

Committee: Environmental Committee

Topic: Taking action towards the prevention of climate migrants

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I. Introduction

Climate migration is an ever evolving issue in our society, with increasing amounts of both climate disturbances and stressors people are forced to leave their homes in hope of finding a safe place from natural elements. As discussion with climate change continues, the discussion of climate migrants should also continue and become more important, as alone in 2018 there were 17.2 million recorded displacements associated with disasters in 148 countries and territories. The World Bank has estimated that 143 million people will become climate migrants by 2050.

Some factors which can lead to the need to migrate from ones place of residence are things such as crop failure, water scarcity, sea-level rise, and wildfires.

Sea-level rise is a factor which already prompts migration from Pacific and Oceania islands as well as low-lying coastal areas. Extreme drought forces people to find sustainable farm land. In addition it seems that the poorest people from the poorest countries will end up being affected most by climate disasters and therefore will have the most migration forced by the climate.

Author's have however said that if the world as a whole acts in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and works to engage development planning the amount of climate migrants could be reduced by 80% to 40 million people. There is still some hope to lessen the amount of climate migrants.

II. Definition of Key Terms

Migrant: Person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, either within a country or across international borders, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

Refugee: Someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of fear of persecution based on reasons such as race, religion, political opinion, etc. or fear of war or violence, afraid to return home or are unable to do so.

Climate Migration: Movement of a person or persons who are obliged to leave their place of residence either temporarily or permanently due to changes in the environment due to climate change.

Environmental Migration: Person or persons who are obliged to leave their place of residence either temporarily or permanently due to sudden or progressive changes in the environment which affects their lives or living conditions, move within or outside their country of origin or residence.

Climate change: Long-term change in average weather patterns which define Earth's local, regional, and global climates IN PROGRESS.

Global Warming: Long-term heating of Earth's climate system because of human activities such as fossil fuel burning, measured as the average increase in Earth's global surface temperature.

Climate Stressors: pressures or dynamics which impact ecosystem components or processes caused by human associated activities, can be impactful at a local, regional, or global scale.

Climate Disturbances: Temporary change in environmental conditions which cause significant changes in ecosystems, often they act quickly and have a large effect in the way that they alter either the physical structure or arrangement of both biotic and abiotic elements. Examples of these are fires and floods.

III. General Overview

The term climate refugee is often used to describe those who have been forced to leave their place of residence due to environmental factors. This term however is not a legally valid term because the 1951 Refugee Convention does not recognize environmental factors as a criteria to define a refugee. For this reason the official term to be used whilst discussing people who have been forced to leave their place of residence due to climate and environmental factors is climate migrant or climate migration.

Climate change is a contributing factor to slowly upcoming events such as desertification, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, air pollution, rain pattern shifts and loss of biodiversity, these are all also reasons for climate migration. Most notably these events will affect less developed countries as well as coastal countries and regions as they are not equipped to deal with the rapid weather changes, which is why action should be taken in order to work to prevent the forced migration of people both across international borders and internally. As the issues they might face are issues of a limited access to clean water as sea-level rise will contaminate inland freshwater and extreme drought can cause wildfires and an increase in the lack of food resources.

