

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND MIGRATION: ADDRESSING VULNERABILITIES AND HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES



Geneva, 19 February 2008

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
GENEVA



IOM International Organization for Migration

TABLE OF CONTENTS



HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK AND IOM PARTNERSHIP	5
Human Security Network (HSN)	5
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	5
REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE.....	7
Executive Summary	7
Conference Overview and Objectives	8
Introduction	9
Key Challenges	11
Key Issues	12
The Way Forward	18
Conclusion	19
ANNEX 1: CONFERENCE AGENDA.....	21
ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	25

HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK AND IOM PARTNERSHIP



Human Security Network (HSN)

Established in 1999, the Human Security Network (HSN) is an informal group of 13 countries that maintain a dialogue on questions pertaining to human security. The Network has a unique inter-regional and multiple-agenda perspective with strong links to civil society and academia.

Being an informal, flexible mechanism, the Human Security Network identifies concrete areas for collective action. It pursues policies that focus on the protection and security requirement of the individual and of society through promoting freedom from fear and freedom from want. The Network plays a catalytic role by bringing international attention to new and emerging issues. By applying a human security perspective to international problems, the goal of the Network is to energize political processes aimed at preventing or solving conflicts and promoting peace and development.

Greece, in its capacity as the current Chair of the Human Security Network, wishes to emphasize that climate change primarily affects human security of vulnerable groups particularly in least developed regions, most prone to the phenomenon; this is an issue that transcends national boundaries and needs to be addressed accordingly. The Greek HSN Chairmanship is committed to focus the public and political awareness-raising function of the Network on the impact of climate change and global warming on human security, particularly using the world's vulnerable population groups as its point of reference. It is also trying to use the Network's capacity as a cross-regional forum/platform of communication to promote international synergies in this area to find path-breaking solutions.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Established in 1951, IOM is the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 122 member states, a further 18 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

The IOM Constitution gives explicit recognition to the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as to the right of freedom of movement. IOM works in the four broad areas of migration management: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration and addressing forced migration. IOM activities that cut across these areas include the promotion of international migration law, policy debate and guidance, protection of migrants' rights, migration health and the gender dimension of migration.

Migration has implications for and is influenced by a variety of policy matters, one of which is the environment. In the cross-cutting area of migration and the environment, IOM addresses linkages between the environment 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 appropriate to address the challenges facing mobile populations today, including those resulting from extreme environmental events or gradual environmental degradation, and implements relevant projects. Through its programmatic activity, IOM is also applying 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 environmental migration and to address potential impacts of migration on the environment.

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE



Executive Summary

The Greek Chairmanship of the Human Security Network (HSN)¹ and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)² co-hosted a Conference on the 19th of February 2008 in Geneva on “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities”.

The overall objective of the Conference was to increase political and public awareness on the risks of climate change, environmental degradation and migration to human security and the need for further research and concerted action.

The half day Conference brought together 180 participants from 67 countries and 33 Intergovernmental Organizations.

The objectives of the Conference were pursued through high level keynote presentations and addresses and two interactive panels.

The speakers emphasized the increasingly challenging and critical nature of environmental degradation, climate change and migration for human security and sustainable development, as well as the two-fold relationship of these phenomena.

In assessing the situation speakers underlined the alarming projections and stressed that climate change is expected to bring about major global environmental change, which may have extensive humanitarian and human mobility consequences.

According to some estimates:

- By 2050, between 25 million to 1 billion people may migrate or be displaced due to environmental degradation and climate change;
- Areas that may potentially be flooded might be 1.3 million square kilometres,
- 9 out of 10 extreme environmental events are argued to be related to climate change;
- Developing countries might suffer 98% of the casualties resulting from natural disasters;
- Within these countries, the most vulnerable groups of population, especially women, are likely to be the most affected;

¹ an informal cross-regional Group of 13 countries that maintain a dialogue on questions pertaining to human security

² the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration

- South and East Asia, Africa and small island states will be most severely affected;
- Climate change in combination with the current demographic trends will intensify the already existing migration pressures;
- Large scale migration due to climate change and environmental degradation will have adverse effects on the environment in areas/countries of destination and will subsequently increase the potential for conflict in these areas/countries. It can be expected to provoke resource scarcity in some areas; for example through disruption of production cycles as well as water scarcity; and
- The consequences of these phenomena are likely to impede the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In outlining necessary actions to prevent, mitigate and adapt to these phenomena, speakers underlined the multidisciplinary nature of the issue. They emphasized that new security risks require us to think creatively and to adapt our traditional approaches to better meet the needs of our new era.

