

2017 UNHCR Engagement in

the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Why is UNHCR engaged?

- Displacement linked to adverse effects of climate change is a current reality, and expected to increase in future. Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) acknowledge the need for action on this issue.¹
- UNHCR is engaged with the process of implementation and action pursuant to the UNFCCC, through which it seeks to raise awareness on protection issues arising from climate change-related displacement, to provide technical support to Parties and to contribute to the work of relevant processes of the UNFCCC. This includes discussions and activities around adaptation and loss and damage to develop recommendations to avert, minimize, and address displacement related to climate change.

How is UNHCR engaged?

- Starting in 2008, UNHCR was a member of the IASC Task Force on Climate Change special subgroup on 'migration, displacement, and climate change'. This group provided collective submissions to annual Conferences of Parties to UNFCCC (COPs).
- From 2013-2016, UNHCR coordinated the informal 'Advisory Group on Human Mobility and Climate Change'² that provided technical support to UNFCCC Parties, including joint submissions, organization of side events, joint exhibits, bilateral meetings and press briefings. UNHCR remains a member of this Advisory Group, now coordinated by the Norwegian Refugee Council.
- UNHCR has also been actively involved in the work of the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) Working Group on Climate Change (WGCC), now named ONE UN group on climate change, co-organizing ONE UN events to ensure relevant thinking, knowledge and progress on human mobility issues is shared with UNFCCC Parties.
- UNHCR, in partnership with relevant organizations, initiatives and academia, was instrumental in ensuring that the COP21 decision text of Paris Agreement established a Task Force on Displacement as part of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage that has been mandated to develop recommendations on integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement. UNHCR is an official member of this Task Force.

What are the developments in 2017?

- **WIM Task Force on Displacement.** UNHCR and partners contributed to the development of the Task Force's Terms of Reference, which were adopted in September 2016. The Task Force convened for the first time in May 2017 in Bonn, Germany, with UNHCR participation,

¹ In 2010, Paragraph 14(f) of COP 16 Decision invited states to 'enhance action on adaptation' by undertaking '[m]easures 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'.; In 2012 the COP 18 Doha decision Paragraph. 7 (a) (vi): loss and damage to include displacement; in 2015 the COP 21 Paris Agreement paragraph 49: establishes Task force on displacement.

² Composed of UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, NRC/IDMC, Refugees International, RAED, University of Liege

where a work plan was developed and then adopted by the Executive Committee of the WIM.³ In this context, UNHCR is undertaking a “mapping of existing international and regional instruments, guidance and tools on averting, minimizing and addressing displacement and durable solutions” (Activity II.4). UNHCR is also contributing to several other activities, including:

- a mapping of existing policies and institutional frameworks at the national level (Activity I.1);
 - synthesizing the state of knowledge to better understand displacement related to slow onset events (Activity I.2);
 - convening a Task Force meeting and wider consultations with stakeholders (Activity IV.2).
- The recommendations of the Task Force on Displacement will be submitted to the COP 24 in December 2018.

- **UNFCCC Intersessional meeting, Bonn, June 2017.** UNHCR organized together with the Norwegian Refugee Council, a side event on Human Mobility and Climate Change: Synergies between the UNFCCC and Other Global Policy Processes.⁴ UNHCR introduced the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, noting processes to adopt a global compact on migration and a global compact on refugees as key outcomes. UNHCR highlighted relevant aspects of its work, including Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements, which can apply in the context of climate change and disasters, and the 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration.
- **WIM Executive Committee – October 2017.** UNHCR contributed to discussions on ways to clarify terminology on the issue and encouraged use of the term “migration, displacement and planned relocation” under the umbrella term “human mobility”, as in the COP 10 decision. UNHCR furthermore addressed questions on policy coherence related to the Global Compacts. Finally, UNHCR contributed to the drafting of the WIM’s five-year rolling work plan that includes an action area on human mobility. Within this area, UNHCR contributed to securing the continuation of the WIM Task Force’s work beyond completion of the drafting of recommendations by COP 24 to ensure proper follow up to and implementation of the recommendations.
- **COP 23 – November 2017: the conference’s objectives.** The 23rd Conference of Parties (COP23) to the UNFCCC was held in Bonn Germany, from 6-17 November 2017, under the presidency Fiji, the first small island nation to perform this leadership role. It was a critical COP in that delegates aimed to draft rules of implementation for the Paris Agreement, known as the “Paris Rulebook,” for all of the elements mandated in the Paris Agreement and Decision. The Rulebook is scheduled to be adopted next year at COP 24. State participants were also required to complete the design of the 2018 “Facilitative Dialogue,” a test run for the “Global Stocktake” which all countries will conduct every five years starting in 2023 to assess and strengthen their “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) and global progress toward reaching the Paris Agreement’s objective, namely to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

