

SUBMISSION

Human mobility in the context of loss and damage from climate change: Needs, gaps, and roles of the Convention in addressing loss and damage

Joint submission by
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UN University, the Norwegian Refugee Council and its Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and the International Organization for Migration

to the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage
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1. Introduction

The Cancun Adaptation Framework asked the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to make recommendations on loss and damage to the Conference of the Parties for its consideration at COP18 (para 29), as well as to strengthen international cooperation and expertise to understand and reduce loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including impacts related to extreme weather events and slow onset events (para 25) such as sea level rise, increasing temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinization, land and forest degradation, loss of biodiversity and desertification.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and its Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), UN University, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, and the International Organization for Migration have jointly prepared this submission in response to Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 28(d), which invites the engagement of stakeholders with relevant specialized expertise to contribute views on the

exploration of approaches to address loss and damage. This joint submission addresses the potential role of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change—particularly the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage—in addressing some of the governance, legal, and institutional issues arising from human displacement, migration and planned relocation induced by global anthropogenic environmental change (climate change).

Climate change will worsen the situation in parts of the world that already experience high levels of stressors to livelihoods, food security, and resource availability, among other societal impacts. The consequences of greater variability of climatic factors are already affecting the livelihoods and safety of vulnerable people: less predictable seasons, more erratic rainfall, unseasonable events or the loss of transitional seasons, and the multiplication of climate- and weather-related disasters (e.g. hurricanes/cyclones, floods, droughts, etc.) have significant repercussions for food security, the livelihoods of millions of people, and the mobility choices of vulnerable communities.¹ This issue is of particular relevance for the work programme on loss and damage for two reasons. First, the IPCC Special Report indicates that the magnitude of population movements is likely to increase due to the impacts of climate change on vulnerable exposed communities.² Second, most of the existing climate-related displacement and migration occurs in developing countries vulnerable to climate change impacts. Of the 15 countries with the highest number of disaster-displaced people in 2011, for example, 14 were developing countries.³ Third, States are already acknowledging at ministerial level, for example through the 2011 Dhaka Ministerial Declaration of the Climate Vulnerable Forum,⁴ the impacts of climate change on human mobility.

These findings require consideration in the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage. In particular, the lack of appropriate frameworks, policies and governance structures to address these movements are a barrier to developing effective responses that improve the lives of the migrants, displaced people, and people who are participating or may participate in planned relocation programs related to climatic stressors.

2. Needs related to human mobility in the context of loss and damage

The Cancun Adaptation Framework laid out possible areas of enhanced action on adaptation, including paragraph 14(f), which addresses human mobility in the context of climate change. The paragraph calls attention to the need to implement “*Measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at national, regional and international levels*”. Paragraph 14(f) calls for enhanced action on many of the things that are needed to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on human mobility.

Prompted by paragraph 14(f) and the conviction that national and international responses and the legal/normative framework applicable to human mobility challenges, particularly disaster-induced cross-border displacement, remain inadequate to date, Norway and Switzerland launched the

¹ UNU and UNHCR, 2012, *Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility: Perspectives of refugees from the East and Horn of Africa* [Afifi, T., Govil, R., Sakdapolrak, P., and Warner, K.]

² IPCC, 2012. *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Field, C.B., V. Barros, T.F. Stocker, D. Qin, D.J. Dokken, K.L. Ebi, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, G.-K. Plattner, S.K. Allen, M. Tignor, and P.M. Midgley (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY, USA, 582 pp.

³ IDMC, 2012. *Global estimates 2011: People displaced by natural hazard-induced disasters*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva.

⁴ <http://daraint.org/climate-vulnerability-monitor/climate-vulnerable-forum>

Nansen Initiative on 2 October 2012. The Initiative addresses the need for a more coherent and consistent approach to the protection of people displaced externally, i.e. across national borders, including but not limited to people whose movements are triggered by climate change. The overall goal is to build consensus on key principles and elements regarding the protection of persons displaced across borders that sets the agenda for future action at domestic, regional and international levels.⁵

The concept of “loss and damage” refers to both actual incurred negative impacts of climate change as well as future loss and damage, which may be avoided or reduced. Paragraph 28(a) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework invites views and information on possible approaches to address loss and damage across this range of climatic stressors. Thus, in considering approaches to address loss and damage, consideration should be given to many of the elements contained in the Cancun Adaptation Framework which can enhance resilience, provide timely coordination and exchange of information, as well as other measures that can minimize actual and future potential loss and damage.

