



Oral Statement at the 43rd Session of the Human Right Council

Item 3: General Debate

Date: 5 March, 2020

Delivered by: Andrzej Owca

Mr. President,

VIVAT International, Edmund Rice International, PRATYeK and IGSSS would like to draw your attention to the deteriorating condition of air quality in India. This submission was composed by children in Delhi, who belong to the NINEISMINE campaign, an advocacy initiative of, for and by children, who seek higher investment by the government for their present and their future.

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution states that, “No person shall be deprived of life.”

India is facing a major air-pollution crisis. India has 15 of the 20 most polluted cities of the world, with Delhi invariably topping the list. “Air pollution is responsible for 12.5 % of all deaths in India.”¹

This has caused India to hold the burden of the highest pollution-related mortality rate and diseases in the world. According to a WHO report, there were about 60,987 deaths of our Indian peers under the age of five that was caused due to exposure to PM 2.5 in 2016.²

Our schools were closed, twice last year to protect us from this “Gas Chamber”. But we the children from impoverished backgrounds continued to breathe in this pollution, in our slums.

This Climate emergency puts our health and lives at risk and our rights to education, play and a childhood, on hold.

The Ministry of Environment was allocated Rs 31 billion, with an additional amount of 44 Billion rupees to ensure clean air in cities with a population of above a million. But this amount is a tiny 0.25 % of India’s total Budget.³ This is certainly an inadequate response by our government to the Climate emergency we face nationally and globally.

We request India and all the world leaders to ensure that India and the world invest adequately on children and our Mother earth.

I thank you.

¹Lancet 2019

²The CSR Journal, Report, Nov 2018

³Government of India Budget- Union Budget, Ministry of Finance