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**FIFTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

New York, 16-17 February 2017

**CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE FIFTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

## BACKGROUND: UN ENVIRONMENT WORK ON MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

UN Environment has worked on issues around the environmental causes and consequences of environmental migration and displacement for many years. Some highlights are listed below.

- The term “Environmental Refugees” was coined in an UNEP publication of 1985 written by Essam El-Hinnawi.
- In 2008 UN Environment collaborated with the [Forced Migration Review in October 2008](#) (Oxford University) to publish a special issue of the review dedicated to environmentally induced migration, featuring a foreword by the Executive Director, a joint UNEP/IOM lead article, as well as 37 contributions by UN, academic, international and local actors exploring the extent of the potential migration crisis, community adaptation and coping strategies, and the search for solutions.
- In 2009 UN Environment, the IOM, UN University and the Munich Re Foundation developed the [Climate Change, Migration and Environment Alliance \(CCEMA\)](#), a multi-stakeholder partnership with objective of mainstreaming environmental and climate change considerations into migration management policies and practices, and to bring migration issues into global environmental and climate change discourse. The Alliance was launched at COP15 in Copenhagen but activities halted soon after launch as a result of funding and coordination challenges.
- In 2012 UNEP partnered with OCHA, UNU, IOM and CILSS (the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) to analyse climate trends and identify at risk populations in the Sahel. The analysis featured in the work on Livelihood Security – [Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel](#) helped to inform the UN integrated strategy on the Sahel.

### A. UN ENVIRONMENT’S 2016 WORK TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MIGRATION-RELATED COMMITMENTS OF THE 2030 AGENDA

UN Environment’s work on the Sustainable Development Goals sees takes the view that environmental factors can impel human mobility across a spectrum of timescales. When these factors build over time the resulting mobility may be termed (environmentally induced) migration, but when they happen quickly they are typically termed (environmentally induced) displacement. Whatever they are called they share many of the same necessary policy responses and international cooperation.

UN Environment’s work focuses on target 10.7 on well-managed migration policies. However, it also focuses on target 1.5 on building resilience to climate related extreme events, target 2.4 on resilient food systems, target 11.5 on reducing the number of people killed and affected by natural disasters, target 11.c on resilient buildings, target 13.1 on societies that are resilient to climate change goal, and target 16.7 on representative decision making.

Consequently, efforts to implement the migration/ displacement related aspects of the SDGs fall into the falling categories.

1. Convening environmental actors to discuss action on environmentally induced displacement and migration
- United Nations Environment Assembly 2 UN Environment organized a high profile symposium on the environment and displacement during the second meeting of the United Nations Environment

Assembly in May 2016. The symposium featured speeches by the Deputy Secretary General, the Head of the International Organization for Migration, the Head of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Head of the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia and the former President of Kiribati. UN Environment put together two ‘curtain raiser’ videos that captured essential elements of the issue ([link](#), [link](#)). This event raised considerable interest in the linkages among environment, migration and displacement among the 2,400 or so participants in the Assembly and was accompanied by a series of press events and press releases.

- UNEA-2 Resolution – One of the outcomes of the UNEA-2 meeting was a resolution on Protecting the Environment in Times of Armed conflict ([link](#)) which directs member states to address the environmental consequences of human displacement, with the support of UN Environment. The resolution was passed by consensus of the more than 150 member states present at UNEA2.

## 2. Raising awareness on the environmental dimensions of migration and displacement

- UN Environment also worked to profile this issue in our communications work and interviews. A sample of stories, blogs and articles is listed below. UN Environment is also working with UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and others to align messages around the environmental impact of humanitarian operations and how that can be improved.
  - Article - *How exploiting the Earth can fuel violent conflict* - Washington Post ([link](#))
  - Op-ed - *The climate change solution to disasters* - Achim Steiner and Robert Glasser ([link](#))
  - Blog - *Europe's Refugee Crisis: A taste of things to come?* ([link](#)) Oli Brown –
  - Article - *Environmentalists deeply concerned with firewood consumption in refugee camps* ([link](#))
  - Blog - *Climate change refugees: a catastrophe of our own creation* - Anote Tong ([link](#))
  - Blog - *Every humanitarian is an environmentalist* - Erik Solheim ([link](#))
  - Webstory - *International Migrants Day: the plight of environmental migrants* ([link](#))
  - Webstory - *Displacement and the Environment in Africa: What is the relationship?* ([link](#))

