

Talking Points from Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC),

Director in Geneva, Dr James Munn

Prepared for UNHCR's Thematic discussion 4 and 5: towards a global compact on refugees

Thematic discussion 5: Issues that cut across all four substantive sections of the CRRF, and overarching issues Panel one: *"How can we address the root causes of larger movements of refugees?"*

Co-chairs:

- Volker Turk, Assistant High Commissioner, UNHCR
- Caroline Sergeant, Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group, World Bank

Wednesday 15 Nov at 10:30-12:30

Room XIX (Palais)

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Recalling Volker's statement in the opening plenary of the UNHCR-NGO consultation in June 2017 where he emphasised the importance of addressing climate change and disaster displacement in the Global Compact on Refugees.

Disasters and adverse effects of climate change are contemporary drivers of displacement. NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that each year **over 25 million people** are forced to flee in the context of climate change and disasters.

Climate change impacts and disasters can also act as a threat multiplier, and fuel conflict between people relying on the same depleted resources. Moreover, many refugees who have already been displaced by conflict and violence can be forced to move again in times of disaster or in search of habitable living areas.

Refugees' **ability to return** to places of origin may also be limited by climate change impacts.

There are complex **dynamics and inter-linkages** between climate change, disasters, conflict and displacement/refugee movements. Climate change is a threat multiplier of existing drivers of displacement [conflict, lack of statehood], but also can make situations worse for those already displaced and lead to secondary displacement for refugees, or limit their ability to pursue solutions [return or locally integrate].

The **impacts of climate change on refugees are not homogenous**. Vulnerable groups of women, children, people of lower income, different castes, and indigenous people are more likely to be affected in the face of climate change impacts.

We have to recognise that the **role of government** to protect citizens and those within their borders can be challenged by climate change. **Regional** laws are also extremely important to offer protection to cross-border disaster-displaced persons – namely the OAU Convention and Cartagena Declaration that protect “persons fleeing events seriously disturbing public order” which may include disasters.

The consequences of climate change reverberate through the displacement cycle.

Example: Returns to Somalia done on the assumption that the political/conflict situation in Somalia has improved, but environmental situation must also be taken into account. Disasters and climate change should be factored in as a basis for non-return.

Links to the Global Compact

- This leads us to ask how the impacts of climate change can be considered to ensure **increased durable solutions**. How will increasing disasters and climate events impact the durable solution of “sustainable returns”?

- **At the heart of** the Global Compact is the need to ensure greater responsibility sharing for refugees between states (with the support of non-state actors). Any move towards a **concrete responsibility sharing mechanism** should factor in the impact of climate change on human mobility, and how states will take on the responsibility for people **forced into situations of displacement** by the changing climate.

The Global Compact on Refugees and the Programme of Action must recognize the role of climate change and disasters as a driver and root cause of displacement. Thus we call for the inclusion of measures to **avert and minimize** disaster displacement, measures to **protect persons displaced by disasters** with admission and stay arrangements, and lastly consider how climate change will impact the pursuit of **solutions** and the potential for people to return or resettle.

Better **predictability** and a **foreword-looking approach** needs to feature in the Global Compact on Refugees. We need to be better prepared to anticipate how climate change will affect resilience of refugees and their hosts and their ability to maintain their livelihood, and their protection needs.

Quote from Neil Turner (NRC CD in Kenya):

“After 25 years working in Dadaab, we’ve have annual funding for each of 25 years. How can we possibly plan for long term challenges of climate change with funding on yearly basis? CRRF Global compact should ensure predictability in planning for protection of large moments of displaced people.”

This quote underscores how the Global Compact on Refugees should have **policy coherence** with Climate Change Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework on DRR, Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda for Humanity, the Nansen Initiative’s Protection Agenda, and the Global Compact on Safe Orderly and Regular Migration. Not only is consistency across these different initiatives important, but complementarity in the work that is being done should be capitalized upon. Preventive measures such as climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, voluntary

migration as an **adaptation strategy** and planned relocation as a last resort are essential to avert and minimize forced displacement, including through implementation of relevant international instruments.

Quote from Oxfam colleague Sarnata Reynolds at UNHCR-NGO Consultation in June 2017:

“Situation in Niger is the ‘perfect storm’ situation – desertification, drought, IDPs, cross border movements; the Global Compact on Refugees should address these issues so that we can begin to look at the multifaceted and multi-causal nature of displacement.”