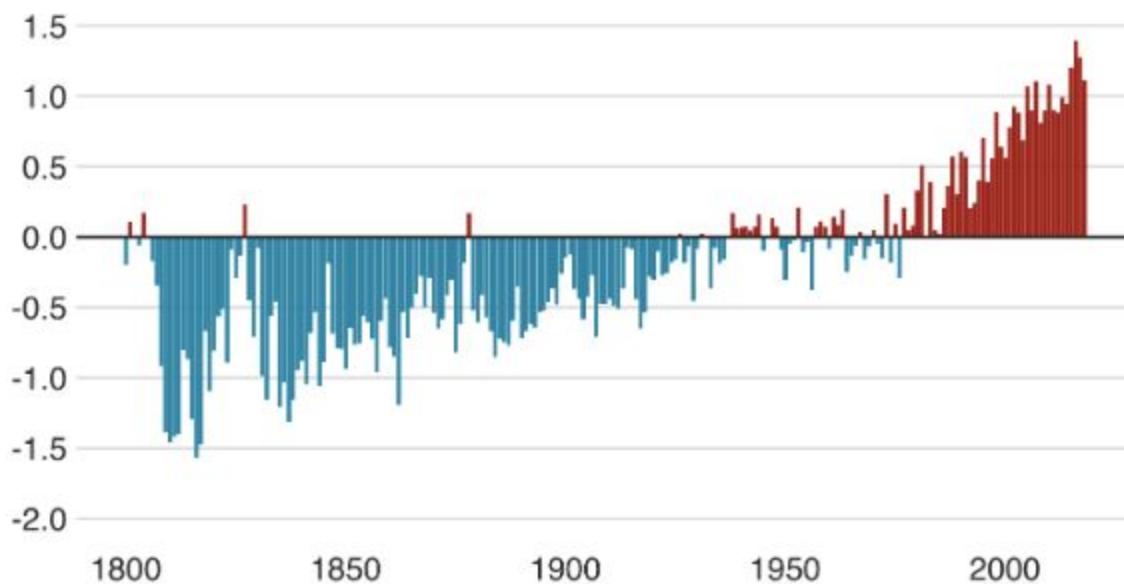
In 2017 alone 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced and though there are only a few instances where the sole purpose for migration was climate change roughly a third of those displaced had to move due to sudden weather events such as flooding or forest fires. There is no legal framework which could account for climate change as being a factor of migration. Climate change will continue to push forth migration as it will intensify things such as the limited access to clean water, food shortage, and agricultural degradation. Examples of places where migration was directly forced by only climate change are the Pacific Islands, where the sea-level is rising at a rate of 12 millimeters per year, causing eight islands to already be submerged and it is estimated that 48 more islands will submerge by 2100, causing even more climate migration due to the sea-level rising. In 2015, a case presented to the High Court of New Zealand to receive refugee status in New Zealand by a family fleeing from the island Kiribati was dismissed. Other

islands which have submerged to an uninhabitable state are the islands in the Federated States of Micronesia. These islands disappeared completely in the past decade and the minute population of 2.3 million people spread to 11 countries. Though there are only a few cases where climate change gets recognized as the main reason for the cause of migration it does still get recognized as a contributing factor to the issue of migration. In South Asia increases in temperatures, sea level rise, more frequent cyclones, and other extreme weather conditions are worsening both internal and international migration.

In order to solve this issue new, innovative and comprehensive solutions have to be thought of. Signatories of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change requested that the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change develop recommendations for addressing people displaced by climate change, in addition The Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration called on countries to come up with plans to prevent the need for climate-caused relocation and to support those who are forced to relocate. However neither of these agreements are legally binding not developed enough to aid climate migrants.

Human activities increase carbon-dioxide emissions which causes the atmosphere's temperature to rise. The possible effects of this are extreme weather and melting polar ice. The average temperature of the Earth is about 15°C however this has been both much lower and higher in the past. Though some fluctuation is normal in weather, scientists say that temperatures have been rising now faster than at many other times.

Annual mean land temperature above or below average (°C)

