexual diversity, such as visits to shelters, psychosocial support for young people, coordinated actions to combat violence, support in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), production of accessible materials, dedicated shelters for the LGBTQIA+ population and for women (such as Casa Violeta, with capacity for up to 190 women and children), creation of a disaster response protocol with a gender perspective, training activities, rescue of Indigenous people and Indigenous women victims of sexual violence, as well as the mapping and daily support of Quilombola and Indigenous communities.⁵³

44. It is important to share that on the occasion of the visit, the Rapporteur also participated in the event at the Chamber of Deputies entitled Seminar of the Commission on Human Rights, Minorities and Racial Equality for the launch of the “Parliamentary Observatory of the Universal Periodic Review – 2024,” as well as at the Rio Grande do Sul Justice Forum at the award ceremony for the II Forum Justice for Human Rights Award, on December 4, 2024, which included a presentation by the Rapporteur on “Climate Justice and Human Rights.”

45. Finally, REDESCA emphasizes the relevance of having shared spaces for dialogue with representatives of the state, civil society, affected communities, international organizations, and the academic community throughout the mission. Visits to the impacted regions provided a more in-depth understanding of the challenges faced, while meetings with various stakeholders enabled the development of a comprehensive and participatory diagnosis. The exchange of information and perspectives was key to formulating recommendations that will strengthen the emergency response, sustainable recovery and

⁵³ Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Nota Técnica 003/2025, April 9, 2025; Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Nota Técnica sobre o relatório da visita técnica da REDESCA a Brasil, Responsável: Delegada de Polícia Viviane Nery Viegas, no date set, received in communication from the Brazilian State dated April 9, 2025; Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Secretaria de Justiça e Cidadania e Direitos Humanos, SJCDH Departamento de Política para a Mulher, DPM Relatório de Impacto das Enchentes no Rio Grande do Sul, no date set, received in communication from the Brazilian State dated April 9, 2025.

protection of DESCA in the context of climate change. The reports gathered during the visit were essential for the analysis carried out by REDESCA and supported the recommendations presented at the end of this document.

CHAPTER II

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY,
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND
THE FLOODS IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL**

II. CLIMATE EMERGENCY, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND THE FLOODS IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL

A. Increase in extreme events and their effects in the region

46. Latin America is one of the most vulnerable regions to the effects of climate emergencies due to its geographical location, diversity of ecosystems and socio-economic inequality, factors that increase the need to develop resilience to natural disasters.⁵⁴ The region faces a high incidence of extreme events, including floods, storms, droughts, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, many of which have been amplified by climate change. In Brazil, 1,161 natural disasters were recorded in 2023, of which 716 were associated with hydrological events, such as river overflows, and 445 of geological origin, such as landslides.⁵⁵ This number exceeds the records for 2022 and 2020, indicating an upward trend in the frequency of these events.⁵⁶

47. Floods have become more frequent and intense events due to global climate change. A warmer atmosphere tends to retain more moisture, which leads to heavier rainfall.⁵⁷ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates significant changes in the planet's regional climate characteristics as global warming progresses. Projections point to an increase in the average temperature in various land and ocean areas, as well as an increase in heat extremes in the most inhabited regions. Increases in the occurrence of heavy rainfall are also expected in various regions, as well as a greater likelihood of droughts and rainfall deficits in some areas. These effects vary according to the levels of warming, being more pronounced with an increase of 2°C or more to current levels.⁵⁸

48. In 2024, Brazil faced severe weather disasters, resulting in 251 deaths due to rainfall, making it the fourth deadliest year since 1991. In addition, almost one million people were left homeless or displaced, a figure lower only than in 2009.⁵⁹ Between August and September, Brazil recorded a high rate of forest fires, severely impacting various biomes, such as the Amazon, the Cerrado and the Pantanal.⁶⁰ As a result, the country experienced a significant increase in these events, and REDESCA pointed out that forest fires affected more than 18,758,025 hectares of land between January 1 and September 8, 2024, aggravating the risks to ecosystems and local communities.⁶¹

B. Floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024

49. The disaster that occurred in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 should not be considered as an isolated event, but rather as part of a series of environmental events that have been affecting this region and Brazil as a whole in recent years. These disasters highlight the urgent need to develop and implement effective prevention, mitigation and repair mechanisms.

⁵⁴ Lampis, A., Torres, P. H. C., Jacobi, P. R., & Leonel, A. L. The production of risks and disasters in Latin America in a context of climate emergency. The Social in Question, 23(48), 75-96, 2020; IMF, Climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean: challenges and opportunities, 2021.

⁵⁵ IMF, Climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean: challenges and opportunities, 2021.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, In 2023, Cemaden recorded the highest number of disaster occurrences in Brazil, August 2024.

⁵⁷ World Weather Attribution, When Risks Become Reality: Extreme Weather In 2024, December 27, 2024, p. 3.

⁵⁸ IPCC, IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, 2018.

⁵⁹ DW, Brazil had 251 deaths due to rains in 2024, January 1, 2025; Carta Capital, Brazil had 251 deaths due to rains in 2024, January 31, 2025.

⁶⁰ G1, August and September 2024 are the months with the most fire outbreaks in São Paulo since 1998, September 30, 2024.

⁶¹ REDESCA, REDESCA urges urgent action in the face of the environmental crisis in South America caused by forest fires, September 17, 2024.

50. The floods that hit Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 affected several regions of the state, each with distinct characteristics in terms of population density, cultural diversity and environmental importance.⁶² The central region, where the Taquari Valley is located, for example, was one of the most impacted, causing damage to the population in general, including traditional peoples and communities, such as indigenous peoples, quilombolas, Roma people, artisanal fishers, people and communities of “terreiro” and African origin, and also settled rural workers, as well as socio-economic damage to infrastructure, soils, agriculture, markets, agro-industry, cooperatives, services and environmental damage.⁶³

51. Many cities in Rio Grande do Sul have inhabited areas near rivers, without adequate infrastructure to contain floods, which increases human and material damage. According to data from the MapBiomass organization, almost two thirds (61%) of the municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul were affected, to a greater or lesser extent, by the extreme weather events of April and May 2024.⁶⁴

52. The environmental impacts of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 were devastating and go beyond the simple submergence of lowland areas. The floods resulted in soil erosion, landslides and sediment deposition in low-lying areas. The lack of vegetation cover and the removal of organic matter made the soil more susceptible to the formation of surface crusts and concentrated erosion, exacerbating the chances of damage in subsequent events. In addition, chemical substances such as pesticides and industrial waste have been dispersed, increasing the region's environmental vulnerability. These processes have contributed to the silting up of rivers and reservoirs, as well as the contamination of water resources, compromising water quality and affecting local biodiversity.⁶⁵

53. The heavy rains recorded in the region generated water flows loaded with sand and mud, resulting in the removal of trees and vegetation from the riverbanks. This process has led to the death of plants and a reduction in plant diversity, directly affecting riverside ecosystems. In addition, the animals that inhabit these areas, such as birds, amphibians and small mammals, have been impacted, suffering loss of habitat and scarcity of food sources.

54. The Special Rapporteur also emphasizes the importance of urgently addressing the underlying causes of these phenomena, adopting a multidisciplinary and integrated approach, based on the best available science and traditional wisdom, indigenous peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems. Recognizing and valuing these different knowledge systems is essential to developing more effective, sustainable and culturally appropriate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Furthermore, collaboration between the scientific community, community leaders and public managers can strengthen the formulation of policies that consider the territorial specificities and socio-environmental realities of the most vulnerable populations.

55. Although the vast majority of mass movements in the context of the floods that occurred between April and May 2024 took place in non-urbanized areas,⁶⁶ REDESCA recalls that the risk of landslides increases significantly with disorderly urbanization, characterized by the occupation of flood plains and steep slopes. Factors such as the deforestation of native vegetation for real estate purposes compromise the

⁶² EMATER/RS e Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, [Impacto das chuvas e cheias extremas no Rio Grande do Sul em maio de 2024](#), 2024.

⁶³ EMATER/RS e Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, [Impacto das chuvas e cheias extremas no Rio Grande do Sul em maio de 2024](#), 2024.

⁶⁴ MapBiomass, [Two-thirds of the municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul were affected by extreme events this year](#), June 10, 2024.

⁶⁵ EMATER/RS e Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, already cited, p. 23; Agrolink, [Impacts of floods in RS: the long journey of soil recovery](#), June 11, 2024.

⁶⁶ Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Nota Técnica 003/2025, 9 de abril de 2025. La nota cita UFRGS, [Nota Técnica do Instituto de Geociências aponta megadesastre por deslizamentos durante as cheias](#), 1 de noviembre de 2024.

absorption of water by the soil, exacerbating surface runoff.⁶⁷ The lack of adequate urban drainage infrastructure contributes to environmental degradation, exposing residents to risks such as landslides, erosion and flooding. In addition, the improper disposal of solid waste in urban areas can obstruct drainage systems, aggravating the risks of landslides and floods. Studies carried out in Rio Grande do Sul highlight that smaller municipalities face additional challenges due to social, economic and infrastructure conditions that increase the risks for their populations. Urban expansion in risk areas in Brazil has tripled in the last 38 years, increasing vulnerability to natural disasters. In addition, disorderly occupation and a lack of urban planning have contributed to the occurrence of climatic tragedies in the state.⁶⁸

56. During the May 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the region faced a combination of natural and anthropogenic factors that increased the risks of landslides. The intense and prolonged rainfall resulted in record floods, affecting everything from small rivers to Lagoa dos Patos, which drains more than 180,000 km², according to recent academic studies.⁶⁹

57. In the early hours of May 13, 2024, residents of Caxias do Sul, in Rio Grande do Sul, reported earth tremors that hit at least four neighborhoods: Madureira, Jardim América, Universitário and Pio X. The Fire Brigade received around 200 calls from frightened residents between 3am and 4am. According to a journalistic report, the Civil Defense stated that the tremors were caused by the natural settling of the ground, possibly exacerbated by the heavy rains that hit the region in the previous days.⁷⁰

58. The 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul caused significant damage to agriculture, affecting crops such as rice and soybeans.⁷¹ It is estimated that approximately 110,300 hectares of soybeans were impacted, resulting in losses of up to 2.71 million tons, which corresponds to around 12.2% of the state's production. The floods and torrents also impacted the rice sector: approximately 46,99 thousand hectares were completely lost, which corresponds to the production of around 395,200 tons of the cereal. In addition, more than 206,000 rural properties were harmed, with losses in production and infrastructure, and 34,519 families were left without access to drinking water.⁷²

59. The impacts of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul have revealed the structural inequalities and disproportionate effects that climatic disasters have on different groups in situations of vulnerability. These events not only highlight pre-existing inequalities, but also increase the barriers faced by people and communities who have historically suffered discrimination and social exclusion. These impacts highlight the need to analyze and respond to the particularities experienced by these groups, considering their specific social, cultural and economic conditions. The floods that hit Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 caused loss of life and

⁶⁷United Nations, Guidelines for Reducing Flood Losses, p. iv, 37 e 49; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk in Latin America and the Caribbean. From risk to resilience, strategic investments for a sustainable future, 2024, p. 41 y 51.

⁶⁸ Metrôpoles. Understand the relationship between heavy rains and earthquakes in Rio Grande do Sul, May 15, 2024; Agência Brasil, Disordered urban occupation may have aggravated the situation in RS, May 7, 2024; Revista Engenharias, Problems caused by inadequate rainwater drainage plans in urban areas, volume 27, issue 128, November 28, 2023. Unesp newspaper, Study analyzes September 2023 floods in RS to map vulnerability of municipalities to environmental disasters, August 6, 2024; Agência Pública. Urbanization in areas at risk of landslides has tripled in the last 38 years in Brazil, January 16, 2024.

⁶⁹ Collischonn, W., F. M. Fan, I. Possantti, F. Dornelles, R. Paiva, M. Sampaio, G. Michel, F. J. C. M. Filho, S. R. Moraes, F. F. N. Marcuzzo, R. D. L. Michel, T. L. C. Beskow, S. Beskow, E. Fernandes, L. Laipelt, A. Ruhoff, M. Kobiyama, G. L. Collares, F. Buffon, E. Duarte, S. Lima, F. S. C. Meirelles, D. Allasia, The exceptional hydrological disaster of April-May 2024 in southern Brazil, HydroShare, November 24, 2024.

⁷⁰ Cruzeiro do Sul newspaper, Floods in Rio Grande do Sul even cause an earthquake, May 13, 2024; GZH, Earthquake hits at least four neighborhoods in Caxias do Sul, May 13, 2024.

⁷¹ Globo.com, Tragedy in Rio Grande do Sul affects rice and soybean: understand the importance of the state in agribusiness production, May 9, 2024; O antagonista, Rain spreads gallons of toxic material through the streets of Canoas RS, June 3, 2024.

⁷² MapBiomias. Technical Note the May 2024 climate event on land cover and land use in Rio Grande do Sul, June 10, 2024. Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA), Impacto das chuvas no setor agropecuário do Rio Grande do Sul: revisão da produção do estado e nova estimativa para o PIB agropecuário brasileiro, Carta de Conjuntura, July 9, 2024; Secretaria da Agricultura, Pecuária, Produção Sustentável e Irrigação do Rio Grande do Sul, More than 206,000 rural properties were affected by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, February 6, 2024.

material destruction, and also exposed deep social inequalities, highlighting a scenario of environmental racism. Historically marginalized communities, such as Afro-descendants, quilombolas and indigenous people, were disproportionately affected, revealing the intersection between socio-environmental disasters and racial injustices.

60. REDESCA considers it essential to strengthen and deepen disaster management policies and strategies in Rio Grande do Sul, to guarantee increasingly effective and sustainable responses. The emergency actions adopted, which will be analyzed later in this report, demonstrate the state's commitment to facing the challenges posed by climate change. However, it is essential to improve long-term measures, such as sustainable soil management, environmental conservation and ecosystem restoration, in order to mitigate the effects of extreme events and strengthen the resilience of communities. In addition, continuous monitoring of geological and climatic conditions must be expanded and disseminated, ensuring greater capacity to prevent and adapt to future environmental crises. The current scenario reinforces the importance of an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, in which cooperation between different levels of government, civil society and the private sector is strengthened, guaranteeing not only an effective recovery, but also a sustainable development model that reduces vulnerabilities and promotes socio-environmental justice.