More specifically speakers stressed the need to:

- Demonstrate real political will and financial commitment, *inter alia*, by developing appropriate financial and other mechanisms such as the Trust Fund for Human Security;
- Design and implement development policies promoting adaptation to climate change and further mainstream this parameter into other policies;
- Further stimulate research and data collection for improving predictability and understanding of the consequences of these phenomena;
- Increase interagency and interstate cooperation, stimulate concerted action of all stakeholders (public and private) and extend consultations to other relevant stakeholders; and
- Better incorporate the human rights aspect into all policies and actions.

Conference Overview and Objectives

“Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities”, a conference co-hosted by the Government of Greece, in its capacity as Chair of the Human Security Network, and IOM was held on February 19 in Geneva. The idea of a partnership between the Greek HSN Chairmanship and IOM to organize a conference focusing on human security implications of environmental degradation, climate change and migration emerged following the 94th IOM Council Session, which took place in November 2007 and included, *inter alia*, a panel discussion on migration and the environment.

The half-day conference brought together 180 participants from 67 countries and 33 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives of academia, for an open and informal exchange of views

on key issues and latest developments in the field of migration and the environment.

The overall objective of the conference was to increase political and public awareness of the challenges that climate change, environmental degradation and migration may pose to human security and of the implications of these challenges for research-based policy. In particular, the conference aimed to:

- stimulate and sustain discussion on the most promising policy tools and mechanisms to manage the migratory causes and consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, particularly in relation to human security and sustainable development;
- raise awareness among the international community on the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and migration on the world's vulnerable population groups;
- underline the need for more policy and action-oriented research aimed at further exploration of inter-linkages between climate change, environmental degradation and migration, including in relation to conflicts and human vulnerability; and
- highlight the need for cooperation and concerted action by all the relevant stakeholders to effectively address the human security challenges posed by the intersection between environmental change and migration.

The objectives of the conference were pursued through high level keynote presentations and two interactive panel discussions.

The conference discussions were cross-cutting and many underlying issues and challenges were brought up repeatedly throughout the event. To help capture the main ideas expressed during the conference, this report is organized around the key issues and challenges rather than by panels.

Introduction

Climate change and migration are among the most pressing issues facing the international community today. These phenomena are not new; however, their scale is making their management, including in relation to each other, both increasingly challenging and critical for ensuring human security and sustainable development.

The linkages between climate change and migration are attracting ever greater attention, including in the broader context of migration and environmental degradation³. The relationship between these phenomena is complex but in general terms can be argued to be two-fold. On the one hand, gradual and sudden environmental changes are resulting in substantial human movement and displacement; on the other hand, migration is also having a demonstrable impact on the environment in communities of origin and destination. Implications of these interrelations for human vulnerability

³ Environmental degradation refers to processes which can be caused or exacerbated by climate change, for example sea level rise, as well as by human activity, for example, land degradation due to over-intensive farming. In some areas, both climate change and human activity contribute to environmental degradation.

as well as for the potential for conflict have not been sufficiently studied by policy-makers and researchers alike. These implications are even more difficult to assess given their interaction with other social, economic and political issues such as underdevelopment and demographic trends, which affect human vulnerability to environmental change and its migratory and other consequences.

