FAQ on the Climate and Environment Charter

1. Why a climate and environment charter for humanitarian organizations?

The climate and environment crises are humanitarian crises, threatening the future of humanity. They are already affecting people's lives and livelihoods around the world, and their impact is growing all the time. While these crises are affecting all of us, those most affected by their consequences are the poorest and most marginalized communities, whose capacity to adapt is already strained, owing to armed conflict, displacement, weak governance, unplanned urbanization or poverty. All of these situations are exacerbated by structural inequities and by people's individual characteristics, such as age, gender, disability or livelihood.

We want to send a clear signal that humanitarian organizations have a key role to play in addressing these crises. We must be a part of the solution and help people adapt to a changing climate and environment, while also increasing our own environmental sustainability. This needs to be a collective endeavour, as it is clear that no organization can tackle this alone. This Charter intends to provide a clear vision and principles to guide humanitarian action in the face of the climate and environment crises.

2. Why now?

First, because we have no time to lose. We must act, at scale and in concert. Second, because the community is ready. The massive scale of existing and predicted humanitarian impacts of the climate and environment crises means addressing them has become a priority for many humanitarian organizations. At a technical level, a collection of guidelines and standards already exists or is being developed on how to incorporate climate risk into programmes and operations to reduce the environmental impacts of our work. What is lacking, however, is a sector-wide commitment to changing our ways of working and implementing these standards. Third, because we have identified a gap between concerns and effective action, and a need to strengthen collaboration within and beyond the humanitarian sector to tackle the crises together.

3. How has the Charter been developed?

The development of the Charter has been led by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and guided by an Advisory Committee of 19 people, including representatives of local, national and international NGOs, UN agencies and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as academics, researchers and experts in the humanitarian, development, climate and environmental fields. This committee represents and is linked to a number of important humanitarian networks, including the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the Alliance for Empowering Partnership, InterAction, the Environment and Humanitarian Action Network, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee sub-working group on climate change. The members of the Advisory Committee have been instrumental in ensuring wide distribution of the Charter, coordinating the consultation process around the draft Charter and developing and improving the text.

Between December 2020 and March 2021, discussions were held with more than 150 organizations and 200 individuals. The organizations included more than 50 national NGOs/local chapters of international NGOs, national and international NGO networks and forums, components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the IASC sub-working group on climate change and UN agencies. Consultations were in the form of virtual meetings, bilateral discussions, two open

consultations for the whole humanitarian sector and an online questionnaire. The draft was also shared widely through the networks of various organizations, including the IASC.

4. Why are the ICRC and IFRC leading the Charter development and consultation process?

Addressing the climate and environment crises is a top priority for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and has been for some time. At the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2019, the ICRC, IFRC and a number of National Societies committed not only to adapting their ways of working but also to developing a charter to support and promote greater climate action within the humanitarian community at large.

5. Who is this Charter for?

The Charter is a document *for* and *by* humanitarian organizations. It is open for signing by organizations that conduct humanitarian activities and that self-identify as humanitarian at the local, national or international level. These include faith-based organizations, those with a dual humanitarian and development assignment, human rights actors, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, local NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies.

While the increased focus on climate and the environment by states and humanitarian donors is most welcome, the Charter is not designed for these parties.

6. Why does the Charter focus on humanitarian organizations?

We all need to do more to ensure effective climate action. This Charter is intended to help humanitarian organizations play their part and highlight their relevance in responding to the crises. It is important that we, as humanitarian organizations, are clear about our role and what we can offer in engaging with others.

7. What does my organization need to do to sign the Charter?

The Charter is not a legally binding document but a statement of commitment. Organizations adopting the Charter should be committed to addressing the climate and environment crises, both in the programmes they implement and the way in which they work. Organizations will be expected to translate the commitments in the Charter into time-bound targets and action plans within a year.

8. What kind of targets does the Charter require humanitarian organizations to develop?

Organizations adopting the Charter should be committed to ensuring they have specific targets (these could be new, existing or a mixture of both) that demonstrate how changes are being implemented and that lead to real reductions in their environmental impacts. Each organization will have its own specific targets, reflecting its scale, capacities and mandate. These targets may take time to develop. Organizations do not need to finalize their targets before adopting the Charter; they merely need to commit to doing so within a year of signing it.

Targets should be informed by international standards and agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, and be based on the latest scientific evidence. While the Charter does not include specific targets, it will be accompanied by a series of suggested targets on key measures, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and on the mainstreaming of climate and environmental risks.

9. Is there a deadline for adopting the Charter?

There is no specific deadline for adopting the Charter. The intention is, however, to share the document and the list of those who have adopted it ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference

(COP26) – due to take place in November 2021 – to signal the strong commitment of the humanitarian community to scaling up its response to the climate and environment crises. Ideally, a substantial number of organizations will sign the Charter ahead of COP26 to demonstrate our collective commitment to act.

10. What kind of tools will be available to help organizations develop targets and track progress?

In addition to the series of suggested targets, sharing tools and knowledge will be critical to the success of the Charter. Many organizations have been developing tools that will be valuable for fulfilling the Charter's commitments. Other tools may need to be developed, especially in the area of carbon accounting. Many organizations have already committed to ensuring that existing tools are shared widely and to identifying potential gaps and ways to address them. Following the launch of the Charter, the intention is to establish communities of practice to serve as forums for exchanging knowledge, best practice and tools.

11. Will there be a monitoring mechanism?

The IFRC and ICRC will act as the repository for the Charter and maintain a database of the organizations that adopt it, but there will not be a formal external monitoring mechanism. However, organizations themselves will be expected to monitor and report on their own progress.

12. When will the Charter be finalized?

The text is currently being finalized in light of the (overwhelmingly positive) feedback received from more than 150 organizations. The final document will be available for organizations to sign from May 2021. The signing period will be open-ended – we want organizations to sign up when they are ready – and the plan is to publicly launch the Charter, together with a list of organizations that have signed it, around the time of COP26, in November 2021. The Charter will also be presented at the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in December 2021.