

UN Water Conference Side-event

Water Extremes at the Feet of Displaced People: Averting, Minimising and Addressing Loss & Damage

Organised by IOM and UN-OHRLS

With the co-sponsorship of the European Union, Portugal, Malta and the United Arab Emirates

Date and time: 22 March, 14:00-15:15 EST

Location: UNHQ, New York – Side Event Room C

Concept Note *as of 8 March 2023*

Disasters, climate change and environmental degradation are reshaping both patterns of water availability and human mobility patterns. In 2021 alone, 23.7 million new displacements in the context of disasters were registered across the world. Out of the 23.7 million, 10.1 million happened in the context of floods, 11.5 in the context of storms. The changes in rainfall patterns, with less rain in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa in 2021, together with severe droughts and extreme temperatures led to hundreds of thousands of displacements (IDMC, 2022). Moving in these contexts is an integral part of risk reduction and a necessary survival, protection and coping mechanism, as it enables people to avoid harmful impacts (Guadagno and Yonetani, 2022). At the same time, displacement and migration linked to the increasing intensity of such disasters can have an alarming impact on the lives of individuals and society. Negative impacts include economic and non-economic losses such as loss of cultural heritage, indigenous or local knowledge, societal or cultural identity and livelihoods.

The side-event will put forward the voices of Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. While at the forefront of water related disasters, these countries are also implementing innovative and sustainable solutions – including related to water resources management – grounded in local knowledge and vast experience in overcoming and planning for continuous shocks to avert, minimise and address displacement and Loss & Damage associated with human mobility; but also to resort to human mobility to avert, minimise and address Loss & Damage impacting water resources.

UNFCCC COP27 has been an opportunity to advance discussions on Loss and Damage, also related to human mobility, including displacement, and water extremes. The identification and commitment to good practices to avert, minimise and address displacement and Loss & Damage is an essential next step ahead of UNFCCC COP28, by putting forward in high-level processes the voices of most affected States. Beyond UNFCCC COP27, this side event will build on the advances on the links between human mobility, Loss and Damage associated with climate change and water extremes that took place in the context of the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar (2022), the UN Ocean Conference (2022), the Dushanbe Water Process (2022), the ECOSOC Partnership Forum (2023), UN Security Council open debate on Sea Level Rise (2023) and the Water Scarcity in Agriculture International Forum (2023).

As key outcomes, the event will enable:

- A dialogue between State representatives from different regions on the linkages between human mobility, climate change and water and identify concrete ways – including linked to water resources management - and to advance progress on averting, minimizing and addressing Loss and Damage in the context of water extremes;
- Informing the audience of the state of knowledge, different experiences and responses in different regions related to water management and human mobility management;
- Promoting an increased attention to human mobility, including displacement and Loss and Damage associated with water extremes in the context of climate change;
- A commitment with concrete good practices identified – including linked to water resources management - to avert, minimize and address displacement and Loss & Damage associated with human mobility in the context of water extremes; but also to resort to human mobility to avert, minimise and address Loss & Damage linked to water resources. The commitment would support the acceleration of SDG6 in regard to both innovation and governance and would include ways forward towards innovative, sustainable and cooperative water resources management resilient to disasters in perspective with human mobility.

The duration of this side event is 75 minutes. The format is an interactive panel discussion between State representatives. The panel discussion will be followed by a Q&A segment.