Considerable time and effort are spent on determining the meteorological impacts of climate change and providing mappings that can be used by the humanitarian community to establish contingency plans and emergency responses. Less time and resources have been spent in analyses and forecasts of climate change implications on human populations and their movements. Climate change is argued to challenge the adaptive capacities of many different communities by interacting with and aggravating existing problems in the areas of, among others, food security, water scarcity and soil fertility. Natural disasters are bound to drive large numbers of people to seek shelter outside their homelands for relatively short periods of time, but the gradual changes in environment are likely to displace far larger numbers of people over long periods or even permanently, though in a much less attention-catching way.

Unfortunately, it is the developing countries, and within them the most vulnerable parts of their communities, that are at the greatest risk of suffering from adverse effects of environmental degradation. South and East Asia, parts of Africa, and small island states everywhere in the world are the hardest hit, while coastal communities and mostly poor rural communities reliant on arable lands are the groups facing the most imminent threat by climate change. By the same token, while temporary migration as a mechanism to adapt to climate change is already undertaken on a large scale in many areas, the ability to migrate continues to depend heavily on resources and mobility. Thus, the most vulnerable groups and communities may not be the ones best prepared and able to migrate.

Environmental consequences of migration and their links with human vulnerability and conflict also warrant greater attention. Migration of large numbers of people can have significant environmental repercussions for areas of origin, areas of destination, and the travel routes in between. Situations of mass human displacement in particular can lead to accelerated environmental degradation. This has potential for creating a vicious circle – when mass migration following natural disasters or conflicts, if inadequately managed, can lead to the deterioration of the environment in the area of destination. This may necessitate further displacement including that of the local population. Such situations may also generate tensions over scarce resources.

Protecting human security in today's world, in particular with respect to vulnerable groups, requires addressing the challenges presented by the interaction between environmental degradation and migration. To do so effectively, it is important to incorporate the human mobility dimension into the policy and programme discussions on environmental change. Similarly, environment concerns should be included in migration management

schemes, reflected in humanitarian preparedness and recovery planning and integrated into the mainstream humanitarian agenda. This would require multi-stakeholder cooperation and a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to policy and operational activities in both areas. Furthermore, specific development assistance and cooperation projects for the promotion of capacity building and sustainable development in developing countries can lead to better migration policies.

Key Challenges

The following key challenges for policy makers and practitioners emerged in the course of the discussions:

- **Ensuring respect for and protection of human rights**, including of vulnerable groups, in the context of the humanitarian implications of the climate change, environmental degradation and migration nexus. States, as well as all other relevant stakeholders, should take both individual and concerted action to address the threats to and adverse effects on the human rights posed by climate change and environmental degradation.
- **Developing effective cooperation among all the relevant stakeholders** to address the implications of environmental degradation and migration and their inter-linkages for human security and sustainable development. Improved cooperation is required at all levels, from national and regional to international and global, with states playing the central role. Dialogue and cooperation across the different policy domains (i.e. humanitarian and environmental) is crucial.
- **Achieving broad consensus among the stakeholders on the terms and definitions of key phenomena under discussion.** Terms such as “environmental migrant”, “environmental refugee”, “climate change migrant” are under an on-going debate and scrutiny with various stakeholders having different perspectives on this issue.
- **Improving the availability of reliable and policy-relevant data and research in the field.** There is a real need for closing knowledge gaps among both the environment and humanitarian communities concerning the interrelations between climate change, migration and human security and wellbeing. This is necessary if a deeper understanding of these phenomena and development of informed and coherent policies and programmes are to be achieved.

1. The humanitarian urgency to tackle the adverse impacts of such phenomena as gradual environmental degradation and extreme environmental events on population movements and human security

The urgency of the need to tackle the consequences of climate change and resulting migration is underscored by predictions that by 2050 between 25 million and as many as 1 billion people may migrate or be displaced due to environmental degradation and climate change events, such as rising sea levels, floods, droughts and hurricanes, to name but a few. These and other environmental changes and related alteration in ecosystems threaten the livelihoods of millions of people and, thus, may force them to move in search of new opportunities.

10 per cent of the world population lives near water and just a few meters above sea level. Some estimates put the area that may potentially be flooded by 2050 at a staggering 1.3 million square kilometres. These factors have distinct humanitarian implications such as the increase in waterborne diseases, diarrhoea, malaria and dengue fever among others. The quality of potable water and level of sanitation are also likely to deteriorate as a result of these and other environmental changes, in particular droughts and desertification.

