



IOM International Organization for Migration
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MIGRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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1. This discussion note responds to the request by the membership at the informal consultations on the International Dialogue on Migration of 29 April 2008 to provide an update on IOM's migration and the environment activities. It briefly outlines the IOM perspective on the links between migration and the environment and provides an overview of recent events and activities of the Organization in this area, including in the context of interagency collaboration. It also suggests the direction for IOM's further work in this sphere. The Annex includes a list of recent IOM publications on the subject of migration and the environment. The authority for IOM's activities in this area derives from the IOM Constitution.¹ The approach outlined below supports activities 1 through 10 of the IOM Strategy document.

Migration and the Environment: an Overview

2. Environmental factors have long had an impact on global migration flows. The scale of such flows, both internal and cross-border, is expected to rise significantly over the next decades as a result of climate change as indicated in successive reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), including its most recent Fourth Assessment Report,² and as recognized by the United Nations.³ Interactions between these phenomena are complex and include not only the impacts of environmental factors on migration, but also the effects of migration on the environment. The implications of the intersection of climate change, environmental degradation and migration are difficult to assess due to their links with other social, economic and political issues, such as poverty and demographic trends, which affect human vulnerability to environmental change and resulting migratory and other consequences. A consensus is emerging in the international community on the need to improve the understanding of environmental issues and their migration implications (and vice versa) and to plan for, adapt to and mitigate the processes and effects of environmental change for human mobility.

3. This growing recognition encouraged IOM to continue its exploration of the links between climate change, environmental degradation and migration, which began more than 15 years ago in 1992 when it co-organized with the Refugee Policy Group a conference on "Migration and the Environment". In addition to policy and research activities, IOM has been providing direct humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations affected by natural disasters, such as the 2005 Pakistan Earthquake, the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 and Hurricane Mitch in 1998, to name but a few examples. IOM has been implementing community stabilization projects in areas of high migration pressure, many of which were

¹ See IOM Constitution, Article 1(1)(e), as well as (a) – (d) more generally.

² IPCC, 2007: *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

³ Ban Ki-Moon address delivered to the inaugural Global Forum on Migration and Development in Brussels, 10 July 2007, Secretary-General SG/SM/11084, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sghsm11084.doc.htm> (last accessed 6 October 2008) Background Paper presented at General Assembly Thematic Debate, 11 and 12 February 2008 on *Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work*.

aimed at strengthening the coping capacity of communities already affected by environmental degradation.

4. Today, IOM continues to address linkages between the environment and climate change on the one hand, and human settlement and population movement on the other from a human mobility perspective. IOM provides advice on policies and practices to adequately address the challenges facing mobile populations, including those resulting from extreme environmental events as well as those resulting from gradual processes, and implements relevant projects. Through its programmatic activity, IOM applies migration management tools to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of the movement of people on the environment, including in cases of mass migration. IOM is committed to close cooperation with relevant international and non-governmental organizations, governments and other relevant stakeholders to develop more comprehensive strategies to better manage migration induced by environmental factors and to address potential impacts of migration on the environment.

Policy Dialogue in 2007 and 2008⁴

5. IOM seeks to build on earlier initiatives related to climate change, environment and migration to develop and facilitate better understanding and more coherence in policy and programmes. To this end IOM, together with a range of partners, held several events in 2007 and 2008.

6. In February 2007, IOM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) co-sponsored an *Expert Seminar on Migration and the Environment*⁵ in Bangkok, Thailand. The seminar brought together experts from various constituencies working in the spheres of migration and the environment, including from governments, non-governmental organizations and academia. It explored the two-way association between migration and the environment as well as their interaction with human security. Its key objectives were to raise the understanding of the issues at hand, to identify the main obstacles for policymakers and practitioners to more effective management of the interrelationship between migration and the environment, and to contribute to a more comprehensive research and policy agenda in this area. There was broad agreement that closer multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary cooperation was necessary if progress was to be made in addressing environmentally-induced migration and its consequences.

7. The Expert Seminar on Migration and the Environment paved the way for *the high-level panel on "Migration and the Environment"* at the Ninety-fourth Session of the IOM Council in Geneva, November 2007.⁶ Based on the outcomes of this seminar, IOM developed and presented a framework for the analysis of the migration and environment nexus, which included a working definition of "environmental migrant" and a series of

⁴ IOM Constitution, Article 1(1)(e); IOM Strategy activity 7.

⁵ The IOM *International Dialogue on Migration No. 10* "Expert Seminar: Migration and the Environment" (2008) includes all the seminar documents and can be found at <http://www.iom.int/publications>. All materials from the seminar can be found at <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/eventGLOBAL/cache/offonce?entryId=13112>.