C. The challenges of environmental protection in the face of agribusiness and mining expansion

61. Environmental regulation is an essential tool for balancing economic development with the protection of human rights and the environment. However, during REDESCA's visit to Rio Grande do Sul, several affected communities, civil society organizations and experts from the scientific community expressed concerns about the weakening of environmental legislation in the state. In particular, the modification of 480 rules of the state Environmental Code in 2020 was highlighted, which, according to reports received, represented a step backwards in environmental protection.⁷³ While some Brazilian states have adopted more restrictive measures, such as the ban on aerial spraying of pesticides in Ceará, in Rio Grande do Sul recent legislation allows this practice provided that the relevant legal and regulatory standards are observed. The State affirms that “a supposed weakening of environmental legislation has no basis in practice” and that such changes aim at the “strengthening of mechanisms for environmental protection, the well-being of the population, the promotion of entrepreneurship, the appreciation of good practices adopted in environmental protection, and legal certainty, based on protectionism and the modernization of the environmental scope.”⁷⁴ However, this law has raised questions about its impacts on public health and environmental preservation. Despite the above, national environmental laws should set out the general parameters, coordinating and integrating actions across the country.⁷⁵ REDESCA reinforces the need for a broad and participatory debate on environmental regulation, considering the voices of the communities directly impacted and the scientific evidence available, to promote policies that reconcile environmental sustainability with the human rights of the population.

62. In December 2024, during REDESCA's visit to the country, the Legislative Assembly of the state of Rio Grande do Sul passed a law declaring agricultural aviation used to spray crops with pesticides “of relevant social and economic interest.”⁷⁶ This measure goes against the recommendations of international human rights systems. In 2019, when visiting Brazil, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights warned that there are disturbing and abundant reports on the health risks to agricultural

⁷³ Brasil de Fato, [Eduardo Leite cut or changed almost 500 points of the RS Environmental Code in 2019](#), August 24, 2024.

⁷⁴ Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Nota Técnica 003/2025, 9 de abril de 2025. Among the new measures, it mentioned “the inclusion of the Payment for Environmental Services (PES), a tool that encourages environmental protection by providing compensation to those who preserve private areas”. It also pointed out that “the Environmental Code now includes, for example, the protection of the Pampa Biome, which had not been covered by previous legal provisions.”

⁷⁵ Supremo Tribunal Federal, [STF upholds ban on aerial spraying of pesticides in Ceará](#), May 30, 2023

⁷⁶ Planeta arroz, [Assembly approves text regulating agricultural aviation in Rio Grande do Sul](#), December 4, 2024.

workers and communities, including children, as a result of aerial spraying, and recommended a ban on aerial spraying in the country, especially over inhabited areas, as well as the application of buffer zones and the installation of mandatory monitoring devices around schools and homes and on spraying vehicles.⁷⁷

63. In addition to these legislative and monitoring aspects, the data on the expansion of agribusiness in Rio Grande do Sul, presented by Mapbiomas, reveals a significant transformation in the use of the state's territory in recent decades. In less than 40 years, agriculture has increased its presence from 34.8% in 1985 to 47.22% in 2022, occupying 12.41% more of the state's territory for its activities. This expansion has resulted in the conversion of approximately 35,000 km² previously occupied by fields, wetlands and forests, which have been replaced mainly by plantations and pastures.⁷⁸

64. In the mining sector, the state of Rio Grande do Sul has 90% of the country's coal reserves.⁷⁹ Coal-fired power stations are one of the main generators of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the most important greenhouse gas,⁸⁰ contributing significantly to global warming.⁸¹ Data from 2022 shows that among the country's most energy inefficient plants are the Candiota III and Pampa Sul plants, located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in the municipality of Candiota.⁸² In addition to these plants, Brazil also has coal-fired power stations in other states such as Paraná, Santa Catarina, Ceará and Maranhão.⁸³ REDESCA acknowledges as a positive advancement the decision made by the Brazilian state in January 2025 to veto the provision of incentives for the production of energy from natural gas and coal, as well as the extension of contracts for coal-fired power plants. This measure represents a significant step in the transition to more sustainable energy sources and in mitigating the environmental impacts associated with carbon emissions.⁸⁴

65. In light of the challenges identified regarding environmental regulation, the expansion of agribusiness and mining, and recent legislative changes in Rio Grande do Sul, REDESCA emphasizes the importance of strengthening regulatory frameworks and environmental inspection mechanisms, ensuring that economic development takes place in a sustainable manner and in line with the protection of human rights. The active participation of civil society impacted communities, and the scientific community is essential for building public policies that ensure environmental justice and climate resilience. REDESCA also stresses that advances such as the recent decision by the Brazilian state to veto incentives for fossil energy production must be accompanied by complementary measures that promote a just energy transition and the protection of ecosystems, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

⁷⁷ United Nations, Informe del Relator Especial sobre las implicaciones para los derechos humanos de la gestión y eliminación ambientalmente racionales de las sustancias y los desechos peligrosos, Human Rights Council, 45th session, A/HRC/45/12/Add.2, 2020.

⁷⁸ MapBiomas Brasil (2023), Agricultural land in Brazil has grown by 50% in the last 38 years, August 24, 2024.

⁷⁹ Sul21, Study shows the socio-environmental and economic impacts of coal mining in Candiota, December 15, 2024.

⁸⁰ BBC News Brasil, The uncertain future of the Rio Grande do Sul city powered by the world's most polluting fuel: 'We are not against the planet', July 11, 2024.

⁸¹ Instituto Humanitas UNISINOS, Impactos ambientais e sociais das termelétricas a carvão, July 30, 2024.

⁸² Energy and Environment Institute, Inventory of Atmospheric Emissions from Thermal Power Plants: electricity generation, emissions and list of companies that own fossil fuel and public service thermoelectric plants in the National Interconnected System (base year 2020), June 2022.

⁸³ BBC News Brasil, The uncertain future of the Rio Grande do Sul city powered by the world's most polluting fuel: 'We are not against the planet', July 11, 2024.

⁸⁴ Agência Brasil, Lula signs law on exploiting electricity at sea, January 11, 2025.

CHAPTER III

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

III. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

66. The chronology of the May 2024 flood in Rio Grande do Sul highlights the recurrence of extreme weather events, reinforcing the need for more effective preventive measures to minimize their impacts. Months before the great flood, in September 2023, the state had already faced devastating floods that resulted in deaths and significant damage, leading to a State of Calamity or Emergency being declared in several municipalities.⁸⁵ In April 2024, the Civil Defense of Rio Grande do Sul issued the first warnings about the risk of flooding due to the forecast of storms.⁸⁶ At the beginning of May, several river basins in the state were classified as being at risk of severe flooding.⁸⁷ Also in May 2024, Porto Alegre's flood protection system failed, resulting in the flooding of part of the city. It is worth highlighting that only Porto Alegre has a specific flood control and retention system, made up of dikes, sluice gates and pumping systems, whose effectiveness was compromised by the magnitude of the extreme event in 2024.⁸⁸

67. During the April and May 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, significant deficiencies were identified in the flood monitoring and forecasting system. Experts pointed out that not all rivers in the state were adequately monitored, which may have delayed evacuation and emergency response actions. In addition, although warnings about heavy rainfall have been issued since March by MetSul Meteorologia, the effectiveness of these warnings in mitigating impacts has been limited.⁸⁹

68. In Porto Alegre, the flood protection system, made up of dikes, floodgates and pumping stations, showed critical failures during the floods. Experts attributed these failures to a lack of proper maintenance, pointing out that components such as bolts, rubbers and rails were deteriorating. Furthermore, there was a backflow of water through the pumping stations' galleries, contributing to flooding in areas such as the city's historic center. Lack of maintenance and possible design flaws prevented the flood containment system from effectively protecting the city.⁹⁰

69. Considering these shortcomings, it is essential and urgent that technical mitigation measures are adopted. This includes the modernization and ongoing maintenance of hydrological monitoring and flood forecasting systems, ensuring the efficient feeding of data into mathematical models. In addition, it is crucial to review and improve Porto Alegre's flood protection system, ensuring the proper sizing of pumping, the efficiency of floodgates, the availability of emergency power sources, such as generators, and the integrity of dikes, especially in areas of informal settlements.

70. REDESCA emphasizes the need for these measures to be implemented with transparency and broad social participation. Involving the regional and national scientific community, as well as the affected communities, is key to developing effective, sustainable solutions that are appropriate to the local context. A comprehensive flood response plan should be drawn up, covering both preventive actions and

⁸⁵ Brasil, Estado do Rio Grande do Sul. Enchentes de setembro de 2023, janeiro de 2025; Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), Relatório Final - Porto Alegre, Brazil. August 2024.

⁸⁶ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), already cited.

⁸⁷ They are: Quaraí; Ibicuí; Vacacaí-Vacacaí Mirim; Alto and Baixo Jacuí; Ijuí; Piratini; Butuí-Icamaquã; Pardo; Passo Fundo; Várzea; Turvo-Santa Rosa-Santo Cristo; Tramandaí; Mirim-São Gonçalo; Taquari-Antas; Caí; Sinos; Gravataí; Guaíba (Islands, Quay and Waterfront); Camaquã; Mirim-São Gonçalo (elevation of the Laguna dos Patos with damming by south and southeast winds). Globo.com. Storms in RS leave 32 dead, affect rivers throughout the state and could cause record flooding in Guaíba, May 3, 2024.

⁸⁸ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), already cited.

⁸⁹ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), already cited; Folha de S. Paulo, Tragedy shows lack of data on rainfall and operational failures in RS, experts point out, May 17, 2024; Agência Pública. Warning system on tragedy in Rio Grande do Sul failed, experts say, May 6, 2024.

⁹⁰ Programa do Governo Holandês de Redução de Risco de Desastres e Suporte a Surtos (DRRS), already cited; UOL News. Lack of maintenance jeopardizes flood protection system in RS, May 4, 2024; Diário Gaúcho, Study indicates that seven types of failure in the protection system aggravated flooding in the Metropolitan Region, December 12, 2024; Pesquisa FAPESP magazine, Lack of maintenance and design flaws prevented the flood containment system from protecting Porto Alegre, July 2024; Marengo, J. A., Dolif, G., Cuartas, A., Camarinha, P., Gonçalves, D., Luiz, R., Silva, L., Alvalá, R. C. S., Seluchil, M. E., Moraes, O. L., Soares, W. R., & Nobre, C. A. (2024); Brazil's biggest climate disaster: Rains and floods in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in April-May 2024, Estudos Avançados, 38(112), 203-228.

response and recovery strategies, with a view to preventing future climate disasters and protecting vulnerable populations.

71. Despite the irreparable losses and suffering caused by the May 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, REDESCA recognizes the positive results of the prompt intervention of the Brazilian state which played a crucial role in the rescue efforts, including emergency evacuations and the distribution of essential supplies such as food and drinking water. These actions saved lives and significantly mitigated the immediate risks faced by the most vulnerable populations. Noteworthy was the rapid mobilization of financial and logistical resources, for example with the release by the federal government of R\$525.71 million for social assistance, infrastructure and transportation in the state, as well as the expansion of social programs to meet the emergency needs of affected communities.⁹¹

72. REDESCA values the efforts of the Brazilian state in response to the climate tragedy, especially with the creation of the Extraordinary Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic to Support the Reconstruction of Rio Grande do Sul, with ministry status, and the Secretariat for Reconstruction of Rio Grande do Sul and the presentation of the results of the state's investment in September 2024. According to official sources, the federal government has made R\$97.8 billion available to the state, of which R\$44.7 billion has been committed and R\$40.2 billion has already been executed in transfers and investments, as well as advances of extraordinary resources to Rio Grande do Sul.⁹²

73. According to the information gathered during the visit, the actions implemented involved coordination between government authorities, the armed forces, civil society organizations and international agencies, which enabled an immediate and effective response to mitigate the impacts of the disaster and meet the urgent needs of the affected communities.

74. During the meeting between the Civil Office of the Cabinet of the President of the Republic and REDESCA, the measures adopted by Brazil in response to the May 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul were detailed. The state set up a crisis cabinet to coordinate emergency actions, mobilizing Civil Defense, linked to the Ministry of Integration and Regional Development, and other key players, such as ministries, institutions and the Fire Brigade. Civil Defense took over coordination in several municipalities, ensuring an agile response from the federative entities.

75. Following the declaration of a state of public calamity in Rio Grande do Sul in May 2024, the state implemented a structured system to manage requests for assistance from the affected municipalities, meeting essential demands such as rescues, medical assistance and reconstruction.⁹³ Federal and state funds were immediately made available to meet urgent needs, including food, medicine and temporary housing. Priorities varied depending on the region: in some areas, the focus was on restoring infrastructure, such as bridges and roads; in others, attention was concentrated on caring for victims, covering housing and health. In addition, basic services such as water supply, electricity and transportation were restored by repairing critical infrastructure. Support was also provided for the reactivation of agricultural production, benefiting farmers who had lost their crops. To ensure transparency in the use of resources, the state launched a system to monitor the transfers made to Rio Grande do Sul, making it possible to monitor the actions and amounts invested in the recovery of the affected areas.

76. According to the information provided in the context of the visit, Operation Taquari 2, conducted by the Brazilian Armed Forces in conjunction with federal entities, civil society organizations and local communities, has achieved significant results in supporting the regions affected by the floods in Rio

⁹¹ Senado Notícias, [Governo libera mais R\\$ 525 milhões para assistência e infraestrutura no RS](#), December 30, 2024; IDB, ECLAC, et al, [Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul](#), 2024.

⁹² Secretaria de Comunicação Social, [Investimentos e dedicação: ações do Governo Federal asseguram a reconstrução do Rio Grande do Sul diante do desastre climático](#), September 11, 2024.

⁹³ Brasil, Senado Federal, [Legislative Decree No. 234 of 2021](#).

Grande do Sul. By June 2024, approximately 71,000 people and 10,500 animals had been rescued. In addition, the Armed Forces provided almost 61,000 medical services, while 30,000 people received social support, demonstrating a significant impact on the lives of the affected communities. The My House My Life program (Minha Casa Minha Vida) was expanded to assist families who had lost their homes, making it possible to build new homes and offering subsidies and financing to rebuild their lives.⁹⁴

77. According to the information gathered during the visit, in order to guarantee the continuity of education in the affected areas, resources were allocated for the construction of temporary classrooms and the distribution of school materials. A special focus was given to rural communities, where 158 schools received infrastructure improvements and maintenance actions, allowing for the gradual resumption of school activities.