According to the data available, both gradual environmental change and extreme environmental events have different though equally devastating effects on populations. Gradual environmental changes, such as desertification, land degradation and deforestation can be understood as being those that occur slowly over a long period of time in small yet cumulative manifestations. Some suggest that the highest number of people migrate as a result of the gradual deterioration of environmental conditions, though it is less visible than extreme environmental events.

Extreme environmental events refer to disasters that are likely to affect a considerable number of people over a large region and whose effects on the affected community are of immediate and grave nature. These events usually result in sudden, massive population displacement. As argued by one of the participants, extreme environmental events (such as hurricanes, cyclones, tsunamis, coastal and riverbank flooding, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions) can be among the leading causes or contributing factors that trigger hunger, malnutrition, lack of access to water and adequate housing, exposure to disease, loss of livelihoods and permanent displacement. As 9 out of 10 extreme environmental events are argued to be related to climate change, it may be said that this threatens the very right to life of large populations.

2. The impact of climate change and environmental degradation on the most vulnerable countries and populations

Highly vulnerable countries

Although Europe is facing significant challenges posed by climate change with its most vulnerable areas being coastal zones, densely populated floodplains, mountainous regions, islands, the Arctic region and parts of South and South-East Europe, it is the populations of developing countries who will be most severely affected. As stated by one of the participants, developing countries suffer 98 per cent of the casualties resulting from natural disasters. South and East Asia, Africa and small island states around the world are most likely to experience large-scale migration as a result of extreme environmental events.

Developing countries also suffer most as a result of gradual environmental degradation. According to some estimates, South and East Asia account for up to 75 per cent of the population at risk, with the majority of people residing in coastal areas where sea-level rise poses a serious threat to their livelihoods. Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. Desertification increases the incidence of poverty. Soil fertility is on the decline, resulting in lower crop yields and less viable grazing areas. Changed patterns of rainfall can also affect food security, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. With falling incomes from agriculture, families adapt by looking for alternative employment options in the region or in developed countries, which often involves migration.

According to one of the participants, climate change has been of serious concern to small island states for decades. As much of their land is just a few metres above sea-level, these states have been and are increasingly vulnerable to sea-level rise. Governments are making all possible efforts to prepare for sea-level rise. In the Maldives, for instance, artificial islands of higher land level have been built and continue to be constructed to provide the population under most immediate threat with new places of residence. Other types of environmental deterioration are also a serious concern. Cape Verde, for example, is currently undergoing vast desertification, while Grenada is still suffering from the aftermath of the devastating hurricanes of 2005 (though the country up until 2000 had been considered to be below the hurricane belt).

Another cause for alarm for many participants was the fact that both extreme environmental events and manifestations of gradual environmental degradation are now also occurring in unexpected locations.

Highly vulnerable population groups

Within the developing countries, it is the poorest and most vulnerable groups of people who are most susceptible to the adverse effects of environmental degradation. According to one participant, almost two billion people in the world today depend on the fragile ecosystems in arid and semi-arid areas with 90 per cent of them (mostly poor) living in the developing world.

70 per cent of the poor in Africa live in rural, mostly dry-land areas and are heavily dependant on agriculture for their livelihoods. At the same time, three quarters of all agricultural dry-lands in Africa are degraded to some extent, which affects food production and agricultural employment. In response to the challenges posed by land degradation, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is set to address the following two key items on its agenda: the risk of vast areas left uninhabitable by declining agricultural capacity and the risk of reduced freshwater availability.

The poorest and most vulnerable may be the hardest hit but are not always able to opt for migration given their limited resources. The capacity and strategies of these most vulnerable groups to adapt to climate change are further limited by various forms of discrimination and social marginalization.