⁶ All materials from the "Migration and the Environment" panel of the Ninety-fourth IOM Council can be found at <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/1915>.

scenarios⁷ illustrating the two-way relationship between the two phenomena and related policy challenges. The proposed policy responses to the challenges of environmental migration included: developing comprehensive and coherent policies encompassing, *inter alia*, the environment, migration and development considerations; facilitating and regulating migration; improving the quality of data in this field, and enhancing bilateral and regional cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The *Temporary and Circular Labour Migration* initiative developed by the Government of Colombia in cooperation with IOM was one example presented of how migration management tools can be used to respond and adapt to environmental change. This initiative offers agricultural workers confronted by natural disasters temporary employment opportunities abroad until the affected zone is safe and its agricultural productivity restored. It was concluded that effective management of environmentally-induced migration was essential to ensure human security, health and well-being and to facilitate sustainable development.

8. The human security implications of environmental degradation, climate change and migration were the focus of the February 2008 Conference “*Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities*”,⁸ which was organized jointly by IOM and the Greek Government in its capacity as Chair of the Human Security Network. The overall objective of the Conference was to increase political and public awareness of the risks of climate change, environmental degradation and migration to human security and the need for further research and concerted action in this area. Emphasis was placed on the negative effects climate change will have on the lives and livelihoods of inhabitants of affected areas, as well as its potential for contributing to increased conflicts over scarce resources. Additional strain on scarce resources may result directly from environmental degradation or may be caused by a mass inflow of people fleeing environmental degradation in their own regions. The need to provide targeted support to the most vulnerable countries through capacity-building and partnerships aimed at improving the ability of countries to cope with such threats and challenges was highlighted. Speakers emphasized that ensuring human security today required addressing the implications of the climate change and migration nexus. This demands creative thinking, increased cooperation among all relevant stakeholders, and further research to obtain more reliable data. More specifically, states need to demonstrate real political will and financial commitment by developing, i.a., appropriate financial and other mechanisms.

9. Human security challenges in the context of environmentally-induced migration and lack of data were also among the issues addressed during the two-day workshop on “*Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Preparing for the Future*”, organized in May 2008 in New York by IOM, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and UNFPA and sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation. The first

⁷ In the Discussion Note on Migration and the Environment (2007), IOM provided a working definition of environmental migrants as “*persons or groups of persons who, for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad*”. The Discussion Note also offers more information on the environment and migration scenarios and can be accessed at http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/evolving_global_economy_2728112007/MC_INF_288_EN.pdf.

⁸ All materials from this Conference can be found at <http://www.iom.int/hsnconference>.

day was dedicated to an expert group meeting, which explored, among others, the need to develop a common terminology and a research agenda, as well as ways to design comprehensive policy approaches to migration and the environment. The outcomes of the expert group meeting fed into the discussions on the second day of the workshop, which brought together government officials as well as representatives of international, non-governmental organizations and academia. The participants underlined the need to recognize that not all of the consequences of environmentally-induced migration were negative, and that migration should also be seen as part of adaptation strategies in response to climate change and environmental degradation.

Policy-oriented research activities⁹

10. Sound data are key to understanding the complex relationship between migration and the environment and to effective policy and programme development. The limited availability of data and resulting knowledge gaps in the understanding of the links between the movement of people and environmental factors therefore present an important obstacle to moving forward in this area. Sound research methods, more primary, comparable and accurate data collection, empirical studies and systematic and cross-cutting approaches to migration and the environment are needed to inform policymakers and practitioners.

11. IOM is working together with a range of partners, including the United Nations University and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to address this need. An example of activities in this area is the *Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios* (EACH-FOR), a project funded by the European Commission (EC) and carried out by the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in cooperation with a group of agencies, including IOM. This project aims to develop the knowledge base on migration and the environment, including by conducting case studies in a number of regions to explore the extent to which environmental factors play a role in the decision to migrate. IOM assisted the project's implementation in Mozambique, Niger and Viet Nam.

12. Specifically focused on research gaps, IOM and UNU, in collaboration with UNEP and with the support of the Munich Re Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation organized a “*Research Workshop on Migration and the Environment*”¹⁰ in Munich in April 2008, bringing together scholars and experts on the subject of migration and the environment from different regions of the world. The main objectives included defining priorities for future policy-oriented research on the subject of environmental change and migration; developing a framework for a global research agenda, and identifying ways in which this agenda could be carried forward. The experts agreed on the need for an interdisciplinary global research programme based on a common research design, and a review of the existing research on migration and the environment that would examine the links between both gradual environmental change and migration, and extreme environmental events and migration.

⁹ IOM Constitution, Article 1(1)(e); IOM Strategy activities 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

¹⁰ All materials from this Workshop can be found at <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/eventEU/cache/offonce?entryId=16923>
Forthcoming publication based on the participant papers at this Workshop.

13. In order to pursue one of the priorities identified at the above-mentioned workshop, IOM, in collaboration with UNU and sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, is developing a *State of the Art Review of Migration and the Environment Research*. IOM will commission seven studies based on the themes identified by the experts at the research workshop: (1) conceptualizing migration and the environment; (2) challenges to measuring the migration and environment nexus; (3) collecting data on migration and the environment; (4) migration and natural disasters; (5) migration and chronic environmental degradation; (6) managing environmentally induced migration, and (7) legal frameworks and policy responses.

