

***The United Nations Human Rights Council***



**Measures to Address Water Scarcity and to Improve the Protection  
of Human Rights in Southern Africa**

**-Committee Guide-**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE**

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and making efforts to prevent and solve them. Established in 2006 by the General Assembly, it has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. The Council, consisting of 47 Member States, which are selected every year by the General Assembly and which are distributed among the five UN regional groups responds to human rights emergencies and makes recommendations on how to better implement human rights on the ground. The rotating membership reflects the UN's diversity and gives every country the possibility to face human violations.

The complaint procedure of the Human Rights Council addresses consistent patterns of gross and reliably-attested violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms occurring in any part of the world and under any circumstances. Complaints may be submitted by individuals, groups, or non-governmental organizations that claim to be victims of such violations, or who have direct, reliable knowledge of them. From 19-23 June 2006 the UN Human Rights Council held their first session in Geneva.

### **2. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC**

Billions of people still don't have access to clean and safe water, which is a fundamental human right. The water scarcity can be classified into two types: physical and economic. Rainfall in Southern Africa is low, agriculture consumes large amounts of water, demand continues to rise due to population growth and industrialisation, and the climate crisis is exacerbating periods of drought. The vital catchment areas of Boland and Groot Winterhoek are under threat – not only from over-use and the climate crisis, but also from invasive plant species.

## **II. FACTS AND CURRENT SITUATION**

### **1. FACTS**

- Southern Africa is located in the southern part of the African continent and includes countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, Lesotho, and Eswatini
- The region has mostly dry and semi-arid climate and frequently experiences droughts and irregular rainfall
- Important geographical features include the Kalahari Desert, the Namib Desert, and major rivers such as the Zambezi, Limpopo and Orange River
- South Africa is the most economically developed country in the region and has around 65 Million inhabitants
- South Africa has three capitals: Pretoria (executive), Cape Town (legislative), and Bloemfontein (judicial)
- Agriculture is one of the most important economic sectors in Southern Africa and depends heavily on rainfall and water availability
- Climate change increases temperatures, droughts, and water shortages across the region
- Millions of people in Southern Africa still lack reliable access to clean drinking water and sanitation
- Water scarcity affects fundamental human rights, including the rights to water, health, food, sanitation, and development



<https://www.worldvision.de/aktuell/2018/03/wasser-afrika-cheru>

## 2. CURRENT SITUATION

- Southern Africa is facing severe water shortages caused by climate change, droughts, and irregular rainfall
- Countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, and Namibia are strongly affected by water scarcity
- Millions of people still lack reliable access to clean drinking water and sanitation, especially in rural areas
- Low water levels have damaged agriculture, increased food insecurity, and reduced energy production from hydropower
- Rapid population growth and urbanization are increasing pressure on already limited water resources
- Governments, NGOs, and organizations such as Southern African Development Community (SADC) are working on improving water infrastructure and sustainable water management in the region

## III. ECONOMY

Many Countries in Southern Africa depend heavily on agriculture, mining, and energy production, all of which require large amounts of water. Because of recurring droughts and irregular rainfall, water scarcity has become a major economic challenge for the region. Agriculture is especially affected, since many farmers rely on rain-fed farming.

Crop failures and livestock losses reduce food production, increase food prices, and lead to unemployment and poverty.

Water shortages also affect energy production. Several countries in Southern Africa use hydropower generated by rivers and dams. During periods of drought, low water levels reduce electricity production, causing power shortages that negatively impact businesses, industries, and households.

In addition, many countries in the region face economic difficulties that limit investments in modern water infrastructures and sanitation systems. Poor infrastructures often leads to water waste, pollution, and unequal access to clean water, especially in rural areas.

Water scarcity disproportionately affects poorer communities, as many people lose their sources of income and struggle to afford clean water and basic services. As a result, economic inequality and social instability can increase.

For these reasons, sustainable water management, international investment, and regional cooperation are essential to support economic development and protect human rights in Southern Africa.

#### **IV. (SOUTH) AFRICA'S JUSTICE SYSTEM**

South Africa has a constitutional democracy with an independent justice system based on the rule of law. The country's legal system is founded on the Constitution of South Africa, which guarantees fundamental human rights, including the right to equality, dignity, and access to water and sanitation. The judiciary consists of different courts, including the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Appeal, and lower regional courts.

The justice system plays an important role in protecting human rights and addressing issues such as discrimination, corruption, and unequal access to basic resources. However, challenges such as poverty, inequality, corruption, and limited access to legal services still affect the effectiveness of the system, especially in rural communities.

