

Concrete solutions to disaster displacement discussed at UNHCR Excom side event

On 4 October 2017, UNHCR, the Government of Germany and the Platform on Disaster Displacement co-hosted a very well attended high level side event to UNHCR Excom on “Addressing disaster displacement and climate change: Opportunities in partnership” that discussed concrete solutions and partnership opportunities to address disaster displacement.

UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk, moderated the event. In his opening remarks, he underscored that disaster displacement is a large humanitarian challenge and the world needs to be prepared for it. He reminded that [UNHCR’s Strategic Directions \(2017-2021\)](#) include commitments to advancing legal, policy and practical solutions for the protection of people displaced by the effects of climate change and disasters and to contribute to an inter-agency response to disasters emergencies. He mentioned strategic recommendations from [a report drafted by professors McAdam and Goodwin-Gill](#) to enhance UNHCR role on protection in disaster contexts and invited participants to contribute to thematic discussion on the Global Compact on Refugees and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to ensure this issue is adequately addressed.



Ambassador Antje Leendertse, Permanent Representative of Germany presented the [Platform on Disaster Displacement](#), chaired by the Government of Germany, as an opportunity to address the disaster displacement protection gap in partnership, by implementing the [Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda](#). She underscored the role of UNHCR in this regard and highlighted the two important global processes of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and global compact on refugee (GCR), which provide important opportunity to advance protection for cross border disaster displaced persons and should both reflect the issue of displacement in contexts of disasters and climate change.



Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations Office in Geneva explained that Costa Rica has been engaged in several pilot projects on regional cooperation in disaster preparedness and management. In August 2017 Costa Rica and Panama jointly organized a simulation exercise involving the respective national authorities, with UNHCR participation. The exercise allowed to identify gaps and improve future coordination. She further noted that constant capacity building is necessary plus the strengthening of dialogue between the emergency authorities of countries. She encouraged that exercise should be replicated elsewhere as it proved to be a good example of how States could harmonize their efforts.



Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office



in Geneva reminded that Fiji currently assumes the UNFCCC COP 23 presidency and, as a country seriously affected by disaster displacement, is committed to ensure COP23 will reflect the sense of urgency. She mentioned that the Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and damage and the Task Force of displacement and the Nairobi Work Program, in which UNHCR plays important roles, are of great importance. She explains her country has to face reality of relocation. Fiji is developing sets of guidance for planned relocation, using useful [guidelines developed by UNHCR](#) and partners as well as operational [toolbox](#). She shared Fiji's experience that when villages had to be moved to higher ground at first nobody wanted to leave. Therefore inclusiveness and participation are inherent to the relocation process and are an occasion for implementing a transformative agenda where those who are usually not consulted (women and children) become key stakeholders.

Professor Walter Kälin, Envoy of the Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement explained that



the way ahead is to include disaster displacement in the the Global compact for Migration (GCM) and in the Global compact for Refugees (GCR). He elaborated that this does not mean new obligations for States but is about strengthening existing and collaborative work regionally and to harmonize national efforts. He further explained that Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework offers advice and perspectives for addressing drought and famine related displacement, such as in Somalia in 2011-2012 and in 2017 as well as return. Both refugees and IDPs need durable solutions that should be integrated in national development plans. He encouraged that these issues as well as mixed flows, including when climate change plays an exacerbating role, should be explored in November at the GCR thematic consultations.

Dina Ionesco from IOM, from the floor, highlighted strong partnership with UNHCR both in moving forward this issue of human mobility in the UNFCCC process and in the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

Volker Türk in his concluding remarks noted that « it is absolutely clear that we have made a lot of progress » and that addressing this issue will only be possible if we keep working together, with member states and in strong partnerships with other UN organisations.