Interagency and multi-stakeholder cooperation¹¹

14. The interplay of climate change, environmental degradation and migration cannot be addressed effectively at the policy, research or operational levels without regional, international and global collaboration and coordination that would reach not only across countries, but also across disciplines, incorporating, *inter alia*, climate science, geography, migration, development studies, health, security and human rights.

15. In order to create an appropriate informal framework for such cooperation, IOM, together with UNEP, UNU and the Munich Re Foundation are working on the establishment of a Climate Change, Environment and Migration Alliance (CCEMA). The Alliance is based on the existing collaboration among the above-mentioned agencies and conceived as a multi-stakeholder global partnership of concerned actors, such as international organizations, interested groups of states and representatives of the private sector, the scientific and professional community and civil society. These actors represent a range of perspectives, including environment, migration, development and humanitarian assistance. The Alliance aims to bring migration considerations to the environment, development and climate change agendas, and vice versa. This objective will be pursued through a combination of awareness-raising, research, policy development and practical actions. IOM is providing administrative, organizational and coordination support for the development of the CCEMA work programme. The official launch of the Alliance is scheduled to take place on 9 December 2008 on the margins of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Poznań, Poland, at a joint side event.

16. On emergency and humanitarian assistance IOM has taken an active role within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on incorporating climate change into the humanitarian agenda. The increase in the number of extreme environmental events caused or exacerbated by climate change, and the resulting internal or cross-border displacement, already present a challenge to the humanitarian community, while the intensity of extreme environmental events is also expected to rise. As was recognized at the 30 April 2008 IASC Principals Meeting on *Humanitarian Action and Climate Change*, a move towards disaster risk reduction measures, including prevention, vulnerability analysis, early warning and preparedness is needed.

¹¹ IOM Strategy activities as above plus 9 and 10, in particular.

17. During its 71st meeting, held in June 2008, the IASC Working Group widely acknowledged the work undertaken by IOM to improve understanding of the linkages between voluntary as well as forced migration and climate change and environmental degradation. Following a request from the IASC Working Group, IOM, in coordination with the IASC Secretariat and in cooperation with other agencies, is convening a series of informal interagency meetings and consultations to develop appropriate terminology and typologies on migration, displacement and climate change, and to identify possible operational and analytical gaps in the context of the humanitarian response. The outcomes of these activities will feed into the institutional work of the IASC.

18. In addition, IOM supports the IASC in its efforts to achieve a consensus within the humanitarian community on the key messages on the issue of migration, displacement and climate change. These messages will be presented at an UNFCCC side event in Poznań, led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Conclusion

19. IOM will continue its work towards developing the analytical framework presented to the membership at the 2007 Council, and work with the membership to develop a comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing the environment and migration nexus. This approach involves recognizing migration as part of adaptation strategies, and seeking to increase the resilience of vulnerable populations to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. The efforts to increase the adaptive capacities of vulnerable populations need to include better management of environmental migration, in particular with a view to enhancing positive developmental effects.

20. IOM welcomes the growing recognition by many relevant actors of the linkages between environmental degradation, climate change and migration. The environmental community at large, however, still focuses primarily on mitigation measures and not sufficient attention is being paid in discussions on adaptation to the human dimension of the impact of climate change.

21. IOM is working closely with a broad range of relevant actors to bridge, in accordance with the respective mandates of each, policy, research and operational gaps in addressing the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation for human mobility in terms of both emergency and humanitarian assistance, as well as of development and adaptation.

Annex

PUBLICATIONS ON MIGRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT¹

1. IOM is committed to promoting the Organization's work on migration and the environment also through its publications and the commissioning of new forward-thinking research on this increasingly important issue. IOM's publications on migration and the environment go back as far as 1992, with its first publication on the subject, *Migration and the Environment*, followed by the report of the 1996 symposium on "*Environmentally-induced Population Displacements and Environmental Impacts Resulting from Mass Migrations*", co-organized by IOM, UNHCR and the Refugee Policy Group.
2. Over the past few months, IOM has dedicated three editions of its Migration Research Series (MRS) to migration and the environment: "*Climate Change and Migration: Improving Methodologies to Estimate Flows*" (MRS.33, 2008), "*Migration and Climate Change*" (MRS.31, 2007) and "*Migration, Development and Natural Disasters: Insights from the Indian Ocean Tsunami*" (MRS. 30, 2007). A forthcoming MRS dedicated to this subject, "*Migration, Development and Environment*", explores the conceptual framework of the interrelationship between migration, the environment and development through a review of the current literature, and offers an in-depth analysis of the various permutations of this relationship. Under the International Dialogue on Migration in IOM's Red Book Series", IOM has also published "*Expert Seminar: Migration and the Environment*", (No. 10, 2008). Two other publications based on the Research Workshop on Migration and the Environment, held in 2008, and the conference on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities, will be disseminated in 2008.

¹ All publications are available at www.iom.int/publications.