It was argued that women are likely to be more heavily affected by climate change than men. For example, there are many countries where women are disproportionately heavily represented in agriculture – a sector which is among the most affected by environmental degradation. Moreover, in many societies women are traditionally responsible for collecting water, which makes their role directly dependent on weather conditions. Small-scale farmers (especially in Asia and Africa), indigenous people, the elderly and the handicapped as well as orphans are also at great risk.

Climate change in combination with the current demographic trends is set to intensify the already existing migration pressures. With the population of young people on the rise in many developing countries and opportunities in the local job market increasingly scarce, a growing number of them will be driven to consider migration options.

One of the proposed mechanisms to help identify or predict cases where migration may serve as the main strategy to cope with environmental change is vulnerability mapping. Vulnerability mapping can help to more accurately identify those areas experiencing or likely to experience an outward flow of environmentally-induced migrants. It involves considering the following factors: the carrying capacity of the ecosystem – i.e. the ability of ecosystems to support basic standards of living; the caring capacity of local institutions – i.e. the capacity of formal and informal local institutions to adapt to any changes in the ecosystems' carrying capacity; the socio-economic vulnerability of households and individuals, and preferences for "fight or flight".

3. The need for the effective protection of human rights in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, migration and their humanitarian consequences

So far, insufficient attention has been given to the human rights dimension in the context of the climate change discussions, negotiations and research. It was argued that there is a pressing need to integrate principles of equality, non-discrimination, access to information and justice, and other core human rights norms in the framework of the post Kyoto Protocol era. All related policies and programmes, whether international, regional or national, should factor in and address the human rights aspect.

The general framework for addressing the consequences of climate change for human rights and human life as such is provided by the international human rights norms that have been devised and put into effect over the six decades since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. A human rights approach to climate change highlights the obligations of states under international law to prevent and address consequences of and threats to basic and fundamental human rights posed by climate change. Several of these obligations are relevant to specific vulnerabilities induced by climate change, such as the responsibility to provide better housing; improved access to sanitation, potable water and healthcare; access to adequate food; effective participation in planning and decision-making; accountability, as well as access to information and justice. Guaranteeing these basic rights and entitlements may also help to prevent displacement or migration related to climate change.

It was also argued that it is important to ensure that existing international core human rights standards should be applied equally to nationals of a country in question as well as to non-nationals residing there, irrespective of their legal status.

4. Adverse impacts of migration on the environment in areas and/or countries of origin and destination vis-à-vis potential for conflict and in the context of human security

Adverse impacts of migration on the environment in areas/countries of destination

Large-scale migration of people (often accompanied by livestock) can have significant implications on the environment both in the areas of origin, transit and destination. In other words, resettlement of environmental migrants can easily produce an environmental wasteland of its own.

The major areas of concern in relation to the effects of mass migration on the environment are, *inter alia*, not only uncontrolled felling of trees (for firewood and construction), overgrazing and other poor agricultural practices but also poor site and camp management (especially when in ecologically vulnerable areas), poor waste management and uncontrolled mining. Poor camp management can directly result in overexploitation of groundwater and arable land.

Much of the migration from environmentally degraded areas tends to flow toward urban centres. Increasing urbanization, if combined with limited infrastructure and absorption capacity, can have negative environmental effects. An influx of migrants into urban centres may result in unregulated construction and unsanitary livelihood practices. This may lead to serious public health risks, pollution, etc.

During the 1994 civil war in Rwanda for example, over 400,000 people were driven out of the country into neighbouring Tanzania. As a result, Kasulo, one of the Tanzanian villages just off the border with Rwanda, swelled from an initial roughly 1,000 residents to become the second largest population concentration in the country. Such a massive inflow of people into the once

small village led to severe damage of the host environment and undermined the livelihoods of the local inhabitants. Trees were chopped down for firewood and construction, causing deforestation and soil erosion. The vegetation cover was reduced and water resources drained.

Potential for conflict of the adverse impacts of migration on the environment in areas/countries of destination

Mass migration can in turn have major implications for international and human security, especially if it takes place in semi-arid areas where weak governance and poverty are prevalent. Disputes and violence can occur over already scarce resources such as potable water supplies and arable land. One of the participants, for example, identified desertification as a serious threat to security in the Mediterranean region.