NRC suggests 5 Actionable Recommendations:

- The GCR and Programme of Action should address how climate change can **hinder potential for refugees to return** to country of origin, or to pursue another solution. Moreover, threats to safety that result from risks related to disaster and climate change must be more substantially addressed by countries of origin.
- The GCR and Programme of Action should include measures to **avert or minimize the environmental impact** of large movements of refugees, as a way of preventing the exacerbation of root causes. This could include building more sustainable infrastructure to respond to the needs of displaced people (to move away from temporary projects that are land, water and energy intensive); Environmental degradation, ground water depletion and deforestation should all be prevented in refugee response planning
- The GCR and Programme of Action should include disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures to **avert or minimize secondary displacement** for refugees.
- The GCR and Programme of Action should address the **protection gap for cross-border disaster-displaced persons**, and highlight potential solutions including the importance of supporting the implementation of the **Nansen Initiative’s Protection Agenda**.
- The GCR and Programme of Action should focus on **predictability** and a **foreword-looking approach** to be better prepared and anticipate how climate change will impact refugees and host communities’ resilience, ability to maintain livelihoods, and their protection needs.

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Background

Disasters and adverse effects of climate change are contemporary drivers of displacement. NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that each year over 25 million people are forced to move in the context of climate change and disasters. The likelihood of being displaced by disasters and effects of climate change is twice what it was in the 1970s. Noting that efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (ref Paris agreement 2015 intention) would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change, experts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change agree that the increased intensity and frequency of climate-related natural hazards, in combination with other factors, will increase displacement in the future.

Climate change impacts and disasters can also act as a threat multiplier, and fuel conflict between people relying on the same depleted resources. Moreover, many refugees who have already been displaced by conflict and violence can be forced to move again in times of disaster or in search of habitable living areas. Refugees' ability to return to places of origin may also be limited by climate change impacts.

Link to Global Compact on Refugees

Both the Secretary General's report 'In Safety and Dignity: Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants' (May 2016)¹ and the New York declaration² explicitly acknowledged the challenge posed by climate change and disaster displacement and referred to the Nansen Initiative Protection agenda³ as part of efforts to work towards solutions for addressing this issue.

Climate change and disaster displacement arises primarily in relation to the following aspects of the New York Declaration, notably its commitments to refugees and migrants, as well as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework as set out in Annex I:

- Reducing the risk of **secondary displacement** for refugees and host communities situated in climate change and disaster hotspots: Both because many displaced communities are situated in countries vulnerable to the effects of climate change and disasters and because of environmental challenges of hosting a large population in a small area, it is essential to increase preparedness and resilience of displaced persons and their host communities,⁴ including through disaster risk reduction, contingency planning, climate change adaptation and sustainable development activities.⁵
- Increasing **opportunities for sustainable return** for refugees: Refugees may be prevented from returning to their countries of origin by environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change, including sudden onset disasters such as storms and floods as well as slow onset

¹ http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/in_safety_and_dignity_-_addressing_large_movements_of_refugees_and_migrants.pdf

² http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1

³ <https://nanseninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PROTECTION-AGENDA-VOLUME-1.pdf>

⁴ New York Declaration Paragraph 85; Annex I Paragraph 6(e)

⁵ New York Declaration Paragraph 17, 18, 43

events such as droughts and sea level rise.⁶ It is therefore essential to support countries of origin in addressing these phenomena, including through climate change adaptation and sustainable development activities.⁷

- Addressing **root causes** of refugee movements and displacement: Climate change and disaster should be considered both as a root cause of displacement and as a threat multiplier potentially leading to conflicts, including over scarce resources, which may also lead to displacement.⁸ This perspective was articulated in the 2015 High Commissioner' Dialogue on Protection Challenges focused on 'Understanding and addressing root causes of displacement'.⁹
- **Protection** of people displaced in climate change and disaster contexts: Although people displaced in climate change and disaster contexts would not normally qualify as refugees, there might be cases where this status could be relevant, including where climate change is linked to conflict or persecution, and on the basis of regional instruments such as the OAU Convention¹⁰ which affords protection to people seeking refuge as a result of events seriously disturbing public order.¹¹ In addition, complementary and temporary protection and stay arrangements (TPSAs)¹² are also relevant in these contexts.¹³

In addition, climate change and disaster displacement also feature prominently in the discussions around the interface with the **Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration**:

- **Addressing drivers** of migration: In some cases, people move as a strategy to cope with the effects of climate change and disaster, which may be characterized as migration, but in others, including when the most vulnerable people who lack resources to migrate are forced to flee to seek safety in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disaster, it is more appropriately characterized as displacement. Climate change, including through slow-onset events, can influence migration by amplifying or modifying the economic, social, political and demographic drivers of migration. Preventive measures such as climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, voluntary migration as an adaptation strategy and planned relocation as a last resort are essential to avert and minimize forced displacement, including through implementation of relevant international instruments (UNFCCC Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework on DRR, SDGs, among others).¹⁴

⁶ New York Declaration Paragraphs 75, 76; Annex I Paragraph 12(f)

