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International Organization for Migration Background Guide 2024

Written by Janet N. Ekezie and Lillian Newton



NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2024 National Model United Nations Conference in Washington, DC (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This year's staff is: Director Janet N. Ekezie and Assistant Director Lillian Newton. Janet is of Nigerian descent and works for the San Antonio Area Foundation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Philosophy from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and will continue her candidacy for a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Lillian holds a Bachelor of Science in National Security from the University of New Haven. She is currently working towards a Master of Arts in Security Studies from Georgetown University and will graduate in spring 2025.

The topics under discussion for the International Organization for Migration are:

1. Upholding Human Rights during Situations of Emergency Migration
2. Addressing Migration Due to Environment and Climate

IOM is a leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. Established in 1951, its primary mandate is to promote humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. IOM works closely with governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental partners to assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management, advance understanding of migration issues, and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants. Ultimately, IOM plays a crucial role in addressing complex migration challenges, providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, and fostering international cooperation on migration issues.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to conduct additional research, explore your Member State's policies in-depth, and examine the policies of other Member States to improve your ability to negotiate and reach consensus. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will use their research to draft and submit a [position paper](#). Guidelines are available in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

The [NMUN website](#) has many additional resources, including two that are essential both in preparation for the conference and as a resource during the conference. They are:

1. The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not discuss the topics or agenda with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which include the long and short form of the rules as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretary-General Ashlee Rolheiser at usgashlee.dc@nmun.org or Secretary-General Chris Duggan at secgen.dc@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,
Janet N. Ekezie, Director
Lillian Newton, Assistant Director



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Committee Overview

Introduction

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was founded in 1951 as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME) and renamed in 1989.¹ The committee later became a United Nations specialized agency in 2016 to better manage global migration challenges.² In 2019, IOM took on the role of Coordinator and Secretariat of the United Nations Migration Network, collaborating with other United Nations entities, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Labour Organization (ILO), and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to promote safe and dignified migration practices.³ As of 2024, IOM is active in 175 countries and holds observer status in eight states.⁴ IOM works towards protecting migrants' rights, fostering social and economic development through migration, and enhancing the understanding of migration issues by gathering detailed data.⁵

IOM supports countries managing large movements of refugees and migrants, emphasizing protection and enhancing its role in United Nations inter-agency mechanisms.⁶ This collaboration reinforces IOM's influence in global migration discussions and ensures migration issues are prioritized internationally.⁷ With 281 million migrants worldwide, IOM addresses complex challenges outlined in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), particularly targeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to poverty, inequality, and justice.⁸ The 2030 Agenda promotes orderly, safe, and responsible migration, focusing on migrants' rights to healthcare, education, and protection from human trafficking.⁹

Mandate, Function, and Powers

IOM's mandate encompasses facilitating the organized transfer of migrants, including refugees and displaced persons, and providing essential migration services such as recruitment, language training, and medical exams.¹⁰ It also serves as a forum for Member States to discuss migration issues, with all activities executed in concordance with the requests and agreements of the Member States involved.¹¹ IOM's pivotal role in shaping international migration policy culminated in the development of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration* (GCM) in 2018, following its support for the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (2016).¹²

Reflecting its mission and the broader objectives set out in its constitution, the mandate of IOM can be summarized as follows:

- **IOM will generally:** provide recommendations to Member States, other United Nations agencies, international entities, and stakeholders on migration matters; initiate research and foster international cooperation across various sectors, such as economic

¹ International Organization for Migration. *IOM History*. 2021.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ International Organization for Migration. *Members and Observers*. 2021.

⁵ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Strategic Plan 2024–2028*. 2024.

⁶ International Organization for Migration. *Annual Report for 2016 (C/108/4)*. 2017. p. 4.

⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

⁸ International Organization for Migration. *Abridged Annual Report 2020*. 2020.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ International Organization for Migration. *Constitution*. 2013. p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² International Organization for Migration. *Migration Governance Framework*. 2020; United Nations, General Assembly. *Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration (A/RES/70/296)*. 2016.



development, social inclusion, cultural exchange, education, health, as well as the protection of human rights and freedoms for migrants; request or consider reports from other entities within the United Nations system and collaborate with specialized agencies; establish observance days, convene expert panels or commissions, develop frameworks for treaty negotiations, or direct issues to relevant judicial or policy-making bodies, as needed.¹³

- IOM **will not generally**: prescribe detailed directives for the implementation of its recommendations, leaving the Member States and relevant bodies the discretion to define specific operational strategies; establish new entities, unless there is a widespread international consensus on the need to consolidate existing efforts or when a new concept and its operational mandate have been thoroughly negotiated and defined; intervene in matters that fall directly under the purview of other United Nations bodies, such as the Security Council unless specifically requested or in collaboration with these entities.¹⁴

IOM's Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) outlines principles and objectives for supporting Member States in meeting international standards, enhancing migration understanding through data analysis, and fostering partnerships for comprehensive solutions.¹⁵ IOM's objectives focus on promoting the well-being of migrants and their societal integration, combating human trafficking and exploitation, and ensuring migration occurs in a secure and dignified manner.¹⁶ Through collaboration with Member States, IOM provides advice, technical support, and operational assistance, leveraging its extensive knowledge and capacity to advocate for an integrated government approach to migration.¹⁷

Governance, Funding, and Structure

IOM operates with structured governance comprising two main bodies: the Council and the Administration.¹⁸ The Administration includes the Director-General, the Deputy Director-General, and staff.¹⁹ The Council, which consists of a representative from each of the 175 Member States, meets annually to set IOM's policies, programs, and budget, while also overseeing the activities of the Director-General and subsidiary bodies.²⁰ The Director-General leads the Administration, currently Amy E. Pope of the United States, alongside Deputy Directors-General Ugochi Florence Daniels of Nigeria and Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano of Germany.²¹ The Director-General and Deputy Directors-General are elected for five-year terms by a two-thirds majority of the Council.²² The Administration is tasked with managing IOM's administrative and executive functions, supported by the Office of the Director-General for policy development and organizational oversight.²³

IOM's operational framework is designed to be decentralized, empowering its global network of regional and country offices to tailor and implement diverse, locally focused projects based on specific regional needs and contexts.²⁴ It is funded by voluntary contributions from Member States, grants, and donations,

¹³ International Organization for Migration. *Constitution*. 2013. p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁵ International Organization for Migration. *Migration Governance Framework*. 2020.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Strategic Plan 2024–2028*. 2024.

¹⁸ International Organization for Migration. *Constitution*. 2013. p. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 10.

²⁰ International Organization for Migration. *Members and Observers*. 2021.

²¹ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Announces Appointment of New Directors General*. 2023; International Organization for Migration. *Amy Pope Makes History as First Woman Director General of IOM*. N.d.

²² International Organization for Migration. *Organizational Structure*. 2021.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ International Organization for Migration. *Abridged Annual Report 2020*. 2020.



with an annual budget of approximately \$1.8 billion, aimed at addressing global migration challenges through culturally sensitive and region-specific strategies.²⁵ IOM operates globally through a strategic network of nine Regional Offices in Egypt, Thailand, Australia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Senegal, Kenya, South Africa, and Belgium.²⁶ Additionally, it has specialized offices, like the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre in Germany and the African Capacity Building Centre in Tanzania.²⁷ IOM fosters collaboration with a wide array of stakeholders, including over 60 non-government organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, to discuss migration issues through forums, like the International Dialogue on Migration, emphasizing IOM's commitment to working with many stakeholders through global dialogue on migration solutions.²⁸

²⁵ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Global Appeal 2024*. 2024.

²⁶ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Regional Offices*. 2024.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ International Organization for Migration. *Civil Society & NGOs*. 2021.



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2024 from: <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/pub2023-159-r-iom-strategic-plan.pdf>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration (A/RES/70/296)*. 2016. Retrieved 15 February 2024

from: <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/70/296>



1. Upholding Human Rights during Situations of Emergency Migration

Introduction

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), about 281 million people live outside of their country of origin, and over 232 million migrants are displaced due to emergencies globally.²⁹ While many of these migrations have been characterized as compulsory, there is a lack of human rights-based migration governance at the global and national levels.³⁰ This lack of human rights-based migration often leads to the violation of migrants' rights when in transit, at international borders, and in the countries they migrate to.³¹ This is particularly harmful to displaced persons who are or have been forced to migrate because of an inability to self-determine due to their transitory nature, for instance.³²