#### **V. INTERVENTION OF THE UN**

The United Nations plays a vital role in addressing water scarcity and protecting human rights in Southern Africa. In 2010, the UN agencies have supported countries

in the region through humanitarian aid, infrastructure projects, and sustainable development programs.

Organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) work to improve access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene, especially in vulnerable communities. The UN also cooperates with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to strengthen regional water management and climate resilience.

The United Nations continues to emphasize that water scarcity is closely linked to human rights issues such as poverty, health crises, food insecurity, and inequality. Therefore, the UN encourages international cooperation and sustainable solutions to ensure equal access to water for all people in Southern Africa.

## **VI. OPERATIONS OF THE UN**

### **a. WHO**

The WHO works to improve public health by supporting access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. It also helps prevent diseases caused by shortages and poor sanitation conditions.

### **b. UNICEF**

UNICEF focuses on providing clean water and sanitation facilities, especially for children and vulnerable communities. The organization

also promotes hygiene education and emergency aid during droughts and crises

### **c. UNDP**

The UNDP supports sustainable development projects that improve water management, reduce poverty, and strengthen climate resilience in Southern Africa.

### **d. UNEP**

UNEP works on environmental protection and sustainable use of water resources. The agency addresses issues such as climate change, desertification and water pollution that worsen water scarcity in the region.

## **VII. CRITISM OF THESE MISSIONS**

Despite the efforts of the United Nations and its agencies, many critics argue that progress in addressing water scarcity in Southern Africa remains too slow. One major criticism is that several UN programs depend heavily on international funding, which can limit long-term effectiveness and delay important projects.

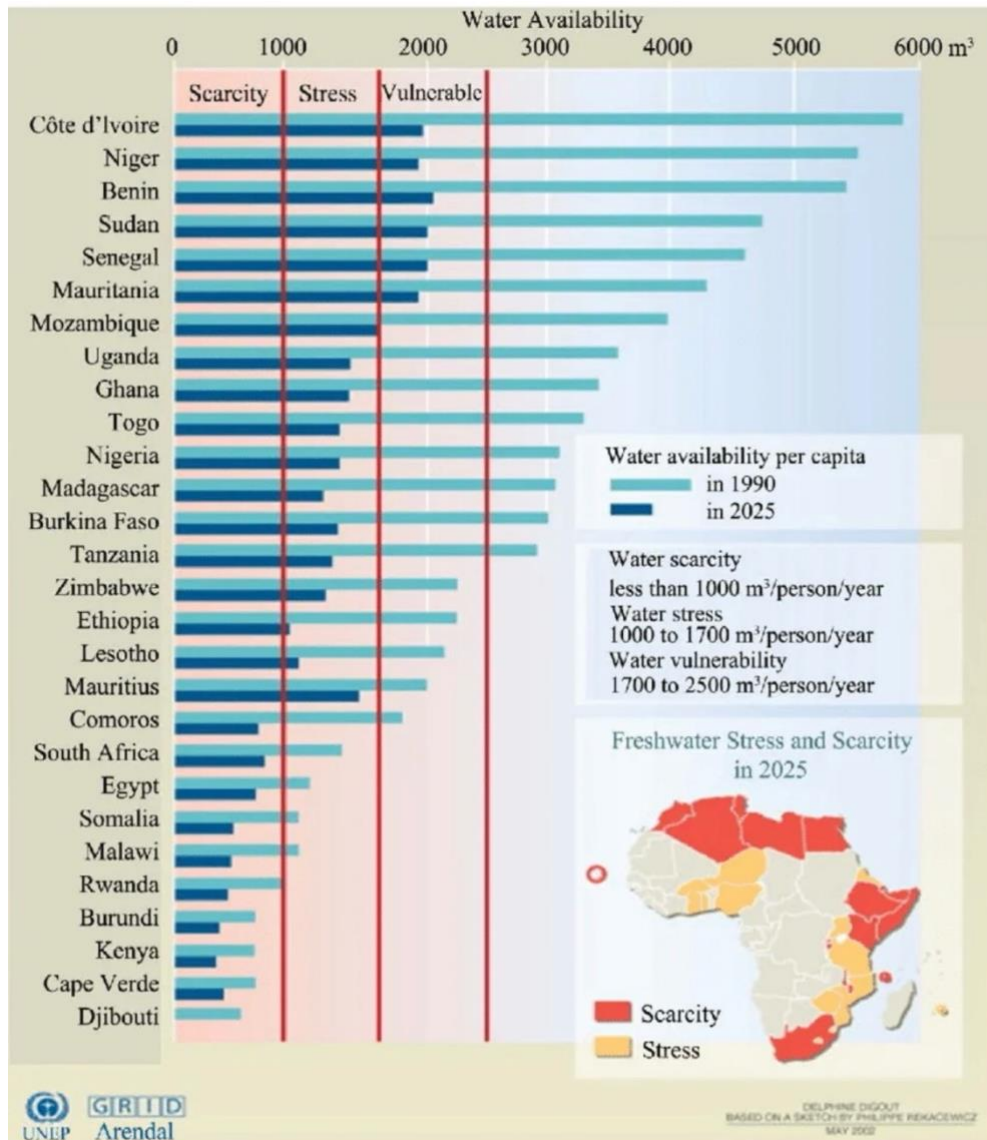
In addition, some experts believe that humanitarian aid often focuses on short-term relief rather than long-term solutions such as sustainable infrastructure and regional water management. Others criticize the unequal distribution of resources, as rural communities frequently continue to have less access to clean water and sanitation than urban areas.