Three needs must be addressed to help developing countries, especially those vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, address climate-related loss and damage. These three needs reflect the three thematic areas of the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage:

Lack of understanding of actual and potential human mobility linked to climatic stressors

There is an increasing need to assess the risk of loss and damage related to human mobility. This includes both understanding the scope and nature of the challenges, as well as specific methods for measuring, monitoring, and signaling changes in human mobility and loss and damage patterns. Early warning systems are needed to signal when populations may be threatened by displacement related to climatic stressors, as well as threshold-signaling systems to indicate trends in population movements and longer-term population distribution in areas acutely threatened by climatic stressors.

Enhanced understanding will likely be an activity happening at national, regional, and international levels. Since at least the mid-1980s, scientists have linked environmental change to human mobility.⁶ Early debates emerged around future projections and predictions of the number of “environmental migrants.”⁷ More recently, conceptual and empirical work have examined broad relationships between environmental factors and human mobility in different situations.⁸ These studies have identified broad patterns as a point of departure for further, more nuanced work on the interactions of climatic and socio-economic factors.⁹ Research since that time has determined that environmental factors do play a role in human mobility¹⁰ and emphasizes that some people who are more exposed to environmental stressors—particularly farmers, herders, pastoralists, fishermen and others who

⁵ Norway and Switzerland, 2012, *The Nansen Initiative: A Protection Agenda for Disaster-induced Cross-Border Displacement*

⁶ El-Hinnawy (1985) introduced the first definition for ‘environmental migrants’ in a United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) report. His definition has been refined and made more comprehensive by other authors and institutions, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2007.

⁷ See for example Meyers (2005), Christian Aid (2007), IOM and O. Brown 2008 which attempt to place estimate numbers on current and future environmentally induced migration.

⁸ Jäger et al. 2009 synthesized the results of the “Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios” project (EACH-FOR, www.each-for.eu)—the first global survey of its kind employing fieldwork to investigate environmental change and migration in 23 case studies; Warner et al. 2009 (“In Search of Shelter”) brought EACH-FOR results to policy makers, particularly in the UNFCCC process.

⁹ Hugo (2008), Brown (2008), Morrissey (2009), Tacoli (2009), Laczko and Aghazarm (eds. 2009), Gunvor (2010), Martin, S. (2010), Martin, P. (2010), Afifi (2011),

¹⁰ Jäger, J., and others (2009). Environmental change and forced migration scenarios project synthesis report. Deliverable D.3.4 for the European Commission, Warner et al. 2009, Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change. 2011. Final Project Report. London: The Government Office for Science.

rely on natural resources and the weather for their livelihoods—may be the least able to move very far away, if at all.¹¹

In the decades ahead, these potentially “limited mobility” populations will face deteriorating habitability of their traditional homelands with fewer options for moving to more favorable places in safety and dignity. The implications of climate change for a wider scope of issues related to human mobility in the medium and longer term have driven a quest for better understanding of the circumstances under which climatic factors affect human decisions about whether to leave, when to leave, where to go, for how long, and when to return. While there has been some progress made on this issue during the last decade,¹² much more evidence is needed concerning the scale, scope and patterns of climate change-related displacement, migration and relocation—and how to account for the costs associated with these forms of population mobility—both in monetary and human capital terms.

Many academic organizations and expert networks, the work of the UN University and its collaborators, non-governmental organizations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council and its Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, and the UN and other international bodies, are actively working to expand the knowledge base around climate change and human mobility. The Nansen Initiative is an example of a State-led, bottom-up consultative process, aimed at better understanding the situation and dynamics in particularly affected regions, and building up an agenda for further normative, institutional and operational development at different levels.