78. Still regarding the efforts to mitigate the damage caused by the tragedy, according to information from the IOM and UNHCR gathered at the meeting, at the beginning, shelters had to be set up to meet the demand, with more than 250 reception points, including bars, schools and other spaces. The main objective was to strengthen response capacities. The United Nations agencies organized themselves to qualify the existing shelters, working together with the Ministries. Training was also provided on shelter management and the protection of people, as well as seminars for the municipalities affected. Despite these efforts, around 300 people still remain in shelters.⁹⁵

79. According to data from a study published in November 2024, prepared in partnership between international financial institutions and United Nations agencies, the Brazilian state's actions in Rio Grande do Sul, in response to the floods that occurred between April and May 2024, prevented a negative impact of 1.1 percentage points on the state's GDP. Among the measures that contributed to this result were the transfer of funds to affected families and companies, as well as the speedy implementation of recovery work.⁹⁶

80. REDESCA recognizes the efforts made by the Brazilian state in response to the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, highlighting the rapid mobilization of financial and logistical resources, as well as the expansion of social programs to assist affected populations. The emergency response relied on coordination between different levels of government, the armed forces, civil society and international organizations, enabling effective rescue, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction actions. The role of the armed forces was essential in evacuating people in risk areas, distributing supplies and ensuring immediate support for the most vulnerable communities. These efforts demonstrate the Brazilian state's commitment to mitigating the impacts of the tragedy and reinforce the importance of continually improving strategies for preventing and responding to climate disasters.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Senado Notícias, [Government releases another R\\$525 million for assistance and infrastructure in RS](#), December 30, 2024; IDB, ECLAC, et al, [Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul](#), 2024.

⁹⁵ UNHCR, [Rio Grande do Sul](#), Brazil, 2024.

⁹⁶ IDB, ECLAC, et al, [Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul](#), 2024.

⁹⁷ REDESCA, [REDESCA presents preliminary observations on the working visit to Brazil](#), December 13, 2024.

CHAPTER IV

**IMPACTS ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL,
CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS
IN THE FACE OF FLOODS**

IV. IMPACTS ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IN THE FACE OF FLOODS

A. The Floods of 2024 and commitments to human rights and the environment

81. The 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul represented one of the most severe environmental disasters in Brazil's recent history, with widespread impacts on ESCER. These extreme events not only caused the destruction of critical infrastructure and the forced displacement of thousands of people but also compromised access to human rights such as housing, health, education, food, drinking water and decent work. The social and structural vulnerability of the most affected population, combined with challenges in implementing prevention and response measures, has the potential to deepen pre-existing inequalities, highlighting the need for robust adaptation and mitigation strategies in the face of the climate crisis.

82. The relationship between environmental disasters and the guarantee of human rights has been widely recognized. The intensification of extreme weather events reinforces the urgency of integrating public policies to deal with climate emergencies with a human rights approach, ensuring that the state response is effective, equitable and sustainable.

83. Brazil is a signatory to several international environmental agreements and treaties, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which implies express commitments to environmental protection and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Domestically, Article 225 of the Federal Constitution of 1988 establishes that “everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment”, assigning the public authorities and the community the duty to defend and preserve it for present and future generations.

84. The legal instruments of the inter-American system include the American Declaration, the OAS Charter, the American Convention and the Protocol of San Salvador, which recognizes and strengthens the protection of the DESCAs. Brazil is a state party to these treaties and is therefore obliged to guarantee the realization of the rights enshrined in them. These instruments state that everyone has the right to a dignified life, which implies the full protection of human rights in all their dimensions, from civil and political rights to social, economic, cultural and environmental rights.

85. In line with international environmental protection instruments and the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Law 12.187/2009 instituted the National Policy on Climate Change (PNMC),⁹⁸ establishing guidelines for mitigating the impacts of climate change and adapting to its adverse effects. It imposes a duty on everyone, including public authorities, the private sector and civil society, to act for the benefit of present and future generations to reduce anthropogenic interference in the climate system. The PNMC also assigns the Union, States and Municipalities the responsibility of implementing measures aimed at climate adaptation, ensuring the participation and collaboration of the economic and social agents concerned or directly impacted, especially those in vulnerable situations. Among its main instruments, the law provides for the National Plan on Climate Change, the latest version of which was developed in 2008.⁹⁹

86. Currently, according to information from the Brazilian state, the plan is being updated, with a robust component focused on adaptation, including specific strategies aimed at reducing vulnerability in urban and rural areas, and strengthening local institutional capacities¹⁰⁰ and its new version will be presented in 2025, serving as a guide for national climate policy until 2035.¹⁰¹ Updating this plan is essential to align national strategies with the international commitments made by Brazil, such as the Paris Agreement,

⁹⁸ Brasil. Law n. 12.187, of December 29, 2009, January 2025.

⁹⁹ Brasil, Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima, Climate Plan, January 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Communication from the Brazilian state, April 14, 2025.

¹⁰¹ Brasil, Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima, already cited.

and to strengthen resilience policies climate, risk mitigation and the protection of human rights in the face of the extreme climate events that have intensified in the country. The State also reported on the implementation of the Adapta Cidades initiative, established by Ordinance GM/MMA No. 1,256/2024, which aims to support federative entities in developing local climate change adaptation plans, with a focus on technical capacity building, the use of data and risk indicators, and the incorporation of nature-based solutions.¹⁰²

87. In this context, Law No. 12.608/2012 establishes the National Civil Protection and Defense Policy, which determines the duty of public entities —Union, States and Municipalities— to adopt measures aimed at reducing disaster risks, recovering affected areas, preventing recurrence and promoting coordination with the private sector to implement preventive actions and contingency plans, ensuring their coordination with other policies, strategies and initiatives aimed at environmental protection, disaster prevention and recovery.¹⁰³

88. At the state level, Law 13.594/2010 establishes the Gaúcho Policy on Climate Change, which is integrated with national policy and international instruments on the subject. Among its guidelines is the state's obligation to identify activities with high greenhouse gas emissions, restricting the granting of incentives for these activities, except for those specifically aimed at reducing emissions and promoting climate adaptation, as pointed out by the state inventory and by the Gaúcho Forum on Climate Change.¹⁰⁴

89. REDESCA and the IACHR, in their Resolution 3/2021 on Climate Emergency, highlighted that environmental disasters compromise the full enjoyment of fundamental rights, such as housing, food, health and access to drinking water, in addition to deepening structural inequalities and disproportionately impacting groups in situations of vulnerability.¹⁰⁵ Given this scenario, the state response and public policies implemented in Brazil must be analyzed from a human rights perspective, considering both the emergency measures adopted and the need to strengthen mitigation and adaptation strategies to extreme weather events. This chapter examines the impacts of floods on DESCA, identifying challenges in guaranteeing these rights and proposing recommendations for a sustainable, equitable recovery in line with human rights and the international commitments made by the country.

B. Right to a healthy environment

90. The right to a healthy environment is included among the rights protected by Article 26 of the American Convention, given the obligation of states to achieve the “integral development” of their peoples, which derives from Articles 30, 31, 33 and 34 of the OAS Charter.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, according to the Protocol of San Salvador, “[e]veryone has the right to live in a healthy environment and to basic public services. States Parties shall promote the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment.”¹⁰⁷

91. The United Nations General Assembly has recognized the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, highlighting its connection with other rights and existing

¹⁰² Communication from the Brazilian state, April 14, 2025.

¹⁰³ Brasil, Law 12.608, of April 10, 2012

¹⁰⁴ Rio Grande do Sul, Law No. 13.594, of December 30, 2010, January 2025; REDESCA has received information about a law suit (Ação Civil Pública) filed by the Instituto Preservar, the Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural and the Núcleo Amigos da Terra (Brazil), which requested, among other measures, greater equity in the composition of the Forum, with the aim of ensuring numerical equality between government representatives and representatives of organized civil society and the scientific community. Jusclima2030, Instituto Preservar; Associação Gaúcha de Proteção ao Ambiente Natural - AGAPAN; Núcleo Amigos da Terra - Brasil vs União Federal and others, January 2025.

¹⁰⁵ REDESCA/CIDH, Resolution 3/2021: Climate emergency: scope of inter-American human rights obligations, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Corte IDH. Advisory Opinion OC-23/17, solicitada por la república de Colombia, November 15, 2017, paragraph 57. Lhaka Honhat Association (Our Land) v. Argentina. Merits, Reparations and Costs. Judgment of February 6, 2020, para. 202.

¹⁰⁷ Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: “Protocol of San Salvador”, November 17, 1988. OEA/Ser.A/44.

international law.¹⁰⁸ For its part, the Human Rights Council has indicated that States must implement policies to guarantee the enjoyment of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, especially regarding biodiversity and ecosystems.¹⁰⁹

92. Furthermore, in accordance with the case law of the Inter-American Court, the right to a healthy environment comprises a set of procedural and substantive elements. Among the procedural elements is access to justice. The substantive elements include air, water, food, the ecosystem and the climate. In these terms, the right to a healthy environment “protects the components of the [...] environment, such as forests, rivers, seas and others, as legal interests in themselves, even in the absence of certainty or evidence about the risk to individuals.”¹¹⁰ This corresponds to the state's obligation to protect nature both because of its usefulness and impacts on human beings, but also because of its importance for the other living organisms with which the planet is shared.¹¹¹

93. The right to a healthy environment imposes a series of specific obligations on states, especially in the context of the climate emergency. These obligations include adopting normative and political measures to prevent environmental degradation, implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies to climate change, requiring and approving social and environmental impact studies, and guaranteeing access to information, public participation and environmental justice for affected communities.¹¹² In this context, given the principles of progressivity, non-regression and precaution and prevention, the state must move forward in creating and implementing effective public policies that prevent and mitigate the damage caused by climate change, while at the same time guaranteeing the maintenance or expansion of the levels of environmental protection already established. It should be noted that in compliance with their obligations to respect and guarantee, states must ensure that both public and private entities respect, mitigate and account for the damage they may cause to the environment and the climate.¹¹³

94. In the context of the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the environmental impacts were severe, resulting in the degradation of ecosystems, contamination of water resources, soil erosion and loss of biodiversity.

95. Firstly, it is necessary to consider that, according to the facts reported and REDESCA's observations, the environmental impacts of the floods that occurred in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 were amplified by historical environmental degradation and legislative changes that weakened environmental protection. These factors contributed to exacerbating the adverse effects of the tragedy, further aggravating the damage to the environment and the affected population. In this context, the Special Rapporteur emphasizes that tackling climate change requires robust legislation that protects the environment and considers the differentiated and disproportionate impacts suffered by populations in situations of social vulnerability, guaranteeing the realization of human rights and climate justice. Taking into account the measures underway in the National Congress and the rules recently approved at state level, REDESCA urges the state to reconsider and strengthen the standards of protection for the environment and human rights, ensuring that legislation is aligned with international commitments and the need to face the challenges posed by the climate crisis.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations General Assembly, The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/300 of July 28, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Human Rights Council, The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, resolution of October 28, 2021.

¹¹⁰ Corte IDH, Advisory Opinion OC-23/17, solicitada por la república de Colombia, November 15, 2017, paragraphs 59, 62, 64 e 212.

¹¹¹ Corte IDH, Case of the Inhabitants of La Oroya v. Peru, Merits, costs and reparations, Judgment of November 27, 2023. Series C No. 140, para. 118.

¹¹² Corte IDH, Observaciones de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos y de la Relatoría Especial sobre los Derechos Económicos, Sociales, Culturales y Ambientales a la Solicitud de Opinión Consultiva sobre Emergencia Climática y Derechos Humanos presentada por las Repúblicas de Chile y Colombia, December 18, 2023.

¹¹³ IACHR, Business and Human Rights: Inter-American Standards. Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights, November 1, 2019, para. 247.

96. During its visit, REDESCA expressed its concern to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change about the deforestation of the Atlantic Forest, the contamination of soil and water using pesticides and legislative proposals that could negatively affect the environment. In response, the Ministry said that it is developing a National Mitigation Strategy, accompanied by 7 sectoral plans, and a National Adaptation Strategy, made up of 16 sectoral plans, including an axis dedicated to climate justice to reduce socio-environmental vulnerabilities. The Ministry also pointed out that some regions of the country have already recorded an increase in temperature of 3 °C and an increase in rainfall over the years, as well as worsening droughts in the Northeast. Data from the Integrated Disaster Information System indicates that 83% of Brazilian municipalities have already been affected by some kind of climate disaster, with 20% of those impacted concentrated in the southern region of the country.¹¹⁴

97. Environmental degradation has played a central role in intensifying the impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul. The absence or insufficiency of Permanent Preservation Areas along riverbanks, combined with disorderly land occupation and the deforestation of riparian forests, has compromised the natural capacity of these ecosystems to act as barriers against flooding and to regulate water flow. In addition, the advance of urbanization and intensive agriculture without adequate planning has reduced the infiltration of water into the soil, increasing surface run-off, which aggravates the risk of floods and landslides.¹¹⁵

98. According to the information given to REDESCA at the meeting with the local scientific community and academic studies, the expansion of monoculture and the lack of effective ecological conservation policies have significantly reduced the capacity of ecosystems to absorb excess rainwater, aggravating the impact of floods. Studies evidence that the replacement of native vegetation and traditional crops with soy and rice, without proper crop rotation and the adoption of conservation practices, contributes to soil degradation. Deforestation for the expansion of intensive agriculture reduces soil cohesion, making it more susceptible to erosion, flooding and landslides. In addition, the loss of vegetation cover compromises the environment's ability to intercept, retain and transpire rainwater, increasing surface run-off and, consequently, the risk of flooding.¹¹⁶

99. In Rio Grande do Sul, data produced by the NGO MapBiomass shows that between 1985 and 2022, the state lost approximately 3.5 million hectares of native vegetation.¹¹⁷ The severe deforestation of native forest makes the region more vulnerable, as vegetation plays the role of intermediary between water and soil, preventing or reducing the speed of water.¹¹⁸ In addition to this, there has been an advance in agricultural practices in the state, where the territory dedicated to agribusiness has increased by 35,000 km², an area that was previously occupied by fields or forests.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the data shows that areas used for agricultural production in the state were the most affected by the floods: more than one million hectares, or 64.2% of the total occupied by these activities in Rio Grande do Sul.¹²⁰

100. REDESCA understands that governments face complex challenges in managing climate change, including extreme climate variability and the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In this sense, coordination between different levels of government is fundamental. However, according to the

¹¹⁴ Brasil, Ministério da Integração e do Desenvolvimento Regional. S2iD - Sistema Integrado de Informações sobre Desastres, January 2025.

¹¹⁵ UFRGS, Flood response methodologies in the Taquari Valley, May 24, 2024; France 24, Brazil: the announced tragedy of Rio Grande do Sul, May 8, 2024; El País, La crisis climática y la falta de inversiones, responsables de las grandes inundaciones en Brasil, June 4, 2024.

¹¹⁶ UFRGS, Methodologies for responding to floods in the Taquari Valley, May 24, 2024; Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean, For a moratorium on the conversion of the Pampa Biome to monocultures and mega-mining, December 22, 2021; Senado Notícias, Avanço de monoculturas coloca Pampa em risco, March 22, 2024. Nexo Jornal; Nature conservation and the reconstruction of Rio Grande do Sul: a dual solution to the climate crisis, June 4, 2024.

¹¹⁷ Jornal USP, How deforestation in Rio Grande do Sul may have aggravated flooding, May 27, 2024.