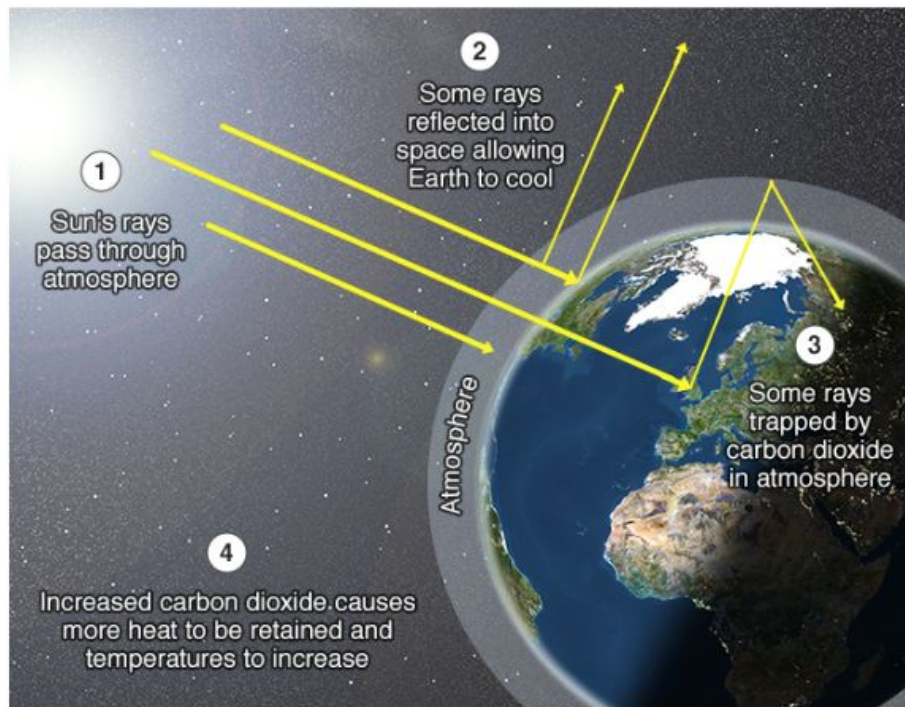


Note: Average is calculated from 1951-1980 land surface temperature data

Source: University of California Berkeley

BBC

This rise in temperature can be linked to the greenhouse effect, which describes that way in which the Earth's atmosphere traps some of the Sun's energy. Solar energy which is being radiated back to space from the Earth's surface is being absorbed by greenhouse gases and re-emitted in all directions.



Scientists believe that gases released from industry and agriculture are trapping more energy causing an increase in temperature. Water vapour is the greenhouse gas with the most impact on warming, however it only remains in the atmosphere for a few days. In contrast carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for much longer and it would take hundreds of years to return to pre-industrial levels of CO₂ as only so much can be soaked up by natural resources such as oceans. Since 1750 CO₂ levels have risen by more than 30% and the concentration is higher than it ever has been.

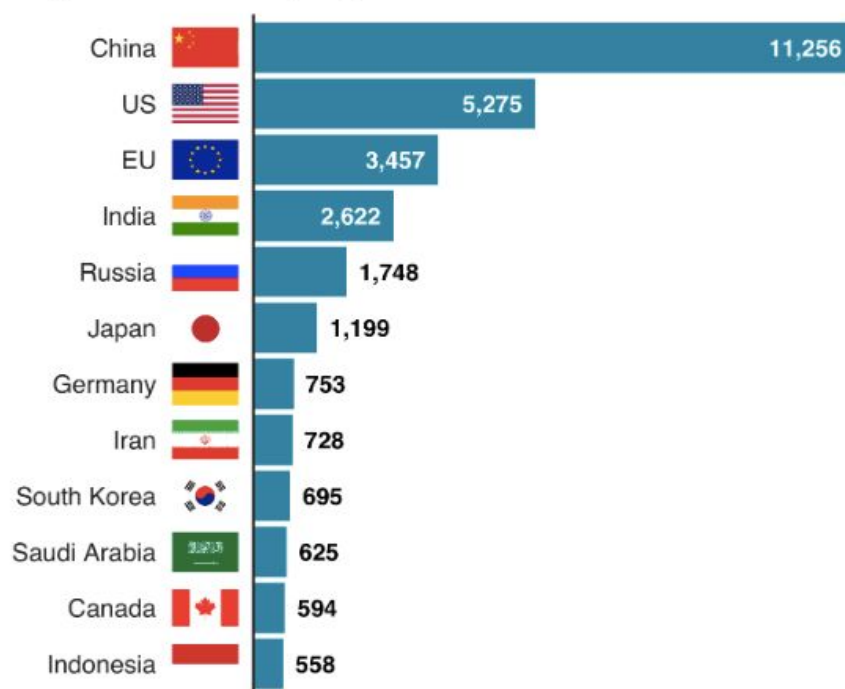
Evidence for the warming of the world comes from the information that the world is roughly 1°C warmer than before widespread industrialisation. The warmest 20 recorded years have all occurred in the past 22 years. In addition across the globe sea levels have risen with an average of 3.6mm per year between 2005 and 2015. The main reason for this rise is thought to be melting ice, as most glaciers in temperate regions of the world are melting.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) estimates that if current warming trends continue then temperatures could rise 3-5°C by the end of the century, a rise of 2°C has been thought of as the maximum increase in temperature that the earth could handle. Recently however both scientists and policymakers have said that limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C would be safer. This however would require rapid and extreme changes in aspects of society.