Conflicts in Sudan provide a vivid example of the link between conflict and environmental degradation caused by mass migration. The conflict between the Government of Sudan and rebel fighters which escalated in 2003, is said to have displaced several hundreds of thousands of people, some of whom sought refuge in neighbouring Chad. Eastern Chad is a poor region which suffers from food insecurity, scarcity of potable water and has limited infrastructure. The sudden large-scale influx of people put an additional strain on the already scarce resources, resulting in deforestation and overgrazing. Despite ethnic kinship among the hosting and hosted communities, this led to tensions and conflicts over water, pasture and firewood between the Sudanese and the local population. Shortages of clean water, health services and essential medicines created severe health problems. Despite large-scale assistance and alleviation efforts by the UN and other organizations, considerable tensions remain between the two sides.

Some participants stressed that causes of conflicts are very complex: they are rooted in a host of issues and cannot be attributed to any one factor, such as environmental degradation. Resolution of conflicts should address the full spectrum of their root causes and requires coordinated action by the international community at both regional and international levels aimed at rehabilitation, reconciliation and reconstruction in the conflict area. Without such efforts, safe return of migrants and their reintegration in their country of origin would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Real political will and financial commitment are of the essence. One of the mechanisms developed to help alleviate such situations is the Trust Fund for Human Security. The Japanese Government took the initiative to establish this Trust Fund with the United Nations in 1999 and has already contributed over USD 260 million to it. The purpose of the Fund is to address threats to human life and dignity. As part of its core practical tasks, the Fund deals with, *inter alia*, supplying potable water; assisting to increase agricultural production; providing basic health services, primary education and vocational trainings, and controlling illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Since its establishment, the Fund has supported 188 projects to protect and enhance human security worldwide, including the two cases mentioned above in Tanzania and Chad.

5. The aggravating effect of climate change on the major development challenges

According to some estimates, the number of people migrating today as a result of environmental disasters or scarcity of natural resources is similar to the number having to flee their homes to escape political oppression, and ethnic and religious discrimination or persecution.

The consequences of the climate change-induced migration are far reaching: it is likely to impede the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The most affected domains would be the provision of education and health care, the reduction of child and maternal mortality, and the combating of HIV/Aids as well as other diseases. Environmental migration may also affect development by increasing pressure on urban infrastructure and services, putting additional strain on scarce resources and increasing risk of conflict.

There is an urgent need to devise and implement development policies promoting adaptation to climate change. It is crucial that sustainable development and climate change issues be incorporated into development agendas. These efforts will be most successful if migrants themselves are fully involved in the development efforts and programmes. Following this principle, the Greek Development Cooperation Policy is working together with the International Organization for Migration in Athens to promote programmes aiming at facilitating the contribution of migrants in Greece to the development of their countries of origin.

6. Importance of greater interagency and interstate cooperation, and concerted action; further inclusion of relevant stakeholders

There is a need for deeper cooperation and closer coordination among all stakeholders to address the technical and policy dimensions of managing environmental causes and consequences of migration and their implications for human security and wellbeing. Improved cooperation is required at all levels, from national and regional to international and global. States should play a leading role in forging interstate and broad-based partnerships.

There is also a need for close interagency cooperation. Some participants argued for the establishment of a new organization to ensure concerted response to climate change. A Global Migration Group, potentially with the addition of organizations dealing with environmental and climate change issues, was discussed as an alternative potential platform for cooperative tackling of the migration and environment nexus.

Although the issue of climate change and its interrelation with migration is already on the agendas of many governments and international organizations, it is paramount to further promote and develop dialogue on these issues including in the context of other relevant international fora such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Cooperation is also necessary if progress is to be achieved in developing better understanding of the interaction between climate change, environmental

degradation and the movement of people. The multidisciplinary nature of the issues requires collaboration in research and data collection between environmental, migration and humanitarian agencies. It was also suggested that UNCCD could cooperate with IOM on a study related to the issues pertaining to desertification and its impact on population movement.