Furthermore, climate change, political instability, and corruption in certain states make it difficult for UN missions to achieve lasting success. As a result, many people in Southern Africa still face limited access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation despite ongoing international efforts.

## **VIII. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

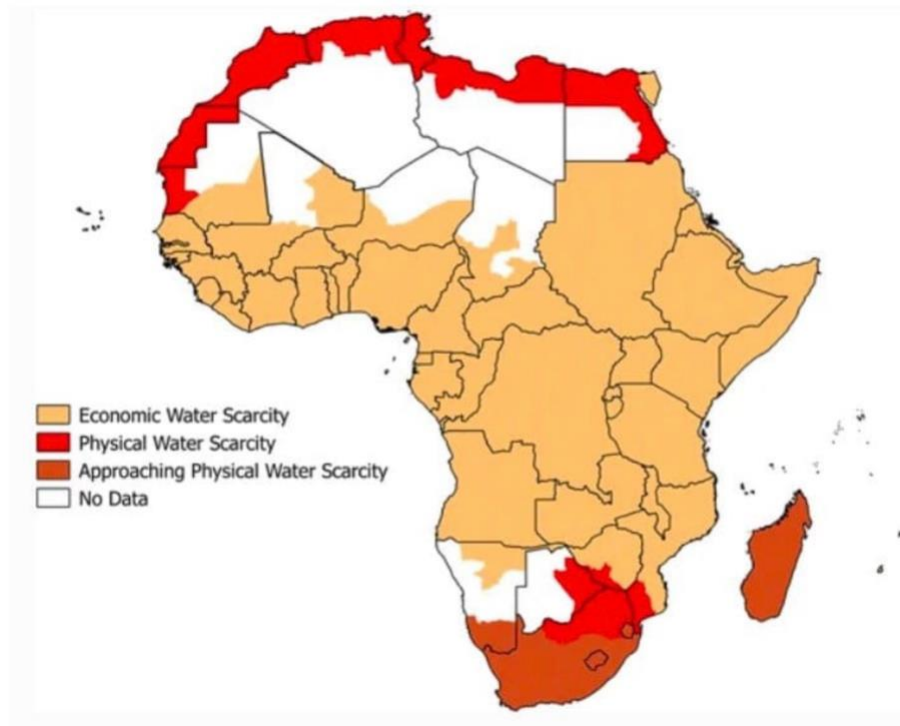
Possible solutions include investing in sustainable water infrastructure, improving access to clean drinking water, and promoting water conservation. Southern African states should strengthen regional cooperation and develop better management of shared water resources.

In addition, international support, climate resilience projects, and education programs can help reduce the long-term effects of water scarcity and protect human rights in the region.



**IX. DEFINITION KEY TERMS**

- **Water Scarcity:** A situation in which the demand for water exceeds the available supply of clean and safe water.  
<https://de.genesiswatertech.com/blog-post/the-top-solutions-to-water-scarcity-in-africa/>
- **Human Rights:** Basic rights and freedoms that every person is entitled to, including access to clean water and sanitation.
- **Climate Change:** Long term changes in global temperatures and weather patterns that can increase droughts and reduce water availability.



## X. USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.unicef.org/wash/water-scarcity>  
(Overview of global water scarcity and its effects on children and communities)
- [https://www.who.int/health-topics/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash#tab=tab_1)  
( Information about health, sanitation, and access to clean water)
- <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6>  
( Explains the UNs goals and targets regarding clean water and sanitation)
- [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/746993?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/746993?utm_source=chatgpt.com&v=pdf)  
( Resolution focusing on the connection between water access and human rights protection)