¹¹⁸ Jornal USP, already cited; Nexo Jornal, already cited.

¹¹⁹ UOL, Agro advances over almost half of RS and soy quintuples in less than 40 years, May 18, 2024.

¹²⁰ Brasil de Fato, Agricultural production areas were the most affected by floods in RS, satellites show, June 5, 2024. UOL, Agro advances over almost half of RS and soy increases fivefold in less than 40 years, May 18, 2024.

State Climate Change Yearbook, of the 26 Brazilian states and the Federal District, only eight have a climate change adaptation plan, while six are in the development phase.¹²¹ Notably, the state of Santa Catarina, which, along with Rio Grande do Sul, faces a high risk of disasters caused by intense rainfall, is among the federal units that have not yet implemented such a plan.¹²² This scenario highlights that it is essential to develop and implement climate adaptation plans to mitigate the impacts of these extreme events, ensuring that effective public policies are adopted throughout the country.

101. Effective climate planning must integrate mitigation, adaptation, prevention and remediation strategies to respond to the challenges posed by climate change in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. To this end, they must follow the obligations set out in Advisory Opinion OC 23/17 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, such as regulating, requiring and approving social and environmental impact studies, supervising and inspecting activities under their jurisdiction that may cause significant damage to the environment and establishing a contingency plan with safety measures and procedures to minimize the possibility of environmental disasters and mitigate significant environmental damage that has occurred.

102. REDESCA highlights the importance of nature-based solutions (NBS), including green and blue infrastructure, as effective strategies to increase climate resilience, protect biodiversity and ensure essential ecosystem services.¹²³ Green infrastructure, such as urban parks, green roofs and walls, and blue infrastructure, which includes natural wetlands and natural drainage systems, play a key role in mitigating the impacts of intense rainfall and flooding by reducing surface runoff and promoting water absorption and retention.¹²⁴

103. Although the Brazilian state responded quickly to the floods, there is intense concern about the creation of mechanisms to compensate the population and prevent future events such as those that occurred in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024. Prevention requires anticipating future scenarios, promoting the sustainable management of natural resources and strengthening environmental governance. Reparation, on the other hand, is indispensable for restoring degraded areas, guaranteeing climate justice and sustainably supporting and rebuilding the livelihoods of communities affected by disasters.

C. Right to participation and access to information

104. The right to participation and access to environmental information are fundamental pillars for climate governance and the realization of human rights in the context of the environmental crisis. Inter-American standards, developed from the *Claude Reyes vs. Chile* case, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), and the Escazú Agreement (2018), to which Brazil is not yet a party, highlight the importance of transparency, access to justice and the inclusion of civil society in decision-making processes on environmental policies.¹²⁵

105. In the context of the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, REDESCA identified significant challenges related to the provision of clear and accessible information to the population before, during and after the disaster, as well as difficulties in the participation of the most affected communities in the

¹²¹ Corte IDH, *Case of Claude Reyes and others vs. Chile. Merits, Reparations and Costs*, Judgment of September 19, 2006. Serie C No. 151. REDESCA/CIDH, *Resolución 3/2021: Emergencia climática: alcance de las obligaciones interamericanas en materia de derechos humanos*, 2021. RELE/CIDH, *Joint declaration on climate crisis and freedom of expression*, 2024.

¹²² Instituto Clima e Sociedade and Centro Brasil no Clima, *State Yearbook Climate Change*, January 30, 2025.

¹²³ UNEP, *Nature-based Infrastructure: How natural infrastructure solutions can address sustainable development challenges and the triple planetary crisis*, Knowledge Repository, 2023; UNDRR, *From words to action. Nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction*, 2021.

¹²⁴ Ferreira, Carla, Zahra Kalantari, Thomas Hartmann and Paulo Pereira (eds.), *Nature-Based Solutions for Flood Mitigation: Environmental and Socio-Economic Aspects*, Springer Nature, 2022.

¹²⁵ Instituto Clima e Sociedade and Centro Brasil no Clima, *State Yearbook Climate Change*, January 30, 2025.

formulation and implementation of response and recovery measures. In addition, the spread of disinformation was noted, which compromised the population's right to access reliable data on the severity of the situation, protection measures and emergency actions by the public authorities.

106. Considering the reports of a lack of access to information for flood prevention and during flooding in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024, it is essential to guarantee the effective participation of communities and their access to accurate information in climate emergencies. REDESCA recalls that states have a responsibility to proactively generate, disseminate and update information on the environment and extreme events, ensuring that the population, especially the most vulnerable communities, has access to clear and accessible data on threats to health, safety and biodiversity. In addition, it is crucial to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society and the media to operate without undue restrictions, contributing to transparency in crisis management and building more effective responses to climate disasters.¹²⁶

107. The Special Rapporteur expressed concern about the existence of climate disinformation in the context of the tragedy in Rio Grande do Sul. This disinformation includes the dissemination of false or inaccurate information about the causes and impacts of flooding and climate change in general. This phenomenon not only generated confusion among the affected communities but also made it difficult to adopt informed and effective measures for the prevention and mitigation of future disasters.¹²⁷ REDESCA emphasizes the need to strengthen information production, communication and warning systems, combating disinformation, guaranteeing access to verifiable scientific information and promoting timely and evidence-based responses.

108. In its Resolution 3/2021, REDESCA emphasized that, in order to ensure transparency and access to information on the causes and effects of the global climate crisis, as well as on strategies to address it, the impacts of projects on the climate and ways to reduce them, States have an obligation to ensure active transparency.¹²⁸ This implies the production and dissemination of timely, comprehensive, clear, accessible, understandable, truthful, rapid and culturally appropriate information on climate change adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation. In addition, this information must address the particularities and specific needs of vulnerable individuals and groups with an intersectional approach to existing vulnerabilities.

109. REDESCA emphasizes the importance of broadening social participation in decision-making processes on environmental and climate policies, ensuring that the voices of vulnerable communities are heard and incorporated in a meaningful way. To move forward in this regard, the Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of the State considering ratifying the Escazú Agreement and strengthening the production and dissemination of accessible, evidence-based information, ensuring that communities understand environmental and climate challenges and can participate in an informed way in decision-making processes. This participation is also a tool for developing more inclusive and effective policies that are aligned with the real needs of those affected.

110. During the visit, REDESCA had the opportunity to analyze the impacts of climate change on historically vulnerable populations and reaffirm the importance of community participation in environmental planning and management. Climate adaptation requires the implementation of policies and infrastructures that strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems, minimizing the risks arising from extreme events. In this sense, the inclusion of affected communities in decision-making

¹²⁶ RELE/CIDH, [Joint declaration on the climate crisis and freedom of expression](#), 2024.

¹²⁷ REDESCA, [REDESCA presenta observaciones preliminares de la visita de trabajo a Brasil](#), December 13, 2024.

¹²⁸ REDESCA/CIDH, [Resolution 3/2021: Climate emergency: scope of inter-American human rights obligations](#), December 31, 2021; STJ, [First Section theses on the right to environmental information and the State's obligation to transparency](#), May 27, 2022.

processes not only contributes to the effectiveness of environmental policies but also reinforces the commitment of states to human rights and sustainable development.

D. Access to water

111. The right to water is protected by Article 26 of the American Convention and derives from the norms of the OAS Charter.¹²⁹ In particular, REDESCA notes that the OAS General Assembly, in its resolution 2349/07 of 2007, “[r]ecognizes” water as “essential to the life and health” and “indispensable for a life with human dignity”, as well as recognizes and respects “the ancestral use of water by urban, rural, and indigenous communities, in the framework of their habits and customs on water use.”¹³⁰

112. At the international level, there is recognition that access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, affordable and economically viable water is essential for the realization of various human rights, including the rights to food, health, personal integrity and life.¹³¹ In this manner, the right to water is reaffirmed based on the principle of the indivisibility, interdependence and interrelationship of all human rights. The IACHR and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have developed its normative content. This recognition reinforces the obligation of states to adopt adequate measures to guarantee the availability, quality and accessibility of drinking water, especially in the context of climate emergencies and environmental disasters.

113. In the context of the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the right to water was compromised, affecting urban and rural communities, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations. The contamination of water resources, the destruction of supply infrastructure and unequal access to this essential resource highlight the need to strengthen public policies to guarantee its availability and quality.

114. According to information obtained by REDESCA from the affected communities, sewage overflows and the infiltration of chemical substances, such as pesticides, and biological substances into water sources have severely compromised rivers, lakes and aquifers, as well as water quality, creating serious risks to public health. The interruption of the water supply has affected domestic consumption, as well as essential services such as hospitals and schools.¹³² In addition, according to the information available, water supply and sanitation services were seriously affected, leaving more than 3.15 million people without access to drinking water. Contamination, the shutdown of treatment plants and the collapse of drainage systems have exposed thousands of people to the risk of waterborne diseases,¹³³ such as cholera, hepatitis A and leptospirosis.¹³⁴

115. Given the magnitude of the impacts of the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul on access to drinking water, it is imperative that the state adopts structural and preventive measures to strengthen the resilience of supply and sanitation systems. Guaranteeing this fundamental right requires continuous investment in infrastructure, monitoring of water quality and effective mechanisms for responding to climate disasters. In addition, it is essential to ensure the participation of affected communities in the formulation of public policies, promoting sustainable and equitable solutions to mitigate the effects of future water emergencies.

¹²⁹ Corte IDH, Case of Indigenous Communities Members of the Lhaka Honhat Association (Our Land) v. Argentina. Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of February 6, 2020, Series C No. 400, paras. 222 and 223.

¹³⁰ OAS, Resolution. Water, health and human rights. AG/RES. 2349 (XXXVII-O/07), Approved at the fourth plenary session, held on June 5, 2007.

¹³¹ ESCR Committee, Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Observation 15, E/C.12/2002/11, January 20, 2003.

¹³² Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Inundações no Rio Grande do Sul e a saúde: impactos imediatos e suas possíveis consequências sobre a saúde da população, Technical note, 2024.

¹³³ IDB, ECLAC, et al, Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, 2024.

¹³⁴ Sul21, IPH study monitors Guaíba contamination and risk of disease caused by flooding, June 22, 2024.

E. Right to health

116. The right to health is widely recognized in the Inter-American Human Rights System and is guaranteed in various normative instruments. Article XI of the American Declaration establishes the right to preservation of health and well-being, while Articles 34 and 45 of the OAS Charter reaffirm the responsibility of states to promote adequate conditions to guarantee this right. This right is also protected by Article 26 of the American Convention¹³⁵ and Article 10 of the Protocol of San Salvador. Thus, the general obligation to protect health translates into the state's duty to ensure people's access to essential health services, guaranteeing quality and effective medical care, as well as promoting the improvement of the population's health conditions.¹³⁶

117. The right to health is a fundamental human right, indispensable for the proper exercise of other human rights. Every human being has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health that enables him or her to live with dignity, health being understood not only as the absence of disease or infirmity, but also as a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, derived from a lifestyle that enables people to achieve an integral balance.¹³⁷ Fulfilling the state's obligation to respect and guarantee this right requires special attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups.¹³⁸

118. The 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul had severe consequences for public health, affecting thousands of people directly and indirectly. The flooding of entire towns hampered the functioning of more than 3,000 health establishments, including hospitals, clinics, laboratories, private practices and hospitals, significantly compromising the capacity to care for the population and aggravating the impacts of the health crisis in the region.¹³⁹ The collapse in hospital care has led to an overload of emergency services and the interruption of treatments for chronic diseases.¹⁴⁰

119. Meanwhile, according to the information obtained in the context of the visit, the destruction of roads and the interruption of transportation services have made access to health services difficult, especially in rural areas. The overload of the remaining health units has led to a shortage of medicines and medical equipment, affecting the health system's ability to respond and compromising the quality of care for the most vulnerable populations.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Corte IDH, Case of Manuela et al. v. El Salvador, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of November 2, 2021, Series C No. 441, para. 182; Case of Poblete Vilches et al. v. Chile, Merits, reparations and costs, Judgment of March 8, 2018, Series C No. 349, paras. 106 and 110; and Case of the Buzos Miskitos (Lemeth Morris et al.) v. Honduras, Judgment of August 31, 2021, Series C No. 432, para. 80; Likewise, see: IACHR. Report No. 9/20, Case 13.378. Fundo, Beatriz, El Salvador, March 3, 2020; and Report No. 330/20, Case 12.718. Merits. Community of La Oroya, Peru, November 19, 2020.

¹³⁶ Corte IDH, Case of Guachalá Chimbo et al. v. Ecuador, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of March 26, 2021, Series C No. 423, paragraph 101; and Case of Manuela et al. v. El Salvador. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs. Judgment of November 2, 2021, Series C No. 441, para. 185.

¹³⁷ Corte IDH, Case of Cuscul Pivaral et al. v. Guatemala, Preliminary Objection, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of August 23, 2018, Series C No. 359, para. 105.

¹³⁸ Corte IDH, Case of Vera Rojas et al. v. Chile, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of October 1, 2021, Series C No. 439, para. 100.

¹³⁹ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), [Climate and Health Observatory gathers data to support emergency actions in Rio Grande do Sul](#), May 10, 2024.

¹⁴⁰ IDB, ECLAC, et al, [Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul](#), 2024.

¹⁴¹ Joaquim Venâncio Polytechnic Health School (EPSJV/Fiocruz), [Climate disaster in Rio Grande do Sul exposes the growth of diseases and social vulnerability](#), June 6, 2024; Joaquim Venâncio Polytechnic Health School (EPSJV/Fiocruz), [The right to decent housing as a right to health: what we saw in the disaster in Rio Grande do Sul](#), December 19, 2024.

120. The information gathered by REDESCA during the visit confirmed a significant increase in respiratory illnesses due to prolonged exposure to humidity and mold in collective shelters, in addition to illnesses directly associated with water contamination - an issue already addressed in this report.¹⁴²

121. There has been a profound impact on the mental health of the affected populations and the issue was repeatedly highlighted as critical in REDESCA's meetings with the affected communities and civil society organizations during the visit.¹⁴³ The increase in anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder requires adequate responses in terms of psychiatric, psychological and social support, including public policies aimed at psychosocial care and rebuilding the community fabric.

122. The information gathered by REDESCA during the visit exposed the serious consequences of the climate crisis for public health, especially for vulnerable populations. The 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul highlight the urgent need to strengthen the resilience of health and infrastructures systems, guaranteeing universal access to medical services and improving response mechanisms to natural disasters. It is essential to strengthen epidemiological surveillance and adopt strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, reducing the population's vulnerability to extreme events and mitigating future impacts on public health.