If the current pattern continues, funding for building the empirical base (research, case studies, etc.) may come from bilateral sources as individual States call for specific studies and dialogue (e.g. country-specific conferences and expert meetings). This has already been the case, for example, with the Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement, hosted by Norway in June 2011, (focused on climate-induced displacement) and several research projects supported by various European and Asian governments (looking mostly at migration, but also displacement), for instance ‘Addressing Climate Change and Migration in the Asia Pacific Region’ (Asian Development Bank 2012) or the Asia Pacific Migration and Environment Network (APMEN).¹³ Regional and international dialogue about research findings are also expected, particularly with the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC which will be published in 2014 and will feature at least one chapter reviewing migration and displacement in the context of adaptation to climate change, as well as several additional chapters featuring scientific findings on human mobility in different regions.

Gaps in addressing actual and potential human mobility (technical assistance, finance, planning)

Emerging dialogue around human mobility in the context of climate change focuses on climate variability and the use of existing tools. One of the potential challenges in positions of countries that emphasize a reliance on existing institutional frameworks is that these frameworks have already proven to be insufficient, and they may become even more so in the future. A few examples of policy frameworks addressing this issue are available, such as temporary protection status (TPS) in the United States and Europe or soft-law principles, like the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, for protecting people who have been displaced by environmental events. Yet, beyond humanitarian approaches that principally address rapid-onset extreme events, there are significant governance gaps. Population movements related to complex and slow-onset events could pose a major challenge to legal and governance frameworks, in part because responsibility and temporal limits are difficult

¹¹ See Betts (2010), Black et al. (2011).

¹² See, for example: Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change (2011) Final Project Report, the UK Government Office for Science, London.

¹³ <http://www/apmen.iom.int/en/>

to assign. Moreover various institutions that deal with different issues related to the impacts of climate change may have a tendency to operate in “silos” and may approach issues such as climate change within narrow sectoral perspectives.

In the medium to longer term, when human mobility related to climatic change is expected to become more apparent, technical assistance, appropriate finance and other resources, and capacity building will be needed. *Operational cooperation* will be critical at the national and regional level to manage flows of people and respond to their material and protection needs. Where movements (displacement, migration, and planned relocation) are internal, cross-ministry national cooperation and capacity building will be needed. These kinds of activities may be funded through existing bilateral channels or potentially through the emerging climate finance architecture. Where movements occur in and across border areas, regional and international cooperation will be necessary. Examples of regional labor migration agreements may be models for the future, but they may take some time to design and implement.

Challenges in policy coherence and coordination

There is also a need for coordination of and efforts to ensure policy coherence on areas relevant to human mobility—both within countries as well as across countries (regional and international). Within countries, there is a present and growing need to coordinate issues that affect the livelihoods and safety of people. Thus, planning processes aimed at integrating adaptation into larger social, economic, and development policies of a country will need to consider human mobility.

3. Filling the gaps: the role of the Convention

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has a role to play in addressing loss and damage linked to human mobility and climate change. This section outlines three things the Convention can do to help attenuate future loss and damage for populations that are vulnerable to migration, displacement and planned relocation.

Assessment of actual and potential human mobility linked to climatic stressors, with a loss and damage dimension

The Convention has a role to play in appropriately assessing loss and damage, for example:

- The Convention, as well as Parties in their own national and regional contexts, can help fill the knowledge and evidence gaps by requesting targeted research and by collecting views and experiences that have not yet been made available (e.g., how pastoral communities have used migration to increase adaptive capacity). Requesting further evidence would also create a potential synergy between two related convention bodies (the SBI and SBSTA) and between the work programme on loss and damage and the Nairobi work programme—and to incorporate this knowledge, as appropriate, into Parties’ respective National adaptation planning processes (NAPs).
- Enhancing data collection, including establishment of foundational requirements, assessment tools and processes to collect data on loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change related to human mobility at the appropriate level, in a manner that is also sensitive to vulnerable groups and people and the mandates of organizations who strive to assist and protect these people.
- Acting as a repository for expertise and good practice and specific approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change relevant to population movements.

- Enhancing the ability of countries to conduct needs assessment and baseline assessments related to human mobility, in order to be able to analyse and make informed decisions on various risk-management policies, including enhancing understanding and coordinating assessment methods for slow-onset changes at national and regional levels, including through regional cooperation and regional activities.
- The process under the Convention and the work in this field could also serve to enhance understanding of processes to monitor and warn about potential triggering of identified tipping points. The Convention should consider establishing early warning and threshold-monitoring systems relevant to human mobility, and ensure that end users have timely access to relevant information (such as that related to drought and livelihood security).