## 3. Aligning our work with key partners

- Joining the Global Migration Group – UN Environment was accepted onto the GMG in late 2016 and hopes to play an active role in the group until the Global Compact in 2018, after which time UN Environment will take stock and see how best to move forward on these issues.
- Platform on Disaster Displacement (<http://disasterdisplacement.org/>) UN Environment is working closely with the Platform on Disaster Displacement, which is a state-led successor to the Nansen Initiative, which aims to improve protections to people displaced across borders as a result of climate change and disasters. Achim Steiner has been appointed by Germany as special envoy for the Platform. Marika is the UN Environment focal point for the platform, and a member of its Advisory committee. We have identified several possibilities for UN Environment to contribute to the implementation of the work plan of the platform, and will take these plans further in 2017.

## 4. Implementing on-the-ground work to address dimensions of environmentally induced migration and displacement

- Environmental Impacts of Displacement - UN Environment has been working with UNDP on mainstreaming environment into the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) to the Syrian Crisis (the impact of

the refugee influx), through undertaking rapid environmental assessment of the impacts of the refugee influx on the environment. UN Environment currently has environmental field advisers on the ground in Jordan and Iraq working to address the environmental impacts of the humanitarian response to the on-going crisis in those countries.

- Green loans for poverty reduction in out-migrant households – UN Environment and UNDP’s Poverty and Environment Initiative is working in Tajikistan to promote green loans for women who have stayed behind (as the men migrate to Russia to seek employment) and need to find new livelihoods and businesses in order not to rely only on remittances (which often stop after a few years).
- Public-private partnership to deliver renewable energy in Lebanese refugee camps – UN Environment’s West Asia office has been working with a private company, the Al Sayer Group, to arrange the installation of \$100,000 of solar street lighting, lamps and water heaters in refugee camps.

## B. UN ENVIRONMENT’S PLANS IN 2017 TO IMPLEMENT ASPECTS OF THE NEW YORK DECLARATION FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

UN Environment looks forward to working with a number of partners to help deliver on environmental dimensions of the New York Declaration. In particular:

### 1. Partnerships

- Global Migration Group - UN Environment is looking forward to closely aligning its work with the Global Migration Group and contributing to the development of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular migration.
- Environment and Emergencies Forum – UN Environment is looking at possible dates and feasibility of holding the next edition of the Environment and Emergencies Forum in Nairobi in September 2017. This biannual event (<http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/2015-environmental-emergencies-forum>) offers an opportunity to focus attention on environmental emergencies, including issues around displacement. It is expected that roughly 120 environmental emergency experts will attend this three day event.

### 2. Research and Knowledge

- Frontiers 2017 - Environmental displacement will be featured as one of the 'emerging issues' in the 2017 edition of Frontiers (<http://web.unep.org/frontiers/content/unep-frontiers>).
- GEO-6 Environmental displacement may also appear as a cross-cutting issue in GEO-6 which is UN Environment’s landmark publication on the global state of the environment (<http://web.unep.org/geo/>)

### 3. Programmes

- Environment displacement in Guatemala, Nigeria and Lebanon - UN Environment is currently working on preparing for a 600,000 USD project on environmental causes and consequences of displacement in Guatemala, Nigeria and Lebanon funded from the UN Development Account.
- Sustainable livelihoods in Darfur, Sudan – UN Environment is developing a second phase for its every successful Wadi El Ku project in Darfur for a second phase with 8 million euros of new funding. The

activities will focus on sustainable improvements on livelihoods and community peacebuilding but will be drawn from the EU migration related funding and so may give us some useful lessons on how to attract this kind of funding.

- Development of new proposals and activities – a number of other proposals and ideas are underway for further development