F. Right to housing

123. The right to adequate housing is widely recognized in the inter-American human rights system, although it is not expressly provided for in the Protocol of San Salvador. The American Convention, the OAS Charter and the American Declaration establish parameters for its protection, emphasizing the need for state efforts to guarantee decent housing for all sectors of the population. The IACHR has dealt with this issue from different perspectives, including the right to collective property of indigenous peoples based on the traditional use and possession of land,¹⁴⁴ the situation of people in human mobility and state obligations in contexts of forced evictions. In the context of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the massive destruction of housing and the inadequacy of temporary shelters highlight the urgency of structural measures to guarantee this right, respecting its intersection with other fundamental rights, such as health, safety and the environment.

124. According to the information available, the floods in Rio Grande do Sul have had a devastating impact on the right to housing. Approximately 388,732 homes were affected in 321 municipalities, with 84.7% of these affected homes concentrated in just 23 municipalities. Among the hardest hit are Eldorado do Sul, where 71.4% of housing was affected, and Rio Grande, with 54%, facing significant challenges in meeting the housing needs of the displaced population.¹⁴⁵ According to available information, approximately 2.4 million people were impacted by the floods in the state.¹⁴⁶ Many of these people lost their homes permanently, as they were located in risk areas where reconstruction will not be feasible.

125. REDESCA was able to observe that many families still remain in affected areas, waiting for their homes to be rebuilt. In some municipalities in the Taquari Valley, the lack of land in safe areas represents an obstacle to housing reconstruction. In addition, high rental costs make it difficult to access temporary

¹⁴² Rizzotto, M. L. F., Costa, A. M., & Lobato, L. V. C., Climate crisis and the new challenges for health systems: the case of floods in Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil. *Saúde em Debate*, 48(141), 2024.

¹⁴³ Rizzotto, M. L. F., Costa, A. M., & Lobato, L. V. C., already cited.

¹⁴⁴ IACHR, Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples over their Ancestral Lands and Natural Resources, December 30, 2009. Corte IDH, Case of the Pueblo Saramaka v. Suriname, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of November 28, 2007, Series C No. 172, para. 96; and Case of the Mayagna (Sumo) Awas Tingni Community v. Nicaragua, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of August 31, 2001, Series C No. 79, para. 140.

¹⁴⁵ IDB, ECLAC, et al, Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul. 2024.

¹⁴⁶ Defesa Civil do Rio Grande do Sul, Civil Defense updates floods in Rio Grande do Sul (10/7). 10 July 2024.

housing, limiting resettlement options for the affected population.¹⁴⁷ It is important to mention that, during the visit and in direct contact with the affected communities, REDESCA learned that the disorderly occupation of risk areas and real estate speculation has forced low-income populations to live in places susceptible to flooding, aggravating the social vulnerability of these communities.¹⁴⁸

126. Added to this concern is the fact that there is precarious temporary housing, such as that visited by the Special Rapporteur in Estrela, houses made of cement blocks and with little ventilation, without the minimum comfort. Families in these conditions should be prioritized in housing access programs, ensuring transparency and social dialogue in decision-making.

127. In the process of rebuilding housing, it is essential to guarantee the active participation of the affected communities, a concern repeatedly expressed during the meetings held by REDESCA in the context of the visit. The communities claimed that their demands and cultural specificities should be considered, such as prioritizing the construction of houses over buildings. The housing policy should include the relocation of populations still living in risk areas, providing, when necessary, for expropriation and planned resettlement processes, always with due inclusion of the affected communities. In addition, objective criteria for access to housing programs and the creation of a unified registry, integrating information at the municipal, state and federal levels, are essential measures to ensure greater efficiency, transparency and social justice in the distribution of resources and in assisting displaced families.

128. This scenario requires an emergency and long-term housing policy, aimed not only at relocating the affected population, but also at implementing urban planning that reduces vulnerability to climate disasters.¹⁴⁹ This includes relocating housing away from risk areas, developing infrastructure that is resilient to extreme weather events and implementing efficient water, sewage and electricity supply systems. Those strategies should also be aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), which emphasizes the need to strengthen disaster risk governance, increase community resilience and integrate climate change adaptation measures into urban and territorial planning policies.¹⁵⁰ Adopting this approach can ensure safer urban settlements and reduce the future impacts of climate change.

G. Right to food

129. The right to food is widely recognized in the Inter-American Human Rights System as an essential element for human dignity and the realization of other human rights. Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the American Convention, it is protected by Article 26 of that treaty, as well as by Article 12 of the Protocol of San Salvador, which establishes both the individual right to adequate nutrition and the obligations of states to improve methods of food production, supply and distribution. In addition, the American Declaration and the OAS Charter reaffirm the importance of this right in the context of preserving health and well-being. The IACHR and REDESCA have highlighted the need for effective public policies to guarantee food security, especially in scenarios of environmental and social crises that jeopardize equitable access to food.

130. The right to adequate food protects, in essence, people's access to food that allows them to eat properly and preserve their health. Thus, the right is exercised when people have access, at all times, to

¹⁴⁷ Folha de São Paulo, Wait for housing in RS drags on due to lack of land, bureaucracy and municipal elections, September 29, 2024.

¹⁴⁸ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Flooding in Rio Grande do Sul and health: immediate impacts and their possible consequences for the population's health, Technical note, 2024.

¹⁴⁹ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), already cited; Rizzotto, M. L. F., Costa, A. M., & Lobato, L. V. C., Climate crisis and the new challenges for health systems: the case of floods in Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil, *Saúde em Debate*, 48(141), 2024.

¹⁵⁰ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, 2015; UFRGS, Flood response methodologies in the Taquari Valley, May 24, 2024; Joaquim Venâncio Polytechnic Health School (EPSJV/Fiocruz). The right to decent housing as a right to health: what we saw in the RS disaster, December 19, 2024.

adequate food or the means to obtain it.¹⁵¹ Non-nutritional values associated with food and its consumption must also be taken into account, i.e. food must be suitable for a particular culture or person.¹⁵²

131. Food insecurity emerged as one of the main consequences of the disaster, since the floods destroyed crops and affected 4,509 agricultural facilities.¹⁵³ In addition, the disruption of supply chains compromised food distribution, impacting both local supplies and the agricultural economy. The loss of crops and livestock directly affected the livelihoods of family farmers, resulting in higher food prices and hindering the population's access to basic products.

132. Affected populations face difficulties in accessing nutritious food, aggravating cases of malnutrition, especially among children and the older persons. Likewise, the contamination of water and soil by industrial waste and toxic materials poses an additional risk to food security.¹⁵⁴ Food insecurity intensified in temporary shelters, where the scarcity of fresh food and the lack of adequate infrastructure for preparing meals compromised the nutritional quality of the families affected.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the floods left thousands of people homeless, many of whom depended on community kitchens and donations for food. The lack of access to safe, nutritious food has increased the risk of malnutrition and other health problems, especially among vulnerable populations.¹⁵⁶

133. This scenario has increased the vulnerability of rural and urban communities, highlighting the need for policies to support the recovery of agricultural production, with particular attention to small producers and the strengthening of family farming. Furthermore, it is important to develop more resilient supply systems to face future climate crises, guaranteeing food distribution to vulnerable populations and ensuring equitable access to nutritious and safe food.¹⁵⁷

H. Right to education

134. The right to education is widely protected in the inter-American human rights system, and is recognized in the American Convention, the Protocol of San Salvador, the American Declaration and the OAS Charter. These instruments establish both the individual dimension of the right to education and state obligations to guarantee its progressive, universal and free access. Article 13 of the Protocol of San Salvador emphasizes the right of all people to education, which must be oriented towards the development of the dignity of the human person and must strengthen human rights.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, this right is guaranteed not only by Article 26 of the American Convention, but also by Article 19 of this instrument, which, among the special measures for the protection of children, includes "the right to education, which favors the possibility of enjoying a dignified life and contributes to preventing unfavorable situations for the child and society itself."¹⁵⁹ REDESCA has reinforced the importance of education as an essential element for people's integral

¹⁵¹ Corte IDH, Case of Indigenous Communities Members of the Lhaka Honhat Association (Our Land) v. Argentina, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of February 6, 2020, Series C No. 400, para. 216.

¹⁵² Corte IDH, Case of Indigenous Communities Members of the Lhaka Honhat Association (Our Land) v. Argentina, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Judgment of February 6, 2020, Series C No. 400, para. 220.

¹⁵³ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Flooding in Rio Grande do Sul and health: immediate impacts and their possible consequences for the population's health, Technical note, 2024.

¹⁵⁴ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Health problems related to the climate disaster in Rio Grande do Sul: current situation and post-flood scenarios, Technical note, 2024.

¹⁵⁵ Rizzotto, M. L. F., Costa, A. M., & Lobato, L. V. C., Climate crisis and the new challenges for health systems: the case of floods in Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil, *Saúde em Debate*, 48(141), 2024.

¹⁵⁶ Secretaria de Agricultura, Pecuária e Desenvolvimento Rural do Rio Grande do Sul 2024, Impacts of Extreme Rains and Floods in Rio Grande do Sul, May 2024.

¹⁵⁷ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Flooding in Rio Grande do Sul and health: immediate impacts and their possible consequences for the population's health, Technical note, 2024; Rizzotto, M. L. F., Costa, A. M., & Lobato, L. V. C., Climate crisis and the new challenges for health systems: the case of floods in Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil, *Saúde em Debate*, 48(141), 2024.

¹⁵⁸ Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: "Protocol of San Salvador" 1988; (OAS. Official documents; OEA/Ser.A/44), art. 13.

¹⁵⁹ Corte IDH, Status and Human Rights of the Child, Advisory Opinion OC-17/02, Resolution of August 28, 2002, paragraph 84.

development and for overcoming structural inequalities, particularly in the context of environmental and social crises.

135. The education sector also suffered significant impacts, with more than 992 schools and universities damaged, resulting in the loss of approximately 79.8 million class hours.¹⁶⁰ Along with the material losses, the suspension of classes compromised the right to education, hindering students' learning and continuity of studies.¹⁶¹ The impact was even more severe for socially vulnerable students, who depend on schools not only for education, but also for food and psychosocial support.

136. In addition to the physical destruction of school units, REDESCA was able to see during the visit and in conversations with the affected communities that many of these schools were used as temporary shelters, which significantly delayed the return to classes. This scenario has raised concerns among families and educators about the continuity of teaching, the recovery of the school calendar and adequate conditions for learning.

137. Regarding access to education, REDESCA has learned that the school community in Rio Grande do Sul is still facing significant challenges to recover after the floods in May, which inundated several educational institutions and left thousands of students without classes. Out of a total of 2,338 state schools, 1,104 were impacted at different levels.¹⁶² Data from UNICEF indicates that approximately 741,000 students were left without access to education during the period of the floods,¹⁶³ highlighting the seriousness of the situation and that it is crucial to take urgent measures to resume school activities under appropriate conditions.

138. The Special Rapporteurship observes with concern that the climate crisis has highlighted and widened existing inequalities in Rio Grande do Sul's education system. Schools located in more socially vulnerable areas, such as rural areas, suffered more severe damage, making it difficult for them to resume activities and for students to have access to quality education. REDESCA recalls that some schools had already been impacted by floods prior to the 2024 flood, emphasizing the need for structural and permanent solutions to prevent recurrences.¹⁶⁴

139. REDESCA notes that both students and education professionals have had their lives profoundly impacted by the floods, facing, in many cases, the loss of their homes, as well as the death of family members and members of their communities. These traumatic events pose a significant risk to the mental health of the school community, increasing the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychosocial impacts. In this context, it is essential that public educational policies integrate actions aimed at psychosocial care in the school environment, including emotional support strategies, ensuring a safe and humanized return to educational activities.

140. The Special Rapporteur expresses concern about the impact of the floods on school dropouts, considering that many families find themselves in a situation of extreme social vulnerability, without full access to fundamental rights such as housing, work, health and food. These conditions can

¹⁶⁰ IDB, ECLAC, et al, Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, 2024.

¹⁶¹ Observatório de Clima e Saúde – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Flooding in Rio Grande do Sul and health: immediate impacts and their possible consequences for the population's health, Technical note, 2024.

¹⁶² Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Department of Education, Return Map, February 4, 2025; Nova escola, Post-tragedy X-ray: the situation of Rio Grande do Sul's state school system today, November 7, 2024; Globo.com, Before and after: six months after the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, see how the affected places were and are, November 4, 2024.

¹⁶³ UNICEF, 250 million children and adolescents will have their studies interrupted by climate crises in 2024, warns UNICEF, January 23, 2025.

¹⁶⁴ New school, Post-tragedy X-ray: the situation in Rio Grande do Sul's state school system today, November 07, 2024.

represent significant barriers to educational continuity, making it essential to adopt active student search strategies and implement educational policies integrated with other areas of social protection.

141. Faced with the significant impacts of the floods on the right to education, it is essential that Brazil adopts structural measures to strengthen the resilience of the education sector in the face of environmental disasters. The reconstruction of school infrastructure must incorporate climate adaptation principles, ensuring that the new facilities are safe and sustainable, minimizing future vulnerabilities. In addition, the implementation of emergency plans for the continuity of teaching, as well as the integration of environmental education and disaster prevention programs, are fundamental strategies for preparing school communities for extreme events. REDESCA reinforces the need to include content on climate change in school curricula, promoting a cross-cutting and preventive approach. This ensures not only that educational activities can be resumed in crisis scenarios, but also that a safer learning environment can be built which is prepared to face future challenges.

I. Right to work

142. The right to work is a fundamental pillar for guaranteeing human dignity and socio-economic development and is recognized in Article 6 of the Protocol of San Salvador, the American Declaration and the OAS Charter. This right encompasses not only the opportunity to access decent and adequately paid employment, but also protection against forced labor and the implementation of systems that ensure economic stability and recovery in the face of crises. In the context of environmental disasters, such as the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024, guaranteeing the right to work becomes even more challenging, requiring public policies that protect affected workers, promote economic recovery and encourage resilience strategies to avoid prolonged impacts on employment and the living conditions of affected populations.

143. The destruction of infrastructure and the paralysis of productive sectors have resulted in a significant impact on the labor market, with estimates of 432,000 job losses by 2024. The regions most affected were the Metropolitan Region of Porto Alegre, with an absolute loss of 97,000 jobs, and the Planalto and North Coast, with 80,000.¹⁶⁵ It is estimated that, in the municipalities most affected, between 84% and 92% of formal jobs were lost.¹⁶⁶ Small traders and informal workers were particularly affected, with difficulties in resuming their activities and guaranteeing their livelihoods.¹⁶⁷

144. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned about fishers who depend on the stability of rivers for their livelihoods. For example, many fishers are still waiting for the recovery of the Lagoa dos Patos harvest, which depends on the water level in relation to the ocean.¹⁶⁸ It highlights that among the fishers of Rio Grande do Sul are artisan workers recognized as Traditional Peoples and Communities who must have their right to prior, free and informed consultation guaranteed in the formulation of public policies.¹⁶⁹

145. Another form of work that is vulnerable to the impact of climate change and which was heavily impacted by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul is that of solid waste collectors, whose recyclable materials were washed away by the waters and whose work structures were affected. These workers are already facing barriers due to the lack of sufficient public policies for decent work and the actions of the state

¹⁶⁵ IDB, ECLAC, et al, Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, 2024.