Approaches to address actual and potential human mobility linked to extreme weather and gradual climatic processes, with a loss and damage dimension

Several important gaps related to the management of human mobility and loss and damage that are appropriately addressed under the Convention:

- Enhancing coordination and cooperation to strengthen social safety networks and resilience-building efforts as part of national and subnational responses to loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change, including through support under the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- Giving appropriate consideration to the needs of people who have moved (through migration, displacement and planned relocation) and those who have remained in areas of origin, including those unable to move. Many people will be forced to move from affected areas and adequate provisions will need to be designed in collaboration with relevant international institutions and other stakeholders to consider how to address the issue of migration, displacement and planned relocation. The COP has the capacity to make recommendations to other international bodies along these lines and accordingly to help coordinate their efforts. The Nansen Initiative and other relevant United Nations and other international organizations will engage with the COP in order to share policy-relevant findings and recommendations for its consideration.
- Addressing residual loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change, including through specific tools, capacity and finance for assessing and addressing risks and impacts from sudden and slow onset changes, including the human mobility dimension. This could involve establishment of a special window under the GCF to help finance appropriate measures related to human mobility, as characterized in paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework.
- As human mobility is discussed in the Cancun Adaptation Framework, it needs to be considered by the GCF Board as being eligible for funding.

Coordination of policy and ensuring coherence in policy and action on loss and damage in relation to Paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework

The COP should consider an international or series of regional platforms to coordinate policy and actions to address human mobility, including systematic efforts to support responses to slow-onset climatic stressors which may contribute to migration, displacement and/or the need for planned relocation of populations to safer or more habitable locations. The Convention should link with appropriate UN and other international organizations working on human mobility and displacement issues, and link with other UN conventions such as the Convention on Biodiversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification, as appropriate.

- The Convention should also be used to promote policy coherence and relevant regulations in a manner that improves conditions for developing countries in line with country-driven national and regional approaches.

- The Adaptation Committee provides recommendations to Parties (the COP) on adaptation. It therefore could (in combination with Least Developed Country Expert Group (LEG)) collect good practice and lessons learned regarding human mobility in the context of climate change, but also relevant lessons from other areas such as development-related relocation, internal displacement, etc. The Adaptation Committee also has a mandate to liaise with processes outside the Convention to increase profile of adaptation and policy coherence. Activities such as liaising with the Nansen Initiative may also be appropriate.

4. Summary

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN University, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and its Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, and the International Organization for Migration have jointly prepared this submission which addresses the **potential role of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change—particularly the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage—in addressing issues arising from human displacement, migration and planned relocation** related to global anthropogenic climate change.

Research shows that the consequences of greater variability of climatic factors already cause loss and damage in vulnerable countries and communities: less predictable seasons, more erratic rainfall, unseasonable events or the loss of transitional seasons, and the multiplication of natural disasters (e.g. hurricanes/cyclones, floods, droughts, etc.) have significant repercussions for food security, the livelihoods of millions of people, and mobility choices of affected communities.¹⁴ The IPCC Special Report on Extreme Events (SREX) noted the magnitude of population movements is likely to increase due to the impacts of climate change on vulnerable exposed communities.¹⁵ Most existing weather- and climate-related displacement and migration occurs in developing countries that are vulnerable to the expected impacts of climate change impacts.¹⁶

These findings require consideration in the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage. The Convention has a role to play in facilitating the increased understanding and assessment of population movements related to the negative impacts of climate change, in facilitating activities that address these movements through capacity building, technical assistance and finance, and in facilitating policy coherence and coordination.

Three needs must be addressed to help developing countries, especially those vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, address climate-related loss and damage. These three needs reflect the three thematic areas of the SBI Work Program on Loss and Damage:

1. Lack of understanding of actual and potential human mobility linked to climatic stressors.

There is an increasing need to assess the risk of loss and damage related to human mobility, including understanding the scope and nature of the challenges, as well as specific methods for measuring, monitoring, and signaling changes in human mobility and loss and damage patterns. **Early warning systems** are needed to signal when populations may be threatened by displacement related to climatic stressors, as well as threshold-signaling systems to indicate trends in population movements and longer-term population distribution in areas acutely

¹⁴ UNU and UNHCR, 2012, *Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility: Perspectives of refugees from the East and Horn of Africa* [Afifi, T., Govil, R., Sakdapolrak, P., and Warner, K.]