³ The work plan of the Task Force on Displacement is available here :

https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/workstreams/loss_and_damage/application/pdf/tfd_workplan.pdf

⁴ See summary of the side event and pictures attached and here:

<http://enb.iisd.org/climate/sb46/enbots/17may.html#event-5>

The issue of human mobility (displacement, migration, planned relocation) was discussed under the agenda item of Loss and Damage. As a Pacific nation led-COP, this COP 23 was seen by many as an opportunity for amplifying the voices of small island nations and thus for progress on loss and damage, especially on the provision of additional finance.

- **COP 23: UNHCR's contributions.** UNHCR disseminated a number of key messages on climate change and disaster displacement at various events throughout the meeting, and undertook the following.⁵
 - **Co-lead of ONE UN event:** In order to maintain focus on the displacement issue and reinforce coordination and synergies amongst relevant UN agencies, UNHCR co-organized with IOM a ONE UN side event on human mobility. This event aimed, among other things, to elicit and encourage reflection and discussion on priorities identified by the different agencies,⁶ – including UNHCR and IOM, alongside FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UN Women, secretariat of the UN Convention on Combating Desertification, UNDP, UN University and WMO. UNHCR chaired the session and highlighted the need to ensure that approaches to averting, minimizing and addressing climate change related displacement must be protection-sensitive. UNHCR noted that unless protection issues are prioritized, pre-existing vulnerabilities and patterns of discrimination can be exacerbated in the climate change and disaster displacement context, with devastating consequences for individuals.
 - UNHCR also participated in over twenty side events on human mobility, a remarkable increase from the handful of side events dedicated to these issues in past climate change negotiations; and engaged with the media through interviews and a press conference.⁷
- **Outcome of COP 23.** The main COP decision – to be known as the Fiji Momentum for Implementation – contains three elements: a call for enhanced Pre-2020 Implementation and Ambition, a reiteration of the Paris Agreement Work Programme, and the design of the Facilitative Dialogue, rebranded by Fiji as the Talanoa Dialogue. On Loss and Damage, the final decision from the conference addressed several issues, on which the Parties:⁸
 - Welcomed the progress made in creating the task force on displacement and the plan of the Task Force on Displacement to convene a meeting in May 2018 on all areas of its work, which will include wide consultations with stakeholders to ensure regional coverage.
 - Invited the Task Force on Displacement to take into consideration both cross-border and internal displacement, in accordance with its mandate, when developing

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/59fc4e065/key-messages-for-cop23.html>

⁶ Summary of Side Event is available here: <http://enb.iisd.org/climate/cop23/enbots/8nov.html#event-4>

⁷ Webcast of the press conference is available here: <https://unfccc.cloud.streamworld.de/webcast/human-mobility-and-climate-change-at-cop23> ; Interview with Climate Action Studio is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LvolS7xSAFI> ; Other media coverage includes:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/11/participants-at-un-conference-examine-human-mobility-in-an-era-of-climate-change/>

http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/weltklimakonferenz-mehr-klimafluechtlinge-als-vertriebene.1773.de.html?dram:article_id=400100

<http://www.uniindia.com/cop23-study-of-human-mobility-in-era-of-cc/world/news/1041668.html>

<http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=423653>

<http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/internacional/noticia/2017-11/cop23-participantes-discutem-mobilidade-humana-e-mudanca-climatica>

<https://nacoesunidas.org/onu-alerta-para-aumento-do-deslocamento-forcado-provocado-por-mudanca-climatica/>

⁸ <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2017/sb/eng/l05.pdf>

recommendations for integrated approaches to averting, minimizing and addressing displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change

- Encouraged parties to “actively engage in the work and to disseminate, promote and make use of the products of the WIM and its ExCom, including by: [...] the consideration of [...] climate change impacts on human mobility, including migration, displacement and planned relocation, [...] into relevant policy, planning and action, as appropriate, and encouraging relevant bilateral and multilateral entities to support such efforts”.

November 2017