¹⁶⁶ Institute for Applied Economic Research, Municipalities hardest hit by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul had between 84% and 92% of their jobs affected, July 3, 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, Municipalities hardest hit by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul had between 84% and 92% of their jobs affected, July 3, 2024. IDB, ECLAC, et al, Assessment of the effects and impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ Empresa Brasil de Comunicações, In Pelotas, fishers fear prolonged crisis in economic activity, May 28, 2025; Zero Hora, Conditions for shrimp development in the Patos Lagoon become more favorable for the next harvest, November 21, 2024; A Hora do Sul, Fishers face another start of scarce catches, October 17, 2024.

¹⁶⁹ Brasil, Decree n. 8.750, of May 9, 2016.

which are contrary to the development of their activities, such as Porto Alegre Municipal Law 10.531/2008, which prohibits the circulation of carts and small wagons.¹⁷⁰ The Solid Waste Pickers Movement is demanding that their work be prioritized in municipal solid waste management policies. In Porto Alegre, workers claim that in the current proposal for the concession of the solid waste management service, their participation in the processes of collection, transportation, and commercialization will be removed.¹⁷¹ This goes against Brazil's National Solid Waste Policy, which emphasizes the inclusion of waste pickers in the entire solid waste management chain.¹⁷²

146. Also vulnerable as a result of the flooding are app workers, especially “motoboy” and motorcycle couriers, who, in situations of climatic disasters, disproportionately bear the risks of the economic activities for which they work, as they do not have their labor rights recognized, such as working hours, minimum wage, social security and occupational health and safety.¹⁷³

147. Other informal workers, such as artisans and street vendors, were also severely impacted by the floods, as they were unable to carry out their activities during the tragedy and lost their space and work tools.¹⁷⁴ It is therefore necessary to implement emergency economic assistance programs for informal workers.

148. Women workers also suffer disproportionate impacts in the context of the flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, due to the increase in family burdens, for example due to the destruction of homes, changes in school routines and possible impacts on their health and that of their families. In this sense, REDESCA recommends that Brazil ratify Convention 156 of the International Labor Organization Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Workers with Family Responsibilities.¹⁷⁵

149. In light of the severe impacts of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024, guaranteeing the right to work requires a comprehensive and coordinated response that considers both emergency measures and long-term strategies for the economic recovery and social protection of affected workers. REDESCA highlights the need for emergency programs aimed at economic recovery, including financial incentives for small businesses, economic assistance for informal workers and mechanisms to guarantee the participation of vulnerable workers in rebuilding the labor market. In the case of solid waste pickers, it is essential that their inclusion is prioritized in municipal policies for managing waste, in accordance with the National Solid Waste Policy. Likewise, artisanal fishers, recognized as Traditional Peoples and Communities, must be ensured their right to prior, free and informed consultation in the formulation of public policies that affect their activity. Economic reconstruction and the resumption of work in Rio Grande do Sul must be conducted in an inclusive and sustainable manner, ensuring that affected workers have access to decent and protected jobs.

J. Cultural rights

150. Cultural rights are fundamental to preserving the identity and diversity of societies and are protected by Article 26 of the American Convention on Human Rights and expressly recognized in Article 14 of the Protocol of San Salvador. These rights guarantee participation in cultural and artistic life, access to scientific and technological progress and the protection of moral and material interests derived from scientific, literary and artistic production. Furthermore, they impose on states the duty to adopt measures to

¹⁷⁰ Município de Porto Alegre, [Law n. 10.531/2008](#), September 10, 2008.

¹⁷¹ Sul21, [Lawsuit requests suspension of public consultation on Porto Alegre's Solid Waste PPP](#), December 18, 2024.

¹⁷² Brasil, [Law n. 12.305](#), of August 2, 2010.

¹⁷³ Brasil, [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Implementing the United Nations' "Protect, Respect and Remedy" parameters](#), October 18, 2019.

¹⁷⁴ Folha de São Paulo, [Women affected by floods in Rio Grande do Sul find income and self-esteem in crochet](#), October 19, 2024.

¹⁷⁵ International Labor Organization, [ILO Convention No. 156 Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Workers of Both Sexes: Workers with Family Responsibilities](#), June 23, 1981.

conserve, develop and disseminate culture, promote freedom of scientific research and creative activity, and strengthen international cooperation for the recognition of the benefits derived from knowledge and cultural expressions.

151. Among the immediate obligations of states in relation to those rights are the elimination of obstacles that prevent or limit a person or community's access to their own culture, the possibility of carrying out their cultural practices and leading their way of life, including the prohibition of discrimination based on cultural identity, exclusion or forced assimilation.¹⁷⁶ In particular, "[t]he protection of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms and requires the full realization of cultural rights, including the right to participate in cultural life."¹⁷⁷

152. The IACHR, REDESCA and the Inter-American Court have developed the scope of these rights, particularly in the context of indigenous peoples and traditional communities, recognizing the intrinsic relationship between the right to collective property and the preservation of their cultural practices. In this sense, the recognition and protection of cultural rights are essential to guarantee the dignity and self-determination of communities, promoting public policies that respect and encourage cultural diversity and social inclusion.

153. As part of its visit to Rio Grande do Sul, REDESCA had the opportunity to meet with Porto Alegre's artistic community and cultural coordinators, who reported the devastating impacts of the 2024 floods on the state's cultural sector. The State Secretariat for Culture identified damage to 283 cultural institutions, including museums, libraries and cultural centers.¹⁷⁸ Among the main losses were damage to 41 museums, as well as the destruction of collections in 57 libraries, which resulted in the loss of more than 115,000 books.¹⁷⁹ These losses not only compromise access to culture and collective memory, but also directly affect cultural workers and the communities that depend on these institutions for the preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage.

154. The Special Rapporteurship held talks with religious leaders of African descent, who reported the severe impacts of the 2024 floods on the *terreiros*. According to the information received, the Council of *Terreiro* People, in partnership with academic institutions, carried out a mapping between May 10 and July 10, 2024, identifying that, of the 711 *terreiros* registered, 457 were contacted and recorded significant damage. Of these, 254 were destroyed and 176 suffered partial impacts, while 27 played a crucial role as aid providers during the crisis.¹⁸⁰

155. In addition to the structural damage, the social and community importance of the *terreiros*, which already acted as assistance spaces before the flood, was highlighted. During the emergency, 51 *terreiros* served as shelters, 59 operated emergency kitchens and 143 acted as supply distribution points. Regarding the reconstruction process, 191 chose to remain in the same place, while 63 were relocated to other areas.¹⁸¹ REDESCA stresses the need to support the reconstruction of these institutions, guaranteeing their continuity as spaces for cultural preservation, religious identity and social assistance for the affected communities.

¹⁷⁶ ESCR Committee, General Comment No. 21, UN Doc. E/C.12/GC/21/Rev.1, May 17, 2010, para. 55.

¹⁷⁷ ESCR Committee, General Comment No. 21, UN Doc. E/C.12/GC/21/Rev.1, May 17, 2010, para. 40.

¹⁷⁸ Brasil, State Secretariat for Culture. SEDAC survey identifies damage to 283 cultural institutions in RS, January 22, 2025.

¹⁷⁹ Brasil, State Secretariat for Culture. SEDAC survey identifies damage to 283 cultural institutions in RS, January 22, 2025.

¹⁸⁰ GZH, Report indicates 711 terreiros affected by the flood in RS; more than 250 were totally destroyed, July 23, 2024.

¹⁸¹ GZH, Report indicates 711 terreiros affected by the flood in RS; more than 250 were totally destroyed, July 23, 2024.

CHAPTER V

**DIFFERENTIATED IMPACTS
ON GROUPS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS**

V. DIFFERENTIATED IMPACTS ON GROUPS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

156. REDESCA has reaffirmed that climate change and environmental disasters disproportionately affect certain population groups that already face structural inequalities, worsening their vulnerability and limiting the full exercise of their human rights. As established in Resolution 3/2021, historically marginalized population groups, such as women, children, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, rural communities, informal workers and people living in poverty, are the most exposed to environmental impacts, despite having contributed much less to the climate crisis. Extreme events, such as the floods that hit Rio Grande do Sul in 2024, reinforce that it is indispensable that the formulation and implementation of public policies to consider intersectional and differentiated approaches, ensuring adequate protection measures to guarantee the recovery and resilience of these communities.¹⁸²

157. Structural inequality and environmental racism are also aspects that must be considered, as highlighted in conversations with communities, civil society organizations and authorities during the visit. In these interactions, the central role that these factors play in amplifying the impacts of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 was pointed out, disproportionately affecting indigenous communities, quilombolas and low-income populations. REDESCA noted that these communities face precarious housing conditions, a lack of basic infrastructure and difficulties in accessing essential services, which makes them more vulnerable to climate disasters.

158. Without overlooking the specific situations relating to groups that will be addressed in the following topics, as well as other situations that it was not possible to include in the context of the visit, REDESCA received information on multiple differentiated impacts. For example, around 35,000 refugees seeking to rebuild their lives in Brazil were impacted, as well as an even larger number of migrants, who faced significant challenges in accessing emergency assistance, housing and basic services.¹⁸³ These populations in situations of prior vulnerability had additional difficulties in regularizing their documents, accessing social benefits and re-entering the job market, further aggravating their situation in the face of the humanitarian crisis caused by the disaster. REDESCA also learned of reports of discrimination and violence faced by LGBTQIA+ people in the shelters, which led to the creation of exclusive spaces to guarantee their safety and dignity. In particular, trans people reported difficulties in recognizing their identity, including disrespect for the use of their social name, as well as facing barriers in accessing public services. There were also reports of harassment and violence in improvised shelters, reinforcing the need for specific measures to protect this population in emergency contexts.¹⁸⁴

159. The following topics provide information on the specific impacts of flooding on certain groups of people, taking into account the circumstances that could be identified in the context of the working visit carried out. However, this does not imply any claim of exhaustiveness.

A. Indigenous peoples, quilombola communities and rural and peasant communities

160. Of the quilombola communities in Rio Grande do Sul, 88% were directly affected by the climate event.¹⁸⁵ Around 20% of these communities are located in municipalities that have declared a state of calamity and 68% a state of emergency: 54 municipalities have declared a state of emergency, in which

¹⁸² REDESCA/CIDH, Resolution 3/2021: Climate emergency: scope of inter-American human rights obligations, December 31, 2021. STJ, First Section theses on the right to environmental information and the State's obligation to transparency, May 27, 2022.

¹⁸³ UNHCR, Rio Grande do Sul, 2024. IOM, IOM works to support flood victims in Rio Grande do Sul, May 8, 2024.

¹⁸⁴ G1, Environmental: what it is and how it relates to the flood in Rio Grande do Sul, transphobia June 28, 2024.

¹⁸⁵ Secretaria de Agricultura, Pecuária e Desenvolvimento Rural do Rio Grande do Sul 2024, Impacts of Extreme Rains and Floods in Rio Grande do Sul, May 2024.

there are 97 quilombola communities; and 15 municipalities have declared a state of calamity, in which there are 28 quilombola communities.¹⁸⁶

161. Quilombola communities had their homes destroyed, furniture damaged and roads blocked¹⁸⁷. Essential services were disrupted, and transportation and communication were difficult.¹⁸⁸ The damage to quilombola communities includes the loss of gardens, crops, orchards, infrastructure, equipment and agricultural inputs, as well as livestock and stored agricultural production. This damage has resulted in a serious situation of food insecurity for the quilombola communities affected, as well as major difficulties in resuming their productive activities.

162. REDESCA reiterates that, during the floods, many quilombola communities played a key role in responding to the crisis, opening their doors to welcome people in vulnerable situations and offering essential support. During the visit to Quilombo dos Machados, in the Sarandi neighborhood, quilombola representatives highlighted the difficulties they faced in accessing emergency assistance and reconstruction, underscoring the need for public policies that guarantee the protection and strengthening of these communities in the face of environmental disasters.

163. In the Quilombo dos Machados, REDESCA was able to hear about the discrimination suffered by quilombolas, *terreiro* peoples and communities and those of African descent due to the structural, institutional and religious racism that exists in Brazilian society. They recalled the case of the Quilombola Communities of Alcântara vs. Brazil before the Inter-American Court, and also demanded that all public policies respect their right to prior, free and informed consultation under the terms of ILO Convention 169.¹⁸⁹

164. With regard to indigenous peoples, according to information from the Secretariat of Indigenous Health (SESAI),¹⁹⁰ 84 communities linked to the Special Indigenous Health District of the Southern Interior (DSEI/ISUL) were directly and indirectly affected by the floods in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. This impact reached approximately 16,691 indigenous people, belonging to 5,183 families, compromising their access to essential services, housing, food security and means of subsistence. The vulnerability of these communities was exacerbated by the destruction of basic infrastructure and the difficulty in accessing emergency assistance, highlighting the crucial importance of adopting specific response and recovery policies that take into account the cultural and territorial particularities of the affected indigenous peoples.

165. The Office of the Special Rapporteur was informed that the SESAI, which is linked to the Ministry of Health, works in conjunction with the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (MPI). Under the DSEI/ISUL monitoring framework, 38,597 indigenous people live in 214 villages located in 94 municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina. A total of 12 Base Centers serve the villages in the DSEI/ISUL region through Multidisciplinary Indigenous Health Teams. Six of the seven Base Poles in Rio Grande do Sul reported the effects of the rains: Barra do Ribeiro, Guarita, Osório, Passo Fundo, Porto Alegre and Viamão, with Barra do Ribeiro and Porto Alegre suffering the most. Among the impacts were communication difficulties,

¹⁸⁶ Rio Grande do Sul Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development (2024), Impacts of Extreme Rains and Floods in Rio Grande do Sul, May 2024.

¹⁸⁷ Rio Grande do Sul Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development (2024), Impacts of Extreme Rains and Floods in Rio Grande do Sul, May 2024.

¹⁸⁸ Rio Grande do Sul Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development (2024), Impacts of Extreme Rains and Floods in Rio Grande do Sul, May 2024.

¹⁸⁹ MDH, Apology: Case of the Quilombola Communities of Alcântara v. Brazil, May 4, 2025; Corte IDH, Caso Comunidades Quilombolas de Alcântara Vs. Brasil, Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs, Sentença, November 21, 2024.