There are efforts being made to cut down and stabilize greenhouse-gas emissions by the UN. It is found that China emits the most CO₂ followed by the US and the European Union.

The world's top emitters of carbon dioxide

Megatonnes of CO₂ per year



Note: One megatonne = 1,000,000 tonnes

Climate change can cause fresh water shortages, alter our ability to produce food, increase deaths from floods, storms and heatwaves, because climate change is thought to increase the frequency of extreme weather events. More water will evaporate causing there to be more moisture in the air which would lead to more rainfall in some areas, however there will be an increase in the risk of drought especially in inland areas during hot summers. In addition it is expected that there will be more flooding due to storms and rising sea levels. More CO₂ in the atmosphere will also lead to the acidification of oceans, as they will absorb more of it.

These are all major factors which need to be taken into consideration when thinking of ways to prevent climate migrants or in the process of decreasing climate migrants. It is important to see the whole picture whilst discussing the issue not only is it an issue of human rights and the environment but also the safety of countries and our planet's safety in the future.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

In 2018 alone, 17.2 million new displacements associated with disasters in 148 countries and territories were recorded (IDMC) and drought displaced 764,000 people in Somalia,

Afghanistan and several other countries. This issue is increasingly becoming more severe as our temperatures, level of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, and sea levels start to rise. These examples listed below shows the dangers and impact climate change is having on people and explains how people are being displaced due to these threats.

Ethiopia:

The majority of Ethiopia's nearly 110.000 million inhabitants are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Accounts of Ethiopian migrants travelling to the Gulf, South Africa and towards Europe are already in circulation and many observers see the growing impact of climate change as having the potential to send many thousands more on similar journeys.

In Ethiopia, climate change has been experienced for a long time; there have been fifteen serious famines in the past 50 years alone. In the 1970s and 1980s, famine became militarized as first the government of Haile Selassie and later that of the Derg sought to defeat armed movements seeking their downfall in areas affected by famine. Populations were forcibly resettled, aid systematically denied, and aid organisations punished for providing support.

The government in Ethiopia is not standing still in addressing this growing challenge of slow-onset climate change. For example, the federal government has created a Commission for Environment, Forestry and Climate Change and has launched major policy initiatives in the field. The reform-minded Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, recognizes the scale and degree of the climate challenges facing the country. For a more coherent approach to be put in place, requires that a government system organised in administrative 'silos' in areas such as agriculture, forestry, education and infrastructure, begins to think and work in a fundamentally different way. (Dainish Institute for International Studies)

In 17 to 26 June of 2019, we saw a major displacement causing internal migration in Ethiopia, specifically from the Somali region to Addis Ababa, the country's capital. This migration was caused by extreme flooding and extreme droughts present in this area exacerbated by fenomeon, the Indian Ocean dipole. Additional information about Ethiopia is linked here ["Ethiopia - DTM"](#)

Brazil:

In 2014, the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean met in Brasilia, Brazil, to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. At the end of the Ministerial Meeting, participating governments adopted the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action. Through this instrument, they committed to work together to maintain the highest standard of protection at the international and regional level, implement innovative solutions for refugees and displaced persons and end the difficult situation faced by stateless persons in the region. The Brazil Declaration gives specific recognition to 'the challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters, as well as by the displacement of persons across borders.