A displaced person is an individual forced to flee or leave their home or place of habitual living either due to disaster- or conflict-induced migration, according to the Migration Data Portal.³³ It is important to note the distinction between these two types of migration where disaster-induced migration is caused by a natural disaster and conflict-induced migration is human-made.³⁴ Although some forms of disaster-induced migration can be human-made, such migration can also be conflict-induced.³⁵ Moreover, the definition of displaced persons encompasses two terms: refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).³⁶ Refugees are displaced persons seeking asylum and protection after fleeing war, violence, or persecution, while IDPs are displaced persons forced to flee, but remain within the territorial boundaries of their country.³⁷ The key distinction between these types of migrants is geographic, whereas refugees move across borders for safety, while IDPs have not crossed an international border to find safety.³⁸

When determining who is afforded protections, emergency migrants may initially be considered asylum seekers until their refugee status is determined, which can also depend upon Refugee Status Determination (RSD), a process that helps realize refugee rights.³⁹ RSD is a legal or administrative process either conducted by Member States or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the event a Member State is not a party to the *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951) or does not have fair and efficient asylum procedures.⁴⁰ Moreover, this transient state can also be a threat to the safety, well-being, and human rights of such migrants.⁴¹ Without a lack of legal protection, risk of refoulement (or the forcible return when liable to persecution), lack of freedom of movement, and inadequate shelter, emergency migrants are forced into cycles of vulnerability, such as rights violations and abuse.⁴²

²⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *About migration and human rights*. N.d; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugee Data Finder*. 2022.

³⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *About migration and human rights*. N.d.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Migration Data Portal. *Forced migration or displacement*. 2023.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugee Status Determination*. 2024.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.

⁴² Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020.



Current international treaties and instruments define and recognize the legal, temporal, and geographic significance of refugees, for instance.⁴³ However, the rights of emergency migrants are implied, leaving some confusion due to the lack of explicit recognition for migrants.⁴⁴ It is then through the enforcement of legal protection standards that emergency migrants' basic rights and durable solutions are provided.⁴⁵ Member States that practice sensitivity towards emergency migration and its precariousness are more likely to provide robust mechanisms and instruments for protection.⁴⁶

International and Regional Framework

The Refugee Convention is an international treaty that establishes principles and legal standards for the treatment of refugees and affirms their fundamental human rights.⁴⁷ There are three principles where this instrument protects refugees: non-discrimination, non-penalization, and non-refoulement.⁴⁸ Non-discrimination ensures equal treatment regardless of identity and subsequent characteristics, while non-penalization protects refugees from punishment for irregular entry.⁴⁹ Non-refoulement is particularly notable since the principle prohibits Member States from returning refugees to territories where their life or freedom would be threatened.⁵⁰ Additionally, the 1967 *Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, an amendment to the Refugee Convention, eliminates its temporal and geographic limitations.⁵¹ The Refugee Convention specifically referred to events in Europe before 1 January 1951.⁵² With the amendment, the Convention can be applied to all persons fleeing conflict and persecution, for instance.⁵³

Concerning the socioeconomic status of migrants, the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families* was established in 1990.⁵⁴ The Convention addresses the intersectionality of migration and human rights and the protection of migrant workers' rights.⁵⁵ The Convention also highlights key definitions, such as migrant workers and who is considered a family member, along with who is not considered a migrant worker.⁵⁶ According to Article 2 of the Convention, a migrant worker is a person who is engaged, is to be engaged, or has been engaged in some sort of pay in a State they reside in that is not of their national origin.⁵⁷ The Convention also articulates the dimensions of migration which include preparation, departure, transit, arrival, and return to the country of origin or habitual residence.⁵⁸

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are 30 principles that outline the protections available to IDPs.⁵⁹ Established in 1998 by a team of legal experts led by the Representative of the United Nations Secretary on Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Francis M. Deng, the 30 principles are based upon existing

⁴³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Convention and Protocol Relating to Status of Refugees*. 2010.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Migration Data Portal. *Migration policies and governance*. 2022.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Convention and Protocol Relating to Status of Refugees*. 2010.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. 1990.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. 1998.