¹⁹⁰ Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, SESAI report indicates that more than 16,000 indigenous people were affected by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, May 23, 2024.

interruption to the electricity supply, damage to water supply systems and health service structures, the need to evacuate and obstacles to accessing villages.¹⁹¹

166. The indigenous communities affected urgently required access to drinking water, food, warm clothing, tarpaulins and materials to rebuild their homes.¹⁹² Since the beginning of May 2024, MPI and FUNAI have been working on removing isolated families, transporting them to reception areas, distributing food, as well as holding meetings to monitor the flood situation in Rio Grande do Sul and liaising with the state government and city halls.¹⁹³

167. It is important to mention that, in several cases, these are recurring effects over time. In the case of the Mbyá-Guarani people of Tekoha Pekurutý, visited by REDESCA, the community had already suffered at least three floods in 2023, without adequate preventive measures having been implemented to avoid a repetition of the impacts or to guarantee effective emergency responses in disaster situations. During the visit, REDESCA noted with concern the situation of this indigenous community, which, after being displaced by the floods, had its homes and school destroyed and was relocated to a new settlement near a highway. This new location exposes the community to additional risks, such as being run over, especially for children, as well as making it difficult to maintain their traditional ways of life. This situation reinforces the need for public policies that guarantee the right to the lands they traditionally occupy, as well as ensuring safe and culturally appropriate resettlements, respecting the territorial rights and self-determination of indigenous peoples.

168. Regarding the settled agrarian reform workers affected by the 2024 floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the data shows just how serious the situation is. It is estimated that 7,437 plots distributed over 226 settlements were affected, directly impacting 7,311 families of rural workers in the state. Among these families, 244 were displaced from their homes.¹⁹⁴ In addition to the damage to homes, there was significant damage to crops, agricultural equipment, personal documents and vehicles.

169. The flooding also caused severe damage to the agricultural soil. REDESCA visited the Cooperative of Settled Agrarian Reform Workers of the Porto Alegre Region, in Eldorado do Sul, details of which are described in the chapter on the regions visited. There, REDESCA heard directly from the communities about the devastating impacts of the floods, including the loss of production, food insecurity and the difficulties in rebuilding the settlements.

170. As for the rural workers settled in Rio Grande do Sul, the Special Rapporteurship was able to learn about their actions in confronting the expansion of Brazil's agricultural model, which has had an impact on agroecological food production, mainly due to aerial spraying. They also demonstrated their efforts to combat legislation that is harmful to health and the environment, such as their collaboration in ADI 6955, which challenges the sale of pesticides imported into Rio Grande do Sul without approval in the countries of origin.

171. REDESCA stresses that land regularization is a central demand for indigenous peoples, quilombola communities and rural workers in Brazil, and is a fundamental element in guaranteeing their territorial rights and ways of life. The titling of quilombola territories, the demarcation of indigenous lands and the implementation of agrarian reform are priority demands of these communities, as identified in the meetings held during the visit to Rio Grande do Sul.

¹⁹¹ Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, already cited.

¹⁹² Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, already cited.

¹⁹³ Ministério dos Povos Indígenas, already cited.

¹⁹⁴ Secretaria de Agricultura, Pecuária e Desenvolvimento Rural do Rio Grande do Sul 2024, [Impacts of Extreme Rains and Floods in Rio Grande do Sul](#), May 2024.

172. In addition to land regularization, the guarantee of the right to land must be accompanied by public policies aimed at promoting sustainable agricultural practices, such as agroecology, and combating predatory forms of cultivation, including the intensive use of pesticides. Press reports indicate that around 1,900 quilombola land regularization processes in Brazil are still pending at the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).¹⁹⁵ In the case of indigenous peoples, according to information from the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), in 2023 there were 80 indigenous lands in Rio Grande do Sul with pending administrative issues.¹⁹⁶ As for rural workers, the press reports that approximately 105,000 families are awaiting settlement in the country.¹⁹⁷

173. REDESCA points out that one of the challenges to the demarcation of indigenous lands in Brazil is the “Temporal Framework” (Marco Temporal) thesis, which argues that indigenous peoples would only be entitled to the demarcation of lands that have been under their continuous possession since the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution. As mentioned, this debate persists, considering that the National Congress approved Federal Law 14.701,¹⁹⁸ which is currently being challenged before the STF. REDESCA reiterates that the IACHR has already stated that this thesis violates international and inter-American human rights norms and standards, especially the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, “given that this thesis seeks to temporally condition the guarantee of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples, when this is given by the existence per se of such peoples.”¹⁹⁹

174. The climate tragedy in Rio Grande do Sul serves as a reminder of the need for public policies that consider racial and social inequalities in disaster management. It is essential that disaster prevention and response strategies include the active participation of affected communities, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their needs met. Furthermore, it is fundamental to recognize and combat environmental racism, promoting socio-environmental justice and ensuring that everyone has the right to a safe and healthy environment.

B. Girls and women

174. REDESCA highlights that it is essential to incorporate a gender perspective into public policies for responding to environmental disasters, guaranteeing adequate protection measures for women and girls in emergencies. During the floods that affected Rio Grande do Sul in May 2024, in addition to the material and human damage, specific challenges were identified for women and girls, especially in emergency shelters. By the beginning of May 2024, four men had been arrested for committing sexual abuse in these places, with victims including children and adolescents.²⁰⁰

175. Reports indicate that the structure and conditions of these spaces did not always ensure an adequate environment for their full protection. The precariousness of the shelters, which often did not offer adequate divisions between men and women, contributed to these situations. The lack of privacy and security exposed women and children to additional risks. Feminist movements denounced these conditions and claimed for specific protocols to protect women in disaster situations.²⁰¹

176. In response, exclusive shelters for women and their children were set up in several cities, such as Porto Alegre, Alvorada, Cachoeirinha, Canoas, Capão da Canoa, Novo Hamburgo, São Leopoldo, and

¹⁹⁵ Observatório Terras Quilombolas, [How the processes of titling Quilombola Lands evolved in 2024](#), December 2024.

¹⁹⁶ Conselho Indigenista Missionário, [Report on Violence Against Indigenous Peoples in Brazil - Data for 2023](#), 2024.

¹⁹⁷ Brasil de Fato, [For movements, Lula's program for agrarian reform is a 'good gesture', but it doesn't solve urgent problems](#), April 18, 2024.

¹⁹⁸ Brasil, [Law no. 14.701, of October 20, 2023](#).

¹⁹⁹ IACHR, [Observações preliminares da visita in loco da CIDH ao Brasil](#), 2018.

²⁰⁰ Diplomatieque, [Women in times of crisis: a tragedy within the tragedy of RS](#), May 10, 2024.

²⁰¹ Brasil de Fato, [In a meeting with the Minister of Women, movements denounce cases of rape and violence in shelters for those affected by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul](#), May 8, 2024.

Viamão. These initiatives had the participation of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Public Defenders' Offices, Public Prosecutors' Offices, city halls and civil society organizations.²⁰²

177. The Special Rapporteur learned that the Ministry of Women has received reports of gender-based violence in some of the emergency shelters set up in Porto Alegre and other municipalities in the state²⁰³, which reinforces the importance of implementing specific protocols for the safety of women and girls in emergencies. State and federal authorities have played an essential role in assisting affected populations, and it is essential to strengthen strategies for preventing and responding to the risks of gender-based violence in the context of climate disasters.

178. Women have been disproportionately impacted by the floods, facing increased risks of gender-based violence and economic insecurity. In addition, many women who play central roles in supporting and caring for their families have lost their sources of income, increasing their economic and social vulnerability. REDESCA emphasizes that recovery and reconstruction policies must incorporate a gender approach, ensuring specific measures for protection, economic autonomy and the active participation of women in the reconstruction of affected communities.²⁰⁴

179. In light of this scenario, REDESCA recommends the adoption of gender-sensitive preventive and response measures, including the training of teams working in shelters, the creation of safe spaces for women and girls and guaranteed access to specialized health and social protection services. The experience during the climate crisis reinforces the importance of strengthening public policies aimed at protecting the rights of women and girls in emergency contexts, ensuring effective and structured responses to mitigate vulnerabilities and prevent rights violations. In this sense, the Rapporteur emphasizes the need for full compliance with the Joint National Protocol for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents, Older persons People and People with Disabilities in Situations of Risk and Disaster, ensuring its implementation on all fronts of response and action, as an essential part of the risk and disaster management strategy with a focus on human rights.²⁰⁵

C. Children and adolescents

180. In the context of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024, children and adolescents faced specific challenges, including interrupted access to education, physical and mental health risks, food insecurity and increased exposure to situations of violence and lack of protection. In addition to these impacts, at least 11 children and adolescents lost their lives during the tragedy, while many others faced mourning the loss of family members and loved ones.²⁰⁶ REDESCA expresses its solidarity with the families affected and, in particular, with those who lost children and adolescents, reaffirming its commitment to supporting actions that guarantee a safer and more dignified future for all children and adolescents.

181. In early May 2024, during the floods, several children were missing in Rio Grande do Sul.²⁰⁷ During the floods, many families were separated during rescue operations, either because they boarded different boats, prioritized the rescue of some members or because they were unable to return to their homes. As a result, the location of children and adolescents was largely the initiative of civil society, using social

²⁰² Governo do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Secretaria de Justiça e Cidadania e Direitos Humanos, SJCDH Departamento de Política para a Mulher, DPM Relatório de Impacto das Enchentes no Rio Grande do Sul, no date set, received in communication from the Brazilian State dated April 9, 2025; Fonte Segura, [Shelters for women and children in the RS floods](#), June 26, 2024.

²⁰³ Ministério das Mulheres, [RS: Ministério das Mulheres recebe denúncias de abusos em abrigos e discute protocolo durante desastres climáticos](#), May 10, 2024.

²⁰⁴ Rizzotto, M. L. F., Costa, A. M., & Lobato, L. V. C., [Climate crisis and the new challenges for health systems: the case of floods in Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil](#), *Saúde em Debate*, 48(141), 2024.

²⁰⁵ Brasil, Presidência da República, [Protocolo Nacional Conjunto para a Proteção Integral a Crianças e Adolescentes, Pessoas Idosas e Pessoas com Deficiência em Situação de Riscos e Desastres](#), September 2013.

²⁰⁶ O Globo, [Floods in Rio Grande do Sul: men are the majority of victims: people over 60 are the hardest hit](#), May 22, 2025.

²⁰⁷ Fala Brasil, [At least 80 children are missing in the South after floods](#), May 9, 2024.

networks and other improvised means.²⁰⁸ To minimize the impact of the floods on children and adolescents, a mapping exercise was carried out in the more than 800 shelters to identify those at risk.²⁰⁹ By mid-May, it was estimated that more than 10,000 children and adolescents were homeless.²¹⁰

182. In addition to the basic needs of food, health, sanitation, hygiene and housing, immediate psychological care and recreational activities were essential in order to prevent further damage to the mental health of the children and adolescents.²¹¹ Along with seeing their homes destroyed, children were also psychologically affected by the loss of their pets, toys and other personal belongings.²¹² Another need that required attention in the shelters was security in relation to sexual violence, with four men having been arrested by the beginning of May for committing sexual violence in these places, with victims including children and adolescents.²¹³ The complaints involve a context in the shelters of lack of space and toilets reserved for women and children and lack of electricity.²¹⁴

D. Older persons and persons with disabilities

183. The floods that hit Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 had a disproportionate impact on the older persons and persons with disabilities, exposing existing structural challenges in responding to emergencies and guaranteeing their rights. The lack of accessibility in temporary shelters, the difficulty in accessing essential medical services and the absence of specific protection and emergency assistance measures exacerbated the vulnerability of these groups. REDESCA received information during the visit about the barriers faced by the older persons and persons with disabilities in the context of the tragedy, highlighting the relevance for measures to guarantee their safety, dignity and inclusion in future responses to climate disasters.

184. The lack of adequate infrastructure in emergency shelters represented a major obstacle for the older persons, persons with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, compromising their safety and well-being during the floods in Rio Grande do Sul. There were reports of difficulties in mobility, risk of falls and inadequate facilities to meet the specific needs of these groups. Many were accommodated on mattresses on the floor, without minimum accessibility conditions, such as ramps, handrails and adapted spaces. In addition, the lack of recreational activities and social stimulation aggravated the impact on the mental health of those housed.

185. According to the information available, Rio Grande do Sul has the highest proportion of older persons in the country, with 14.1% of the population, but there were only two shelters exclusively for this group.²¹⁵ Similarly, the state has approximately 800,000 people with disabilities, which reinforces that it is essential to adopt public policies that ensure inclusive infrastructure in emergency responses.²¹⁶

186. During the visit, REDESCA was able to observe that the damage to health infrastructure caused by the floods has worsened access to essential medical care, particularly affecting people with disabilities and the older persons. According to the information available, there have been significant interruptions in care for chronic illnesses, difficulties in accessing emergency services and the discontinuation of treatments that are fundamental to maintaining the health of these groups. In addition, the precariousness of temporary facilities and the lack of adequate accessibility in shelters compromised the

²⁰⁸ Fala Brasil, [At least 80 children are missing in the South after floods](#), May 9, 2024.

²⁰⁹ UNICEF, [UNICEF leaves legacy in RS and reaffirms commitment to children's rights in post-flood reconstruction](#), December 17, 2024.

²¹⁰ CNN, [Floods in Rio Grande do Sul: more than 10,000 children and adolescents are in shelters](#), May 16, 2024.

²¹¹ UNICEF, [UNICEF leaves legacy in RS and reaffirms commitment to children's rights in post-flood reconstruction](#), December 17, 2024.

²¹² Uol, [See how the floods have affected children in Rio Grande do Sul](#), May 15, 2024.

²¹³ Diplomatieque, [Women in times of crisis: a tragedy within the tragedy of RS](#), May 10, 2024.

²¹⁴ Gazeta do Povo, [Rio Grande do Sul have reports of sexual abuse shelters](#), May 10, 2024.

²¹⁵ Agência Brasil, [With the highest proportion of elderly people in the country, RS only has 2 exclusive shelters](#), May 23, 2024.

²¹⁶ UFRGS, [Integrated response to natural disasters for people with disabilities](#), May 9, 2024.

safety and well-being of these populations, highlighting that specific measures to ensure continuous and accessible medical care in contexts of environmental disasters are crucial.²¹⁷

187. Given the challenges observed during the visit and the available information, REDESCA emphasizes the need for emergency assistance measures to be adapted to ensure the safety and dignity of persons with disabilities and older persons in disaster situations. In addition, it is essential that the state strengthens the training of professionals to meet the specific demands of this population, ensuring safe and inclusive care. The implementation of climate emergency response protocols must provide for continuous access to medical care, rehabilitation services and psychosocial support, ensuring that older persons and persons with disabilities have their rights protected in a comprehensive and effective manner.