⁷ New York Declaration Paragraph 17, 18, 43

⁸ New York Declaration Paragraph. 1, 12, 37, 64, Annex I Paragraph 11

⁹ See Co-Chairs' Summary <http://www.unhcr.org/58be72337> and High commissioner closing remarks <http://www.unhcr.org/high-commissioners-dialogue-on-protection-challenges-2015.html>

¹⁰ New York Declaration Paragraph 66 (OAU Convention and Cartagena Declaration definition includes 'events seriously disturbing public order', which may include disasters)

¹¹ See UNHCR, Legal considerations on refugee protection for people fleeing conflict and famine affected countries, April 2017

¹² UNHCR Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements <http://www.unhcr.org/5304b71c9.pdf>

¹³ New York Declaration Paragraph 24, 53

¹⁴ New York Declaration Paragraph 17, 18, 43

- **Assist and preserve human rights** of vulnerable migrants in vulnerable situations, including those caught in situations of crisis and of displaced persons through the implementation of relevant existing instruments, including the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, Guidelines on Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC), and UNHCR guidance and instruments (such as the 10 Point Plan in Action).¹⁵

NRC experiences:

As a displacement organization, NRC are putting to use our three pillars of work; programmes in affected countries, deployment of experts and policy and advocacy:

- We are delivering concrete programme activities in the field cutting across the 'humanitarian – development' spectrum with the aim to improve the resilience of communities to deal with disasters
- We deploy disaster and climate change experts to regional organisations, UN and national governments, and
- We advocate at the global, regional and national level to develop and implement policies that can help to prevent and respond to disaster displacement

Programme activities:

“Building resilient communities in Somalia” (BRiCS)¹⁶ project where NRC works in a consortium with other agencies¹⁷ cutting across the 'humanitarian – development' spectrum with the aim to improve the resilience of communities to deal with effects of climate change and disasters.

- Resilience is built through a combination of targeted activities that overlap between traditional humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and development assistance. In the communities where we work today, this generally includes (but is not limited to) combinations of interventions related to Food Security, Livelihoods, WASH, nutrition, disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, and notably, an increased community capacity to organize and react to shocks.
- Some examples of concrete activities: water management (dug irrigation canals, reinforce river embankments or procure culverts); providing emergency relief for a few months and thus protecting the previous gains of the long-term programme; provision of emergency unconditional cash transfers as a rapid response to support the food security of populations affected by disasters etc.

NRC Secondments within the areas of resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction:

- NRC/NORCAP has a number of experts within the areas of resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in their roster.

¹⁵ New York Declaration Paragraph 50, 51; Annex II Paragraph 8(i) and (n)

¹⁶ https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/images/thematic/brcis/brcis-booklet-2016_web.pdf
<https://www.nrc.no/what-we-do/brcis-consortium---building-resilient-communities-in-somalia/>

¹⁷ Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI), Concern Worldwide (CWW), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Save the Children International (SCI)

- The experts help national authorities, UN and regional institutions work together and develop national policies and action plans for how to improve their climate services. They also make sure that relevant and understandable information reaches vulnerable groups, local communities and decision makers at the right time. "It is crucial that people affected by climate change know about the changes and how to adapt to them. For instance local weather forecasts should be available in local languages and distributed on the radio or in similar ways to make them easily accessible to as many people as possible."
- The experts also contribute to improved resilience programming with some of our UN partners, which trickles down to activities on the ground. The information we receive from our experts on the ground is used in our advocacy towards increased investments in preparedness, climate change adaptation and resilience.
- The biggest challenge is that the knowledge of climate change is inadequate, particularly due to low density of data and information networks. The availability of reliable data is essential to better understand how to measure climate change resilience and to produce quality information that can assist in the effective planning of actions.
- **Example of a seconded expert to World Health Organisation (WHO) East Africa as Climate Preparedness Advisor:** the task is to collect and analyse information about climate and forward it to health experts in WHO that use it for disaster risk planning. The information comes from national meteorological departments, but also from regional climate organizations, such as IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre, and Southern Africa Development Community's Climate Services Centre, which issue climate outlook predictions.

Advocacy and Policy work

- At the global, regional and national level to develop and implement policies that can help to prevent and respond to disaster displacement.
- Implementation of the international policies and frameworks with a focus on PDD, the Climate Change negotiations and the Sendai Framework on DRR), and we also work to ensure policy coherence between these processes.
- **Example** on how to support states to **translate the international commitments into their national policies and plans:** The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is a roadmap that will chart the global course of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy and programming over the coming years. Well designed and implemented DRR measures can play a major role in avoiding and reducing disaster displacement. To help States implement their commitments under the Sendai Framework, NRC is working with partners (UNISDR, PDD, IDMC, IOM and UNHCR) to draft a **Words into Action guide** to support the integration of disaster displacement and other related forms of human mobility into regional, national, sub-national and local DRR strategies and plans by 2020.