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**NINTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

A. INTRODUCTION

Human migration and displacement in the context of climate change has come to the renewed attention of researchers and policy makers in recent years. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios suggest that climate change is likely to be an increasingly important variable in this equation¹. While there are no reliable estimates of the numbers of people who will move as a result of climate change impacts, the rise in the scale of population movement, in particular within countries, will be substantial².

The media have recently highlighted significant flooding events in 2010 like the Pakistan floods which inundated up to 20 percent of the country and left an estimated 20 million people temporarily homeless. Further, similarly large floods in early 2011 in eastern Australia captured world attention as they inundated areas the size of France and Germany together, leaving many towns stranded for several weeks. These disastrous events are highly visible, but what is equally compelling are the set of questions about the interaction of a spectrum of human mobility (ranging from migration to displacement) and environmental changes of rapid-onset and slow-onset nature³.

These questions challenge existing approaches to migration displacement, and illustrate the need for fresh thinking about the impacts of changing environmental conditions, including climate change, and human migration and displacement. Today, new evidence-based research projects, methods, and concepts are emerging to help address some of the most important knowledge gaps around environmental change, migration, and displacement⁴. More work is needed to develop indicators, improved methods, and evidence to support policy around climate change, migration and displacement⁵.

B. UNFCCC CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS & HUMAN MIGRATION & DISPLACEMENT

The outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in Cancun on 11 December 2010 acknowledges the need to address the movement of people as a result of climate change (paragraph 14 (f)). This section gives an overview of the timeline of the UNFCCC discussions on climate induced migration between 2007 and December 2010, which resulted in the Cancun Adaptation Framework (agreed by parties) in the following wording⁶:

14. Invites all Parties to enhance action on adaptation under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, by undertaking, inter alia, the following:

...

(f) 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;

Adaptation was firmly established as a focus of the UNFCCC climate negotiations by the Conference of

identifying concrete elements for an agreed outcome to be reached at the fifteenth session of COP. Thus, before COP 14 research and operational organizations had the opportunity to directly co-shape ideas for the draft negotiating text within the established process. In this context, the wider humanitarian community - including UN agencies, research, and civil society - massively mobilized in the period from 2008 to 2009 to ensure that the human face of climate change would be duly represented. That was the moment when the idea of environmentally induced migration was formally introduced in the UNFCCC process.

For the Poznan session (COP 14), AWG-LCA Chair Michael Zammit Cutajar had compiled an assembly document - reflecting submissions by applied research and the humanitarian community - which mentioned migration for the first time.⁷

From COP14 2008 onwards, migration maintained its presence in the draft negotiating text. During the sixth AWG-LCA session in June 2009, Parties provided general comments on its structure and content of the LCA text, stated reservations and objections to elements of the text, and proposed additions and modifications. At the opening plenary, Jonathan Pershing (Head of Delegation, US) expressed concern about the use of the term “climate refugee” in the draft text. Since that statement, however, there appears to be no public record of Party objections or concerns about the inclusion of the issue in the UNFCCC negotiations text. The UNFCCC noted Pershing’s recommendation and revised the wording around migration and displacement which was then carried forward in discussions from Bangkok and Barcelona in the autumn of 2009 to Copenhagen’s COP15 in December 2009.

In the high-pressure circumstances of the COP15 negotiations in Copenhagen, UNFCCC delegates to the AWG-LCA continued working on elements of a broader adaptation framework, which at the time included the key words “migration and displacement “. During those drafting sessions, some Parties suggested that an array of themes be added in to a paragraph on migration and displacement: Human rights, mother earth, climate justice, compensation to vulnerable people, and other items were proposed. The concern was expressed that the paragraph on migration and displacement would be difficult to include, if it was couched in these terms. Parties consulted and decided that it was sufficiently important to include migration and displacement and compromises were found for the placement of other issues (such as placing human rights in the perambulatory text as a principle), and the wording became anchored in what later was accepted as the outcome text from COP15 (FCCC/CP/2010/2, in Paragraph 4(f)).