The Way Forward

The following ideas and action points for moving the agenda forward were brought up during the conference discussions:

- **Strengthen interstate and multi-stakeholder cooperation** at all levels to address the inter-linkages between climate change, environmental degradation and migration. Countries of origin and destination need to assume a central role in such cooperation. Civil society, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, in particular, also have an important contribution to make, especially in the area of capacity-building.
- **Strengthen cooperation across the different policy domains** between environmental and humanitarian communities, including through improving interagency cooperation and dialogue. It is necessary to ensure that migration issues are an integral part of all climate change-related discussions and policies and that environmental and climate change considerations are in turn factored into migration management policies and programmes as well as humanitarian, recovery and preparedness planning.
- **Develop a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to research** in order to improve the understanding of
 - the links between climate change, environmental degradation and migration and the impacts of these phenomena on human security and sustainable development;
 - the patterns of climate change-induced migration to enable early policy planning for: organized movement, diverse migration strategies, and pre-departure preparation and assistance upon arrival; and
 - migratory flows, their socio-economic and cultural dimensions and impact on the economies of a region, including methods for disaggregating the push factors of migration.
- **Address in a concerted manner the definitional issues**, in particular on whether the term “environmental refugee” or “environmental migrant” should be used. Pertinent international treaties recognize only political refugees; therefore application of the term “environmental refugee” would require revision of the existing international legal instruments. IOM’s proposal for a working definition speaks of “environmental migrants” and defines them as “persons or groups of persons who, for compelling 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”.

- **Devise comprehensive policy approaches** to addressing the human security challenges linked to climate change, environmental degradation and migration. The combination of measures should cover the short-, medium- and longer-term and encompass areas of emergency relief and humanitarian assistance as well as those of preparedness and planning.
- **Provide targeted support to the most vulnerable countries** through capacity building and partnerships aimed at improving the ability of these states to cope with threats and challenges posed by climate change.
- **Devise incentives to channel financial and non-financial resources of migrants to make local livelihoods more sustainable** and to reduce environmental degradation caused by human activity.
- **Promote at the global level national strategies** adopted in response to the degradation of natural resources, such as the UNCCD’s National Action Programmes which include Local Area Development Programmes aimed at reducing poverty within local communities affected by desertification and drought. Such programmes help to reduce the push factors of migration.

Conclusion

By bringing together a diverse range of participants for an open exchange of views, the conference highlighted the links between climate change, environmental degradation and migration and contributed to the better understanding of these links. It also discussed the challenges of these phenomena for the protection of human rights and ensuring human security, in particular in relation to the most vulnerable regions, communities and groups.

The conference participants called for immediate and concerted action in light of the humanitarian urgency of the above-mentioned challenges as well as their scale. There is a growing need for the development of appropriate policies which can measure up to these challenges as well as for the implementation of development policies promoting adaptation to climate change. Integrating sustainable development and climate change considerations into national development policies as well as into cooperation and capacity-building programmes is essential. This will be important for the developing world in particular for the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island States, which are to be the hardest hit although they have historically contributed the least to the creation of the problem.

While much work still remains as agreement was not reached on all the issues at stake, including the very definitions of the phenomena discussed, the participants expressed strong support for further efforts to bridge the existing gaps. There was also commitment to work together to reach consensus on the outstanding issues and to more effectively tackle the

ANNEX 1: CONFERENCE AGENDA





PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
GENEVA



IOM International Organization for Migration

GREEK CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK

Organizes in cooperation with the

International Organization for Migration

a conference on

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND MIGRATION: ADDRESSING VULNERABILITIES AND HARNESSING OPPORTUNITIES¹

at the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva
19 February 2008

AGENDA

19 February 2008	
09:00 – 10:00	<i>Registration and coffee</i>
10:00 – 10:20	Welcome Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theodoros Skylakakis, Secretary General for International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation and Special Representative for Climate Change, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece, delivered on behalf of the Greek Chairmanship of the Human Security Network • Brunson McKinley, Director General, International Organization for Migration
10:20 – 10:40	Keynote Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyung-wha Kang, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights • Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization

¹ This conference is one of a series of consultative events organized under the Greek Chairmanship of the Human Security Network during 2007 and 2008 with the primary purpose of raising political and public awareness of the human security challenges of climate change for the most vulnerable groups and the implications for research-based policy.