The study is regional rather than global in scope, focusing on the three regions of the Americas from which the States that approved the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action are drawn: Mexico and Central America,¹³ South America¹⁴ and the Caribbean.¹⁵ In addressing themes of crossborder displacement due to climate change and disasters, it describes empirical dynamics of movement and government responses in countries from across the three regions. In this respect, it is not limited to consideration only of those countries that were present at the adoption of the 2014 Brazil Declaration. The reason for this broader scope is that climatic factors and disasters rarely respect national boundaries, such that many of the challenges (and actual or potential response frameworks) have a strongly regional character. The study thus considers the thematic issues in relation to a wide range of States with considerable variation in their history, legal and governmental structures and principles, geographic situation and exposure to climatic factors and natural hazards, size, population and resources.

For more information, visit UNHCR's website linked here: [UNHCR - Brazil](#)

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

Since climate migrants are a recent issue, there are a few resolutions and documents provided by the UN. The most notable resolutions comes from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which is an intergovernmental organization that provides services and advice concerning migration to governments and migrants, including internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrant workers. In 2016, the IOM became a related organization of the United Nations. In addition statistics on climate migrants are hard to find as the reasons for migration are very rarely only based on environmental reasons.

IOM - Outlook: Though the entire report may not be of value, the report released by the IOM has many sections which directly relate to what will be discussed in debate such as briefs 1, 3, 8, and 10. It is important to understand the way in which international organizations work to solve this issue and their policies on the issue as the UN could collaborate with these organizations to work together to prevent climate migrants or to help them.

[IOM Outlook on Migration, Environment and Climate Change](#)

IOM - Climate Migrants Explanation: Once again it is important to understand the policies of international parties and to know how they work in order to prevent or help climate migrants. This document also goes into predictions on climate migrants which is valuable as the debate will focus on ways to prevent future climate migration.

[Migration and Climate Change](#)

DTM (IOM Affiliated) - Displacement Around the World (Interactive Map)

[IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#)

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization part of the UN that strives to protect rights and build a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

UNHCR - Their Role in Climate Migrants:
[Climate Change and Disaster Displacement](#)

UNHCR - Summary of the Panel Discussion:
[Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General](#)

UNHCR - Perspective on Climate Migrants
[Climate change, disaster and displacement in the Global](#)

UN Climate Change: Both of the following agreements were made in order to try and prevent climate change. They are important documents and agreements to consider as some major contributors to climate change have withdrawn from them, climate change is the main subject which needs to be discussed in order to be able to solve climate migration.

[Paris Agreement](#)

[Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change](#)

The Sustainable Development Goals, proposed by the UN, addresses the global challenges we are currently facing, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. These 17 Goals are all interconnected, and in order to leave no one behind. The target is to reach all of these goals by 2030 for a better life for all.

UN - Sustainable Development Goals (Climate Migrants)
[Let's Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees, UN](#)

VI. Questions to Consider

- What measures should be taken in order to prevent climate migrants?
- What patterns of migration have been observed today in relation to environmental change?
- What patterns are expected in the future as climate change advances?
- What are the groups of people that are most likely to experience environmental outmigration pressures?
- How will the climate migrants crossing international borders affect the neighboring countries?
- What can governments and the international community do to address environmental migration?

- Where will the environmental migrants come from? Internal Migration?
- What actions can be taken in order to prevent sea-level rise?
- What can be done in order to stop global warming?
- How can potentially in threat people be helped to ensure that they do not have to migrate if placed under pressure from extreme weather conditions?
- How can the effect of climate migrants be minimized on the environment?
- What are the largest contributors to why migration happens due to climate or environmental changes? How can these factors be either limited or completely eliminated?

VII. Conclusion

Climate change is something that will affect all of us, however the extent to which it will affect us and our daily lives will vary depending on where we are in the world both geographically and economically. In order to tackle the issue of environmental displacement we must tackle the issue of the climate and work in order to minimize the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere in order to minimise factors such as sea-level rise and extreme weather patterns. Climate migrants are most present in poorer coastal countries and these countries should be helped in order to work to prevent the rush of climate migrants that is possible if climate change continues at the rate at which it is going. We should find a way to preserve the countries from where people are migrating from and work to save the countries that climate migrants are migrating to. We must work together to form a comprehensive, detailed and plausible solution in order to minimise the effects of climate change as fast as possible.

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