

Press information¹

“Climigration takes place today!”

In the complex field of environmentally induced migration a rigorous and policy oriented scientific research is needed

Today, more than 200 million people have left their homes for political, economic, environmental and other reasons. If these migrants formed a single nation, it would make up the world's fifth largest country.

Environmental factors have long had an impact on global migration flows, both internal and cross-border. Recent IPCC reports provide ample indications that climate change is likely to increase the number of humanitarian emergencies and trigger population movements as a result of increasingly intense weather events, sea-level rise and accelerated environmental degradation. A significant rise in human mobility can also be expected over the next decades as a result of the adverse consequences of climate change on livelihoods, public health, food security, and water availability. In its fourth assessment report, the IPCC estimates, for example, that flooding will affect the homes of two to seven million people in coastal areas by 2080. More than 1 billion people will lack drinking water, and 200 to 600 million will be threatened by hunger. While no reliable estimates exist, experts reckon there may be 25 to 50 million more migrants due to climate and environmental change by the year 2010, and 200 million or more by 2050.

The impacts of climate change are detrimental to human security. They exacerbate the magnitude and frequency of various natural hazards, affect the resilience of communities and ecosystems and therefore already provoke large-scale migration and displacement and competition over diminishing resources. A failure to recognise and address this new reality will not only undermine development but will put the survival of many people at risk and may increase the potential for conflict.

The effects of climate change are especially strongly felt in geographically susceptible areas such as Alaska or the small island states of the Pacific. Polar ice and permafrost in Alaska or Canada are melting, sea levels are rising, contributing to coastal erosion and forcing people to move. The effects are so dramatic that some Inuit communities face imminent resettlement. In the case of small island states, who are represented at COP 15 by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the rising sea level is one of the key factors leading to increased outmigration.

While mitigation of carbon and other emissions responsible for climate change cannot be over-emphasized, there is an urgent need to also design and implement appropriate policies to humanely manage increasingly large migration flows. This will require a three-pronged approach: 1). minimize forced climate-related migration as much as possible, 2). provide adequate protection and assistance to the displaced and 3), facilitate the use of migration as an adaptation strategy. The last point is important – migration should be recognized as one possible adaptation strategy, especially at early stages of environmental degradation, allowing for example for income diversification through the receipt of remittances. Migration

¹ This press information note was prepared by the Munich Re Foundation (MRF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF International) – members of a wider Climate Change, Environment and Migration Alliance.

issues deserve greater attention in the world's on-going environmental and climate change discourse, in particular in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations.

The CCEMA, an alliance on climate change, environment and migration, brings together a diversity of partners, including the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF International), the UN University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and the Munich Re Foundation (MRF). It claims that there is a strong need to strengthen the knowledge base and understanding of the complex processes of environmentally-induced migration through sustained and rigorous scientific research.

During a briefing session, held at the "Development and Climate Days" in the Danish Concert Hall in Copenhagen on 12 December 2009, Tom Downing* from the Stockholm Environment Institute, an IPCC climate change expert and member of CCEMA explained: "Uncertainty is a reason for action." Koko Warner*, an expert on environmentally induced migration from the United Nations University, added "In coming decades, climate change will motivate or force millions of people to leave their homes in search of viable livelihoods and safety. The scope and scale of coming migration flows could vastly exceed anything that has occurred before. People in the least developed countries and island states will be affected first and worst." - "Climigration takes place today", said Thomas Loster* from the Munich Re Foundation. "Just take a look at the small island states in the Pacific. Last-minute rescue from drowning is not a viable migration solution. It will only lead to conflict and huge social problems."

The international community is not yet equipped to deal effectively with climigration as many scientific and policy gaps still need to be addressed. According to CCEMA, sustainable solutions can only be found if the issue of environmentally forced migration becomes a priority on research and political agendas.

About CCEMA:

The **CCEMA** (Climate Change, Environment and Migration Alliance) aims to mainstream the environmental and climate change considerations into migration management policies and practice and to also bring migration issues into the world's on-going environmental and climate change discourse. A broader interdisciplinary research is necessary to understand these complex processes. The Alliance provides a platform for this interdisciplinary broad-based regional, international and global collaboration and coordination to:

- Bring together key stakeholders
- Develop the knowledge base on climate change, migration and the environment
- Provide a setting for creativity and innovation
- Provide practical support to the most vulnerable.

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