



'Governing Migration - Addressing displacement and crisis migration'

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We are at a point in history in which mass migration movements threaten to become the norm. The Secretary General, in his recent report¹ on migration noted that 'the images of the past few years have shocked the world' and I have to agree with him. We see ever more frequent examples of people displaced or migrating as a result of conflict, insecurity, persecution, economic collapse and environmental degradation. We are seeing migration being used as a response mechanism to slow onset crisis as well as more immediate threats.

There is no comprehensive solution that will halt migration, as to some extent the drivers will always be outside our control. However there are governance responses we can take that will both limit the degree of crisis that occurs and ensure that migration and displacement are met with dignity, respect for human rights and transparent processes. How we deal with the crises of today will inform the pathways that we take going forward, and ensure that future migration and displacement does not follow the patterns we see today.

¹ 'In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants'

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I am happy to see that the Global Forum for Migration and Development has acknowledged, both in today's meeting and in the preparations for the Forum in December, that climate change is having an impact on migration. It is my view, and that of my Foundation, that displacement that is caused substantially by the impacts of climate change can and should be classified as 'climate displacement'.

While the drivers of displacement and crisis migration are many and varied climate change is a threat multiplier, exacerbating the difficulties and challenges faced by the most vulnerable people – including women and girls who face terrible threats to their security and rights when migrating. Rising global temperatures are leading to a range of climate impacts such as drought, floods, changes in seasons and rising sea levels, all of which may contribute to people making the decision, or being forced to move. Climate displacement is a growing issue faced by millions of people who are often the most vulnerable – and least responsible for climate change. This is a great injustice.

While some progress has been made in relation to climate displacement comprehensive solutions have yet to be found. Those displaced by climate change fall through perceived legal gaps. The impacts of climate change can lead to displacement that does not fit within current international frameworks. In addition gaps in the application of the legal framework mean that the rights of climate displaced people are not always protected, for example their social and cultural rights or their right to self-determination.

I am not here to advocate for a separate or new migration category. Instead we need to work with the legal and policy settings we currently have and leverage these to produce better, more equitable results for the displaced. In the words of the 2030 Agenda we must 'reach the furthest behind first'.

Responding to climate displacement is complex and requires a comprehensive strategy. A climate justice approach, one which links climate change, development and human rights is a useful framework to approach the issue. In agreeing Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement global leaders have given the world a normative foundation for this framework. The most important thing we can all do to deal with climate displacement is to limit the impacts of climate change in general - ensuring that

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we keep global temperatures well below 2 degrees and working for 1.5 degrees Celsius, in line with the ambitious goal of the Paris climate agreement. Through the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs we can build resilience and adaptive capacity at all levels and plan for safe and regulatory migration.

But this is not all we need to do to achieve “migration with dignity”, as my good friend former President of Kiribati Anote Tong christened it. To ensure dignity we must recognise climate displaced people as having rights; rights which Countries have already agreed to. The core human rights treaties, two of which turn 50 this year, give us markers by which to deal with migration and displacement. Although covered by international human rights law, the rights obligations owed to people displaced by climate change are routinely not met. This is particularly the case for women and girl migrants who face increased risks of family separation, psychosocial stress and trauma, health complications, physical harm and injury and² risks of exploitation. This is contrary to the expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’ We must ensure that solutions are not just compliant with the rights that are owed to migrants, but take these as their central guidance. This was reflected in the Secretary General’s report where he stated ‘the human rights of all those who leave their countries, whatever their migratory status, must be respected. Migration governance and responses to refugee movements must be in full respect of international human rights, refugee, humanitarian and labour law.’

As the impacts of climate change will be more keenly felt in the decades to come, and climate displacement will increasingly become an issue the world has to deal with, it is critical that we find a comprehensive response - and that this response is grounded in a strong human rights based approach. I note that the current draft of the outcome document for the 19th September High Level Meeting includes an action to develop guidelines on the treatment of vulnerable migrants who have not qualified for refugee status and who may need protection and assistance.³ Climate Displaced People are a core group who fall into this category. As States develop these guidelines it is imperative that

² Sec Gen’s report ‘In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants’

³ Zero Draft of Outcome Document for 19 September High- Level Meeting to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants 4xiv
http://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2015/08/27-June-2016_HLM-on-addressing-large-movements-of-refugees-and-migrants-27-June-2016.pdf

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climate change and climate displacement are included in the guidelines and they should have a strong human rights framework. This Forum is explicitly recognised in the draft and its work and expertise can directly contribute to these guidelines. I urge you to ensure that the outcomes to this meeting feed into a discussion in Dhaka that will advance the global conversation and understanding of this issue.

Climate change is no longer a problem of the future, it is happening right now, the evidence is irrefutable. The effects this will have on vulnerable communities will be profound, and may include a necessity to migrate. Good governance is essential to ensure that the dislocation associated with climate displacement is minimised. We as duty bearers must acknowledge this reality and ensure that vulnerable rights holders are not disempowered from claiming these rights, regardless of their migratory status.