

UNHCR NGO Consultations Concept Note

Climate change: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global Compacts

Day: Friday 16 June 2017

Time: 12:15- 13:45

Room no (ICCG): 4

Background

Disasters and adverse effects of climate change are contemporary drivers of displacement. NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that each year over 24.5 million people are forced to move in the context of disasters,¹ and the likelihood of being displaced by disasters is twice what it was in the 1970s. Noting that efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change, experts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change agree that the increased intensity and frequency of climate-related natural hazards, in combination with other factors, will increase displacement in the future.

Disasters and climate change impacts can also act as a threat multiplier, and fuel conflict between people relying on the same depleted resources. Moreover, many people who have already been displaced by conflict and violence can be forced to move again in times of disaster or in search of habitable living areas. Their ability to return to places of origin may also be limited by climate change impacts.

Link to Theme

Both the Secretary General's report 'In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants' (May 2016)² and the New York declaration³ explicitly acknowledged the challenge posed by climate change and disaster displacement and referred to the Nansen Initiative Protection agenda⁴ as part of efforts to work towards solutions for addressing this issue.

Climate change and disaster displacement arises primarily in relation to the following aspects of the New York Declaration, notably its commitments to refugees and migrants, as well as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework as set out in Annex I:

- Reducing the risk of **secondary displacement** for refugees and host communities situated in climate change and disaster hotspots: Both because many displaced communities are situated in countries vulnerable to the effects of climate change and disasters and because of environmental challenges of hosting a large population in a small area, it is essential to increase preparedness and resilience of displaced persons and their host communities,⁵ including through disaster risk reduction, contingency planning, climate change adaptation and sustainable development activities.⁶

¹ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2016/20161102-climate-change.pdf>

² http://refugeemigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/in_safety_and_dignity_-_addressing_large_movements_of_refugees_and_migrants.pdf

³ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1

⁴ <https://nanseninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PROTECTION-AGENDA-VOLUME-1.pdf>

⁵ New York Declaration Paragraph 85; Annex I Paragraph 6(e)

⁶ New York Declaration Paragraph 17, 18, 43

- Increasing **opportunities for sustainable return** for refugees: Refugees may be prevented from returning to their countries of origin by environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change, including sudden onset disasters such as storms and floods as well as slow onset events such as droughts and sea level rise.⁷ It is therefore essential to support countries of origin in addressing these phenomena, including through climate change adaptation and sustainable development activities.⁸
- Addressing **root causes** of refugee movements and displacement: Climate change and disaster should be considered both as a root cause of displacement and as a threat multiplier potentially leading to conflicts, including over scarce resources, which may also lead to displacement.⁹ This perspective was articulated in the 2015 High Commissioner' Dialogue on Protection Challenges focused on 'Understanding and addressing root causes of displacement'.¹⁰
- **Protection** of people displaced in climate change and disaster contexts: Although people displaced in climate change and disaster contexts would not normally qualify as refugees, there might be cases where this status could be relevant, including where climate change is linked to conflict or persecution, and on the basis of regional instruments such as the OAU Convention¹¹ which affords protection to people seeking refuge as a result of events seriously disturbing public order.¹² In addition, complementary and temporary protection and stay arrangements (TPSAs)¹³ are also relevant in these contexts.¹⁴

In addition, climate change and disaster displacement also feature prominently in the discussions around the interface with the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration:

- **Addressing drivers** of migration: In some cases, people move as a strategy to cope with the effects of climate change and disaster, which may be characterized as migration, but in others, including when the most vulnerable people who lack resources to migrate are forced to flee to seek safety in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disaster, it is more appropriately characterized as displacement. Climate change, including through slow-onset events, can influence migration by amplifying or modifying the economic, social, political and demographic drivers of migration. Preventive measures such as climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, voluntary migration as an adaptation strategy and planned relocation as a last resort are essential to avert and minimize forced displacement, including through implementation of relevant international instruments (UNFCCC Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework on DRR, SDGs, among others).¹⁵

⁷ New York Declaration Paragraphs 75, 76; Annex I Paragraph 12(f)

⁸ New York Declaration Paragraph 17, 18, 43

⁹ New York Declaration Paragraph. 1, 12, 37, 64, Annex I Paragraph 11

¹⁰ See Co-Chairs' Summary <http://www.unhcr.org/58be72337> and High commissioner closing remarks <http://www.unhcr.org/high-commissioners-dialogue-on-protection-challenges-2015.html>

¹¹ New York Declaration Paragraph 66 (OAU Convention and Cartagena Declaration definition includes 'events seriously disturbing public order', which may include disasters)

¹² See UNHCR, Legal considerations on refugee protection for people fleeing conflict and famine affected countries, April 2017

¹³ UNHCR Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements <http://www.unhcr.org/5304b71c9.pdf>

¹⁴ New York Declaration Paragraph 24, 53

¹⁵ New York Declaration Paragraph 17, 18, 43

- **Assist and preserve human rights** of vulnerable migrants in vulnerable situations, including those caught in situations of crisis and of displaced persons through the implementation of relevant existing instruments, including the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, Guidelines on Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC), and UNHCR guidance and instruments (such as the 10 Point Plan in Action).¹⁶

Objectives of session

- This session first aims to raise awareness about displacement in the context of climate change and disaster, and emphasize the importance of mainstreaming this issue with coherent messaging across many parallel policy arenas – most specifically the Global Compacts.
- This session will then aim to solicit civil society perspectives on how to address this issue in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as the interface with the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
- The objective is to foster dialogue and open discussion, and gather insights from civil society actors across a range of geographic regions and types of organizations.

Desired outcome of session

- This session will aim to take stock of the recent thematic discussions, the thematic consultation on Drivers of Migration held in New York in May, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Meeting held in Rabat in May, and ongoing discussions with the Platform on Disaster Displacement.
- This session will also aim to feed into follow-up actions, including the consultations for both Global Compacts.

Session Contacts

- Focal points: Marine Franck (UNHCR); Nina M Birkeland (NRC); Rezaul Karim Chowdhury (COAST Bangladesh)
- Note taker(s): Erica Bower (UNHCR); Suzanna Nelson-Pollard (NRC)
- Moderator: Atle Solberg (Platform on Disaster Displacement)
- Panelists:
 - Rezaul Karim Chowdhury (COAST Bangladesh);
 - Neil Turner (Country Director for NRC in Kenya);
 - Boubker Largou (Organisation marocaine des Droits Humains);
 - Sarnata Reynolds (OXFAM)

¹⁶ New York Declaration Paragraph 50, 51; Annex II Paragraph 8(i) and (n)