E. New forms of social and climate vulnerability

188. REDESCA stresses that the impacts of climate change and environmental disasters are not restricted exclusively to historically vulnerable socio-economic populations. For example, people living in coastal regions, even if they did not previously face economic difficulties, are increasingly exposed to extreme weather events and must be considered when planning emergency responses. The flooding of Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 demonstrated that extreme weather events can, in a matter of hours, put people in a situation of social vulnerability, drastically altering their living conditions and access to essential resources. This reinforces the need to broaden the approach of social response and protection mechanisms to include new groups affected by climate risks.

189. In addition, REDESCA highlights that workers whose livelihoods depend directly on natural ecosystems, such as fishers and riverside dwellers, face challenges aggravated by changes in the environment and failures to protect their economic activities. The paralysis of these activities during and after severe weather events has impacts on food security, the local economy and the sustainability of entire communities. Likewise, small rural producers and family farmers are even more vulnerable, since climate unpredictability affects their production capacity, putting their food security and livelihoods at risk.

190. Given this scenario, REDESCA emphasizes the need for public policies to respond to climate disasters to be planned with a broad and participatory approach, considering not only the population living in poverty, but also communities and economic sectors exposed to climate vulnerability due to their geographical location, dependence on productive activities sensitive to extreme events and other risk factors. Strengthening resilience, prevention and recovery policies must be a priority, ensuring that all segments of society are adequately prepared and protected in the face of future environmental disasters.

²¹⁷ UFRGS, already cited.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

VI. CONCLUSIONS

191. REDESCA's report on the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 highlights the scale of the socio-environmental impacts and the urgent need to strengthen the protection of human rights in the context of the climate emergency. The damage caused to infrastructure, livelihoods and essential services, added to pre-existing structural inequalities, has resulted in disproportionate impacts for groups in situations of vulnerability, including indigenous peoples, quilombola communities, rural workers, women, children, older persons, people with disabilities and migrant populations, among others.

192. Throughout the visit and thanks to the meetings with affected communities, civil society organizations and authorities, REDESCA identified structural challenges that increased the population's vulnerability to the disaster, such as environmental degradation, the relaxation of environmental protection legislation, the lack of resilient infrastructure and insufficient public policies for mitigating and adapting to climate change. In addition, some shortcomings were observed in the emergency response, with difficulties in accessing adequate shelters, health services, education and psychosocial support.

193. REDESCA reiterates its concern about the recurrence and intensification of flooding in Rio Grande do Sul, which reflects not only the impacts of climate change, but also the influence of anthropogenic factors that increase environmental risks. According to information provided by the scientific community and observed during the visit, environmental degradation, driven by deforestation, the disorderly expansion of agribusiness and the replacement of natural ecosystems with intensive monocultures, has compromised the soil's water absorption capacity and aggravated the effects of extreme rainfall. Given this scenario, it is essential to adopt public policies that integrate climate adaptation strategies with environmental protection measures, ensuring that economic development actions are compatible with the preservation of natural resources and the resilience of affected communities.

194. REDESCA notes with concern the profound and cumulative environmental impacts of the recent floods in Rio Grande do Sul, which go beyond the simple temporary inundation of floodplains. According to the information received and verified during the visit, the climatic event resulted in intense soil erosion, landslides, the deposition of sediments in low-lying areas and the dispersion of potentially harmful substances, increasing the region's environmental fragility. In addition, the extreme rainfall intensified ecological degradation processes, compromising aquatic and terrestrial habitats and affecting biodiversity. REDESCA also notes the concerns raised about the loss of effectiveness of the dyke system due to the lack of adequate maintenance and technological modernization, which contributed to its structural failure during the disaster and aggravated the damage in the state capital.

195. Given this scenario, it is essential that the Brazilian state continues to adopt structural and emergency measures to guarantee the recovery of affected communities and resilience in the face of future extreme climate events. This includes the recovery of ecosystems, the implementation of resilient infrastructure adapted to climate challenges, especially considering NBS. In addition, it is essential to ensure the protection of the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations, guarantee the right to decent housing and promote an intersectional and participatory approach in the planning and implementation of public policies, in order to mitigate risks and strengthen response capacity in the face of new environmental and climate emergencies.

196. In addition to the concerns raised throughout this report, REDESCA recognizes the significant efforts undertaken by the Brazilian state to respond to the emergency caused by the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024. From issuing the first risk alerts to implementing rescue, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction measures, government actions have demonstrated a commitment to mitigating the impacts of the disaster and protecting affected populations. During the visit, REDESCA learned about the rapid mobilization of financial and operational resources, including the allocation of emergency funds, the expansion of social programs and support for the recovery of critical infrastructures, such as roads, bridges

and water and energy supply networks. Coordinated action between different spheres of government, civil society organizations and international agencies was key to guaranteeing immediate responses and minimizing the damage to the most vulnerable communities.

197. The Special Rapporteur points out that the prevention of floods and climate disasters in Brazil faces the additional challenge of the vast territorial extension and the need for effective coordination between federative entities, institutions and agencies, ensuring the integration of efforts and the optimization of results. Furthermore, the importance of collaboration with research institutions, social organizations and the private sector is highlighted in order to create effective public policies, promoting the exchange of information and resources. These policies must address not only the emergency response, but also the urgency of tackling the underlying causes of these phenomena, based on the best available science and traditional knowledge, indigenous peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems. In this manner, it is essential that the strategies adopted cover both adaptation and mitigation in the face of climate change and are supported by integrated sectoral plans, with specific actions for various areas, coordinated by all ministries, ensuring a comprehensive and effective response to climate challenges.

198. The climate tragedy in Rio Grande do Sul highlights the urgent need for public policies that consider racial and social inequalities and climate vulnerability in disaster management. These factors, added to the historical vulnerability of marginalized populations such as indigenous communities, quilombolas and informal workers, amplify the social and environmental impacts of disasters, resulting in the destruction of homes, loss of livelihoods and difficulties in accessing essential services. In this sense, it is essential that prevention, response and recovery strategies include the active participation of affected communities, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their demands are met in an equitable manner. Furthermore, the promotion of socio-environmental justice must be at the heart of public policies, ensuring that all populations have the right to a safe and healthy environment.

199. The findings of the visit and the analysis of the impacts of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul highlight that a comprehensive and intersectional approach in the formulation of public policies for prevention, response and recovery from climate disasters is indispensable. Recent extreme events have shown that climate vulnerability is not restricted to historically marginalized populations, but can reach new groups, including coastal populations, fishing workers, family farmers and communities that, until then, were not in a situation of socio-economic vulnerability. The speed with which individuals and families have been displaced into a situation of risk reinforces the importance of adaptable social protection mechanisms and resilient infrastructure, ensuring that all sectors of society are prepared to face the challenges posed by climate change.

200. REDESCA stresses the relevance of broadening social participation in decision-making processes on environmental and climate policies, ensuring that the voices of vulnerable communities are heard and incorporated in a meaningful way. To this end, it is essential to strengthen the production and dissemination of accessible information, based on scientific evidence, which enables communities to understand the challenges and participate in an informed manner.

201. However, the spread of misinformation about the causes and consequences of environmental disasters represents a significant obstacle to the formulation of effective responses and to social mobilization around sustainable solutions. The circulation of inaccurate or misleading information can minimize the real impacts of climate change, weaken the implementation of science-based policies and generate distrust in public institutions. Therefore, combating disinformation and ensuring transparency in the communication of climate and environmental data are fundamental steps towards strengthening the resilience of communities and promoting public policies that are more inclusive, effective and aligned with the real needs of those affected.

202. The impact of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul in 2024 highlights the urgency of strengthening public policies based on prevention, adaptation and effective response to climate disasters, ensuring that these measures are structured from a human rights and socio-environmental justice approach. The evidence collected shows that climate vulnerability is not limited to historically marginalized populations, as it also affects new social groups, and requires comprehensive and inclusive planning.

203. REDESCA emphasizes that the Brazilian state's commitment to protecting human rights in the face of the climate emergency must be translated into concrete actions, including investments in resilient infrastructure, strengthening environmental policies, integrating science into urban and rural planning, combating environmental racism, and ensuring social participation in decision-making processes. Only with an intersectoral and equity-based approach will it be possible to build an effective response that not only mitigates the damage of future extreme events, but also strengthens the resilience of communities and promotes human rights and climate justice as a fundamental principle for sustainable development.

CHAPTER VII

RECOMMENDATIONS

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the observations and conclusions of this report, REDESCA makes the following recommendations to the Brazilian state:

1. Strengthen, improve and modernize hydrological monitoring and early warning systems, ensuring integration between the federal, state and municipal levels, and promoting the continuous exchange of information and cooperation with scientific institutions, civil society and specialized bodies.
2. Update Municipal Master Plans and Municipal Risk Reduction Plans to incorporate recent climate scenarios and prevent the occupation and expansion of inhabited areas in zones vulnerable to flooding. Additionally, ensure that these instruments are aligned with Contingency Plans and Water Resource Plans, promoting integrated territorial and climate governance. It is essential not only to update these plans, but also to implement them effectively, with guaranteed social participation.
3. Improve the capacity and coverage of storm drainage infrastructure in vulnerable urban and rural areas, ensuring the implementation of resilient systems such as dikes, efficient drainage and flood containment. In addition, ensure the effective operation and regular maintenance of these infrastructures to prevent future flooding and minimize the impacts of extreme weather events.
4. Promote the integration of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) into municipal and state climate adaptation plans, encouraging the implementation of green infrastructure (urban parks, green roofs, ecological corridors) and blue infrastructure (wetlands, natural drainage, riverbank restoration).
5. Restore degraded ecosystems as a priority strategy for climate adaptation, ensuring regulatory and financial incentives for the recovery of strategic areas for flood control.
6. Strengthen environmental governance and the sustainable management of natural resources through the promotion and implementation of soil management practices that prevent environmental degradation associated with intensive production models. It is particularly relevant that these initiatives be integrated into specific regulatory frameworks aimed at the conservation of the Pampa biome.
7. Advance in the titling of quilombola lands, in the integration of families into the National Agrarian Reform Program, and in the demarcation of indigenous lands, rejecting the temporal framework (marco temporal) thesis. These actions must be accompanied by the promotion of agroecological and regenerative practices, recognizing the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, quilombolas and peasant communities, and integrating them into climate resilience and food security strategies.
8. Ensure that environmental licenses and concession contracts for water and sanitation services incorporate strict human rights and environmental due diligence criteria, ensuring effective monitoring, inspection and accountability mechanisms, in line with international standards and the precautionary principle.
9. Strengthen the protection of human rights in business activities, ensuring the effective application of existing environmental legislation and compliance with the duty of human rights due diligence. Implement rigorous oversight mechanisms to prevent business operations from increasing climate risks, degrading fragile ecosystems or violating the rights of local communities, ensuring accountability and transparency in the actions of the private sector.
10. Implement specific economic recovery plans aimed at the most affected sectors, including family farming, guaranteeing agile financing mechanisms and sustainable recovery. In addition, adopt emergency and structural programs to support informal workers and small rural producers, facilitating access to credit, technical assistance and incentives for sustainable and agro-ecological agriculture, promoting the economic resilience of impacted communities.

11. Guarantee the recovery and sustainability of the livelihoods of artisanal fishers and riverside communities, recognized as Traditional Peoples and Communities, ensuring respect for their right to prior, free and informed consultation in the formulation of public policies.
12. Promote the inclusion of waste pickers in waste management, guaranteeing their active participation in collection, sorting, and recycling processes, in accordance with the National Solid Waste Policy, as well as ensuring dignified working conditions, access to social protection, and the enhancement of their remuneration.
13. Develop comprehensive housing programs that guarantee decent and safe housing, considering the permanent relocation of communities in risk areas, with the active participation of the affected communities. Ensure housing policies that ensure decent housing in safe areas, considering the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the populations.
14. Guarantee specific emergency plans for schools, including permanent relocation of institutions located in risk areas, resilient infrastructure and psychosocial support programs for students and teachers.
15. Strengthen the public health system's capacity to respond to climate emergencies, guaranteeing continuous epidemiological monitoring, comprehensive care and access to mental health services, with special attention to vulnerable groups.
16. Strengthen health systems with continuous epidemiological surveillance and prepare teams to respond to climate emergencies, integrating climate monitoring into the management of preventive public health policies. In addition, ensure the ongoing training of health professionals and the expansion of the necessary infrastructure to care for vulnerable populations in a culturally appropriate way in the context of environmental disasters.
17. Create comprehensive mental health care policies in affected communities, guaranteeing psychosocial support for victims of climate disasters and frontline workers.
18. Ensure the effective implementation of the Joint National Protocol for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities in Situations of Risk and Disaster, guaranteeing its expansion to include specific protection measures for women and the LGBTQIA+ population in disaster contexts. This includes creating safe spaces in shelters, strengthening specialized care and adopting preventive measures against gender-based violence and discrimination, ensuring access to reporting channels and psychosocial support.
19. Ensure that emergency shelters are adapted for the older persons and persons with disabilities, ensuring mobility, safety and dignity. Train emergency response teams to adequately serve this public.
20. Guarantee the effective participation of civil society, local communities and the scientific community in the planning, response and recovery processes in the face of climate disasters, ensuring transparency and access to reliable, evidence-based information. In addition, ratify the Escazú Agreement, reinforcing Brazil's commitments to access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making and strengthening environmental justice, especially for vulnerable groups.
21. Strengthen the fight against disinformation in the context of climate disasters, promoting official communication channels, educational campaigns and strategies for the dissemination of reliable information.
22. Review and, where necessary, reverse legislative setbacks in environmental and human rights matters, ensuring that national legislation is aligned with the international commitments made by Brazil. Strengthen the monitoring and enforcement of existing environmental standards, ensuring

their effectiveness in protecting ecosystems and preventing adverse environmental impacts, especially those aggravated by climate change.

23. Promote scientific production and technological innovation for climate adaptation and environmental protection, ensuring that universities and research centers develop applied studies that support evidence-based public policies. At the same time, foster and incorporate traditional knowledge and the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities in the formulation and implementation of such policies, fostering an intercultural approach that recognizes and values ancestral practices of environmental management and biodiversity protection.
24. Adopt measures aimed at ensuring a just energy transition, including the establishment of dedicated funds — among other initiatives — to accelerate this process, particularly in contexts such as the State of Rio Grande do Sul, which remains highly dependent on coal. These actions should be integrated with ecosystem protection strategies, contributing simultaneously to climate change mitigation and adaptation to its impacts.

REDESCA recognizes the efforts made by the Brazilian state during the 2024 floods, emphasizing that the effective guarantee of human rights in the face of climate change will depend on strengthening preventive measures, social participation and a commitment to sustainable and equitable practices. To contribute to this process, the state will be able to evaluate and request technical assistance from REDESCA through a special follow-up mechanism, with the aim of monitoring and strengthening actions aimed at protecting DESCA from the impacts of climate change.

