



## The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, one year on

May 12, 2022, Analysis / Climate change, conflict and humanitarian action / Humanitarian Action

8 mins read



**Tessa Kelly**  
Climate Change  
Coordinator, IFRC



**Catherine-Lune  
Grayson**  
Policy Adviser, ICRC



**Amir Khouzam**  
Policy Adviser, ICRC



Denis Onyodi/Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

*“The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss the brief, rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future.”*

The [latest reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) present the most urgent and alarming calls to actions we’ve had to date. Its analysis on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability finds that climate change is driving and exacerbating humanitarian crises, and that climate impacts are perpetuating vulnerabilities as well as social and economic inequities. The science now confirms that climate change is not just a future humanitarian concern, but one having devastating impacts already, today – a crisis demanding a scaled-up humanitarian response, now. This is precisely what the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#) aims to do: urgently steer and galvanize a collective humanitarian response to the climate and environmental crises.

The 21st of May marks one year since the Charter was opened for signature. In this post, IFRC Climate Change Coordinator Tessa Kelly and ICRC Policy Advisers Catherine-Lune Grayson and Amir Khouzam highlight the good reasons we have for celebrating, as well as the need to maintain momentum and live up to our commitments.

When the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the second installment of its sixth assessment report on the impacts of climate change, connections between its findings and humanitarian action were abundantly clear. Protecting the lives and the rights of present and future generations largely depends first and foremost on political will to cut greenhouse gas emissions, halt biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, adapt to rising risks, and address loss and damage associated with the impacts of the crises. Yet humanitarian organizations have a role to play in responding to growing needs and adapting our responses to ensure that we help people adapt to these crises themselves.

It is this recognition that led to the development of the Climate and Environment Charter, a short and aspirational text that calls for a transformational change across the humanitarian sector. Its seven commitments are intended to guide humanitarian organizations in stepping up and improving our humanitarian action to address the climate and environmental crises and reduce humanitarian needs.

The strong support that the Charter has garnered in its first year reflects that humanitarian organizations want to do our part – and so do donors. These are good reasons to celebrate, and to redouble our commitments and accelerate our work. We are already playing catch up, and humanitarian needs continue to rise.

## **The commitment of the humanitarian sector to do more and better, together, is clear and uplifting.**

Over the last year, more than 230 humanitarian organizations have signed the Charter. These signatures represent the full breadth of the humanitarian sector, with organizations of different scales, mandates and approaches joining in – from local NGOs in over 80 countries to international organizations, National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, UN agencies, and NGO consortiums.

The number of signatories and their diversity tell us a few things.

First, we can read this as affirmation that humanitarian organizations now see the climate and environmental crises as humanitarian priorities that we must address together as local, national and international organizations. We all agree that we also have much to learn from the solutions that communities have designed themselves, from climate scientists to development organizations and farming associations.

We can also read this as a testimony to the value of listening to people, seeking out diverse opinions, and building a sense of community. The Charter is not any one organization's to claim – it was shaped by hundreds of individuals and organizations across the globe, and we think that this is why so many organizations are happy to be part of this effort.

The support the Charter has received also indicates a consensus on what needs to be done. We have often seen the Charter frame conversations on the role of humanitarian actors in responding to the climate and environment crises. We like to think that this is because the seven commitments captured in the Charter are virtually impossible to disagree with.

## **Donor countries have joined in, and they also have a clear role to play.**

This was a year during which we have seen a growing number of countries commit to supporting a stronger humanitarian response to the climate and environment crises.

The Charter has always been a document for and by humanitarian organizations. As the number of signatories rose, States, government agencies, and other entities noticed, and asked how they could be involved to show their support for the Charter and the ambitions it represents.

This makes sense – in fact, it reflects two core elements of the Charter. First, the Charter highlights the importance of mobilizing urgent and more ambitious climate action and environmental protection. For this, it is essential to have governments and other decision-makers on board. Second, implementing the Charter requires financial and technical support, which requires the support of donors.

In response to this reality, we opened a Supporters category through which States, local and regional governments, government agencies and departments, and private foundations can indicate their support for the Charter. Since this category opened last fall, Switzerland, the United States, Norway and the European Union have formally expressed their support. We hope that many others will follow.

In March, at the European Humanitarian Forum, humanitarian donors were also invited to sign up to a new declaration on climate and the environment announced by the European Commission. The declaration echoes the Charter, as its signatories commit to investing in, preparing for, anticipating and responding to disasters, improving cooperation and partnerships at all levels and reducing the environmental impact of humanitarian activities.

## **The support for accelerating the implementation of the Climate and Environment Charter is increasingly clear – and we have no time to lose!**

As we've always said, signing the Charter is the beginning of the journey. The true test is how this changes the way we work and how our commitments make a difference for the people we are working with and for.

Organizations signing the Charter commit to adopting and sharing publicly specific targets and implementation plans that demonstrate how their commitments are being translated into practice. Some [17 organizations have already shared their targets](#), and many have indicated that theirs are being

Recently, we surveyed humanitarian organizations on the support that they require to implement the Charter. We received nearly 100 responses from people working in over 100 countries and in every region of the world for international, national, and local NGOs and National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies.

We heard calls for help with developing concrete targets, compiling successful examples and case studies, and developing tools and technical standards for specific sectors. We also heard that peer-to-peer exchanges and direct assistance to develop targets and implementation plans would be extremely valuable forms of support. Moving forward into the Charter's second year, we will focus on accelerating this area of work.

The support the Charter has seen in its first year is remarkable. It is also only the beginning. This is a work in progress – and we feel that it is moving in the right direction. We are immensely grateful for the strong engagement of humanitarians across the world in driving this effort forward. As a small Charter team, we cannot provide all the support that is critical to implementing the Charter, but we can help by identifying sources of support and making the right connections, and contributing to turning this into a truly collective effort.

Let's see what the second year brings as we work together to meet the moment.

**To sign the Charter and find guidance on its implementation, please visit [www.climate-charter.org](http://www.climate-charter.org).**

## See also

- Tessa Kelly, Catherine-Lune Grayson & Amir Khouzam, *Standing together: the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations*, 21 May 2021
- Kheira Tarif, *Four pathways of climate insecurity: a guide for humanitarians*, January 13, 2022
- Catherine-Lune Grayson, *A plea for COP26: don't forget people affected by conflict*, October 27, 2021
- Cécile Aptel, *The future is now: time to scale up climate mitigation and adaptation measures*, February 6, 2020
- Catherine-Lune Grayson, *When rain turns to dust: climate change, conflict and humanitarian action*, December 5, 2019

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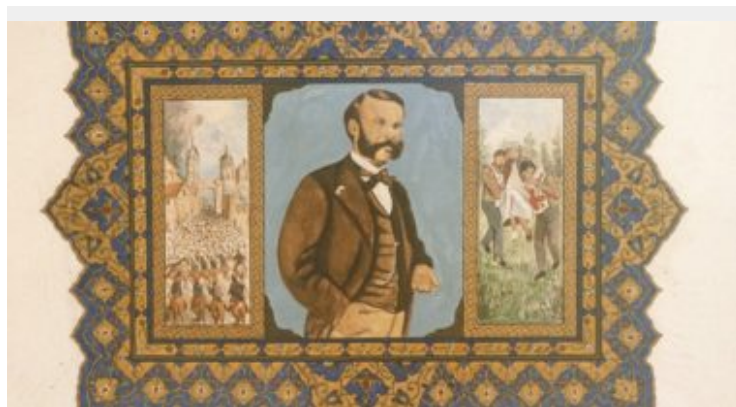


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