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**Edited by
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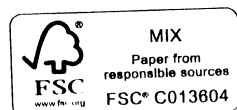
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9 A double-edged sword

Climate change, biodiversity and human rights

Federico Lenzerini and Erika Piergentili

Introduction

The Preamble to the Biodiversity Convention emphasises the significance of biodiversity for humanity. In addition to its 'intrinsic value', the 'ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic value of biological diversity and its components' are underscored.¹ The Preamble also stresses 'the importance of biological diversity for evolution and for maintaining life sustaining systems of the biosphere',² to the point of considering biodiversity a 'common concern of humankind'.³

At the same time, the Biodiversity Convention also expresses the concern that biological diversity is being significantly reduced by certain human activities',⁴ noting that it is consequently 'vital' that the international community 'anticipate[s], prevent[s] and attack[s] the causes of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity at source'.⁵ Among the causes leading biodiversity to be significantly reduced, climate change – to be imputed to human activities – undoubtedly plays a particularly important role, and is therefore to be attacked 'at source'. Indeed, there is no reasonable doubt that climate change represents today the main cause of biodiversity loss. It is estimated that approximately 20–30 per cent of known plant and animal species are likely to be at increased risk of extinction if the global average temperature rises more than 1.5–2.5°C.⁶ This figure appears particularly worrying if one considers that, according to some estimates, warming of up to 3°C could be possible by 2100.⁷ By 2050, climate change alone is expected to

¹ *Biodiversity Convention*, Preamble, first recital.

² *Ibid.* second recital.

³ *Ibid.* third recital.

⁴ *Ibid.* sixth recital.

⁵ *Ibid.* eighth recital.

⁶ IPCC 'Summary for Policymakers', in Martin L. Parry *et al.* (eds), *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (2007) 7, 11; AR5, *Synthesis* (2014) 72.

⁷ See *Two Degrees, One Chance. The Urgent Need to Curb Global Warming*, 6, <www.tearfund.org/Global-Warming/Website/Campaigning/Policy%20and%20research/Two_degrees_One_chance_final.pdf>