¹⁵ IPCC, 2012. *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Field, C.B., V. Barros, T.F. Stocker, D. Qin, D.J. Dokken, K.L. Ebi, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, G.-K. Plattner, S.K. Allen, M. Tignor, and P.M. Midgley (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY, USA, 582 pp.

¹⁶ IDMC, 2012.

threatened by climatic stressors. More **evidence** is needed concerning the **scale, scope and patterns of climate change-related displacement, migration and relocation**—and **how to account for the costs** associated with these forms of population mobility—both in monetary and human capital terms.

- 2. Gaps in addressing actual and potential human mobility (technical assistance, finance, planning).** Current institutional frameworks to manage mobility already face insufficiencies in mandate and capacity, and these gaps are likely to grow in the future. Beyond humanitarian approaches that principally address rapid-onset extreme events, there are **significant governance gaps for population movements** in the context of climate change which concern issues of loss and damage. **Complex and slow-onset climatic processes** could pose a major challenge to legal and governance frameworks. **Operational cooperation** will be critical at the national and regional level **to manage flows of people** and respond to their needs. Where movements (displacement, migration, planned relocation) are internal, **cross-ministry national cooperation and capacity building** will be needed. Where movements occur in and across border areas, **bilateral, regional and international cooperation** will be necessary. Technical assistance, appropriate finance and other resources, and capacity building in loss and damage related areas will be needed.
- 3. Challenges in policy coherence and coordination.** There is a need for **coordination of and efforts to ensure policy coherence** on areas relevant to human mobility—both within countries as well as across borders (regional and international).¹⁷ Within countries, a need exists and will increase to coordinate issues impacting on the **livelihoods and safety** of people. **Planning processes** will be pressed to integrate policies that address human mobility into larger social, economic and development policies of countries and regions.

Filling the gaps: the role of the Convention

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has three roles to play in addressing loss and damage linked to human mobility and climate change:

- 1. Facilitating the assessment of actual and potential human mobility linked to climatic stressors.** The Convention can **fill knowledge and evidence gaps** by requesting targeted research and by collecting views and experiences that have not yet been made available. It can **enhance data collection**, including the establishment of foundational requirements, assessment tools and processes to collect data on loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change related to human mobility at the appropriate level, in a manner that is also **sensitive to vulnerable groups and people and the mandates of organizations who strive to assist and protect these people**. The Convention can **help fill knowledge and evidence gaps by requesting targeted research and acting as a repository for good practice** relevant to population movements, and **enhance the ability of countries to conduct needs and baseline assessments** related to human mobility. The Convention should **facilitate early warning and threshold-monitoring systems** relevant to human mobility.
- 2. Facilitating the development of approaches to address actual and potential human mobility linked to extreme weather and gradual climatic processes, in particular via appropriate funding.** The Convention can help to **enhance coordination and cooperation to strengthen social safety networks and resilience-building efforts** as part of national and subnational responses to loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change. The Convention can achieve this by **coordinating and supporting technical assistance and capacity building**. This could involve **establishment of a special window under the Green Climate Fund to help finance appropriate measures related to human mobility**.
- 3. Facilitating the coordination of policy and greater coherence of policy and action.** Consider an **international or series of multipurpose regional risk management platforms to coordinate policy and actions to address human mobility**. The Convention may **coordinate with**

¹⁷ IOM, 2011, International Dialogue on Migration, “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration”

appropriate UN and other international organizations working on human mobility and displacement issues, and link with other UN conventions such as the Convention on Biodiversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification, as appropriate. The Convention can **facilitate policy coherence and relevant regulations** related to population movement in a manner that improves conditions for developing countries in line with country-driven national and regional approaches.

5. Conclusions

In coming decades, the way countries manage adaptation to climate change will contribute to driving patterns of population distribution in areas of the world that are highly vulnerable to its effects. A more nuanced assessment, approaches to address, and efforts to coordinate population movements related to the negative impacts of climate change are all needed. The three roles of the Convention outlined here will help ensure that strategies vulnerable countries and people use will *contribute to increased resilience to climate change and reduce actual and potential loss and damage related to population movements*.