10:40 – 12:00	Session I: Addressing the Impact of Environmental Degradation and Climate Change on Human Security and Migration
	<p><i>Environmental degradation and climate change are impacting considerably upon lives and living conditions around the world, with a disproportionate effect upon the poor and otherwise most vulnerable. This session will assess some of the implications for human security and migration as they relate to various manifestations of gradual environmental change and extreme environmental events. In addition, this session will explore potential migration policy responses and their coherence with other policy fields, as well as the role of improved data, research and multi-stakeholder cooperation at the national, bilateral and regional levels.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Daniel Wermus, Director, Media21 Global Journalism Network, Geneva</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E. Angus Friday, Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations, Chairman, Alliance of Small Island States • Michelle Leighton, Director, Human Rights Programs, School of Law, University of San Francisco • Georges-Stavros Kremlis, Head of Unit ENV D.3, European Commissioner for Environment, European Commission • Gordon Shepherd, Director, Regional and Global Policy, WWF International <p>Potential topics, among others, for discussion during this session include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the implications of more frequent and intense extreme environmental events for current and future forms of human displacement and for public health risks? • How can gradual environmental change such as desertification, by affecting food security, water scarcity and earning capacity, result in various forms of internal and cross-border migration as coping strategies? • What population movements are to be expected in the particular case of sea-level rise? • How do intermediating social, economic and cultural factors affect both vulnerability to environmentally-induced challenges to human security and the nature of corresponding migration, including displacement, patterns? • What are the implications for coordinating improved responses in sustainable development, migration management, including resettlement schemes, and disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery? <p>General Discussion</p>

12:00 – 13:20	Session II: Addressing the Impact of Migration on the Environment and the Interaction of these Phenomena with the Potential for Conflict
	<p><i>Just as environmental factors affect the movement of people, so too can internal and cross-border movement have an impact on the environment. This session will look at various types of population movement as they affect the environment in areas from which migrants originate, as well as in their temporary and permanent destinations. In addition, this session will explore the potential for migration and environmental change to heighten the risk for conflict and induce further population movements. Discussion will follow on some of the options for improving policy, data and research as well as multi-stakeholder cooperation at all levels.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Janos J. Bogardi, Director, Institute for the Environment and Human Security, United Nations University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makio Miyagawa, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations Office in Geneva • Grégoire de Kalbermatten, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification • Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, Head, Policy Development and Studies Branch, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs <p>Potential topics, among others, for discussion during this session include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have mass displacement and non-orderly return migration adversely affected the environment of host areas and areas of origin respectively? What related improvements are being made to the management of camps and settlements and assistance for return, reintegration and reconstruction? • How can outward migration positively or negatively affect efforts to prevent further gradual environmental degradation in areas of origin? What are the implications for migration policy? • Where inadequately managed, how can various forms of rural-to-urban migration compromise efforts to develop eco-friendly cities and to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters? What are the implications for urban planning and migrant integration? • When might environmental change and migration increase the potential for conflict and additional displacement? What are the implications for traditional approaches to conflict prevention, mediation and resolution? <p>General Discussion</p>
13:20 – 13:30	Closing Remarks
	<i>End of Conference</i>
13:30 – 15:15	Reception Hosted by the Human Security Network Chairmanship

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS





PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
GENEVA



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities

(19 February 2008)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Conference Centre
7 bis Avenue de la Paix, Geneva, Switzerland

List of Participants

Governments	(p.1)	(102 participants)
International Organizations	(p.10)	(52 participants)
Non-Governmental Organizations	(p.13)	(14 participants)
Academics and Other Participants	(p.14)	(3 participants)
Press	(p.15)	(8 participants)
Chairs, Speakers, Discussants	(p.16)	(13 participants)

Total number of pages: 17 (including this page)

Total number of participants: 179

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