The COP15 process created a text whose legal status was under discussion, but most areas of adaptation were not to subsequently re-opened for discussion. Therefore the wording and content of the paragraphs on adaptation did not change significantly throughout the year of 2010.

After missing the window of opportunity for reaching an international agreement at COP15, there was pressure to create a package of balanced outcomes for Cancun. In this context, delegates focused increasingly on what kinds of elements could be included in a possible Cancun Adaptation Framework. At COP 16, Parties decided to accept the draft text containing the Cancun Adaptation Framework several key specific elements such as paragraph 14(f) on migration and displacement; an Adaptation Committee; and a work program on loss and damage.

C. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND ACTION

This section summarises some of the possible policy priorities for research and action on climate change and migration. Now that migration and displacement have been highlighted in the UNFCCC climate negotiations, policy makers increasingly ask “what do governments need to know about the potential impacts of climate change and human mobility in order to prepare their own appropriate legal, institutional, and governance approaches?” The potential scale of future movements may require support for those countries and communities most affected by internal and immediate cross-border environmental

migration as less and least-developed countries may not have sufficient capacities or resources to manage or respond to such flows.

Knowledge gaps in the research about environmental change, migration and displacement can be divided across four areas⁸:

- Environmental processes that trigger migration: There is not yet a widely agreed and measurable definition of human mobility linked to environmental change. This contributes to the already difficult task of compiling accurate data sets or precise figures across scientific studies⁹.
- The process of environmental migration itself: More evidence-based research is needed to characterize the drivers in origin areas (e.g., livelihood insecurity, environmental hazards, conflict, demographic pressures, gender inequality, etc.) and the pull factors in areas of destinations (e.g., demand for labour, aging population).
- Policy frameworks and institutions that address environmentally induced migration: A few examples of policy frameworks addressing this issue are available, such as temporary protection status (TPS) in the United States and Europe or principles and soft laws for protecting people who have been displaced by environmental events. Yet beyond humanitarian approaches for rapid-onset extreme events, there are significant governance gaps. Complex and slow onset events could pose a major challenge to legal and governance frameworks, in part because responsibility and temporal limits are difficult 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.
- Understanding environmentally indu

- Support disaster risk reduction and conflict mediation strategies while strengthening humanitarian responses. If governments do not take action to reduce the risks people face from acute crises arising from natural disasters and competition over resources leading to conflict, they will be called upon to help later, and then the problem will be much more difficult to address. Invest today in resilience building strategies designed to preempt uncontrolled crisis situations.
- Identify guiding principles, effective practices and institutional frameworks to help governments in developing appropriate laws, policies and programs to address environmentally induced internal and international migration. Current laws, policies and institutional arrangements are inadequate to deal with complex movements of people. Of particular concern is the possibility that large numbers of people may be rendered stateless if rising sea levels inundate island countries and low-lying, densely populated delta areas. Guiding principles are needed today to shape thinking about how to manage potential larger-scale relocation in the future.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Research has substantiated the fact that environmental change is one of a larger set of factors that affect human migration and displacement worldwide. Processes such as natural disasters and shifts in climate patterns which may bring glacial melt, sea level rise and desertification are and will increasingly affect migration and displacement. Some of the most vulnerable regions include areas like low-lying islands and deltas, coastal areas, areas dependent on glacial-fed water systems and areas subject to persistent drought. Field-based research suggests that most environmentally induced migrants and displaced people will

Mapping emerging trends and risk hotspots for humanitarian actors - Report to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Geneva: Maplecroft / OCHA / CARE.

⁴ See Jäger, J.; Frühmann, J.; Grünberger, S; Vag, A. (2009): *Synthesis Report. Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios Project*, 64-66. Available at: http://www.each-for.eu/documents/EACHFOR_Synthesis_Report_090515.pdf; Warner, K., Erhart, C., de Sherbinin, A., Adamo, S.B., Onn, T.C. 2009. "In search of Shelter: Mapping the effects of climate change on human migration and displacement." A policy paper prepared for the 2009 Climate Negotiations. Bonn, Germany: United Nations