humanitarian law and international instruments and define who IDPs are.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Principles guide Member States, non-governmental organizations, and civil society on ways to support and protect IDPs.⁶¹ The principles are noteworthy because, before their establishment, no specific internal legal instrument that comprehensively addressed the needs and rights of IDPs existed.⁶² Additionally, though they faced similar legal challenges to refugees, IDPs were not protected by international refugee law, like the aforementioned Refugee Convention.⁶³

While the previous instruments recognize the rights of refugees and IDPs, the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (GCM) acknowledges the rights of migrants.⁶⁴ In 2016, 193 Member States acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach to human mobility and enhanced cooperation, resulting in the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, where Annex II defines GCM.⁶⁵ The non-binding, comprehensive GCM intends to address all dimensions of international migration, contribute to global governance, and establish benchmarks and frameworks for Member States regarding all dimensions of migration.⁶⁶ GCM is also guided by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and its subsequent Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 (reduced inequalities).⁶⁷ Target 10.7 commits Member States to establish secure and organized ethical movement of migrants across borders through implementing systemically administered migration policies.⁶⁸

There are also regional frameworks that pertain to the status of migrants in emergencies.⁶⁹ For displaced migrants in Europe, the *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) is an international treaty between the States of the Council of Europe.⁷⁰ Established in 1953, ECHR upholds civil liberties and prohibits the inhuman treatment of migrants.⁷¹ Article 4 of Protocol No. 4: “Prohibition of collective expulsion of aliens” and Article 1 of Protocol 7 “Procedural safeguards relating to the expulsion of aliens” of the ECHR are noteworthy, as they prohibit the expulsion of aliens and safeguard their rights, respectively.⁷²

The *Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* is the regional legal instrument governing refugee protection in Africa.⁷³ Enacted in Addis Ababa in 1969, the instrument consists of 15 articles.⁷⁴ Section 2 of Article 1 of the OAU Convention expands upon the definition of a refugee according to the Refugee Convention.⁷⁵ The OAU Convention includes persons fleeing situations of external threat, foreign control, or events causing widespread disruption and breakdown of public order.⁷⁶ This broadens protection for those fleeing

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ International Organization for Migration. *Global Compact for Migration*. 2024.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *The SDGs in Action*. 2024.

⁶⁹ Council of Europe. European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*. 1953; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. 1969; Organization of American States. *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*. 1984.

⁷⁰ Council of Europe. European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*. 1953.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*. 1969.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.



emergencies like armed conflict, massive violence, or events threatening public order.⁷⁷ Article 12 also allows for temporary protection of refugees who have not yet received refugee status in the country where they first sought refuge in emergencies.⁷⁸

Established in 1984, the *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* is a non-binding regional framework for the protection of refugees in Latin America.⁷⁹ Like the OAU Convention, the Cartagena Declaration recognizes the key principles of non-refoulement and non-discrimination while protecting migrants yet to receive refugee status.⁸⁰ Ultimately, the Cartagena Declaration strengthens the human rights safeguards for persons forcibly displaced in situations of emergency and mass migration in Latin America.⁸¹

The *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration* (AHRD) is the Southeast Asian framework with provisions related to vulnerable groups including migrants.⁸² Established in 2012, AHRD consists of several principles categorized as political, socioeconomic, or focused on peace and human rights.⁸³ Like the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*, the AHRD recognizes the rights of migrant workers as inherent aspects of human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁸⁴ Migrant workers fill critical labor gaps, send remittances that support development, foster trade and investment links, enrich cultural diversity, and make significant economic and social contributions, which legal protections can affirm.⁸⁵

Role of the International System

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) acknowledges that migrant integration training is fundamental to successful acculturation or assimilation for migrants.⁸⁶ IOM's pre-departure orientation, normally hosted within the host countries and for instances such as resettlement, family reunification, or labor migration, aims to ensure inclusion for migrants in their new communities.⁸⁷ In cases of crisis, IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) provides data that highlights mobility, vulnerability, and needs of the displaced and migrant population.⁸⁸ Furthermore, DTM aids decision-makers and respective responders to provide such populations with context-specific assistance.⁸⁹ Published in 2024, the IOM *Strategic Plan 2024-2028* details how it will support Member States, considering migration while supporting migrants.⁹⁰ Through three objectives: saving lives and protecting people on the move; driving solutions to displacement; and facilitating pathways for regular migration, IOM aims to work with Member States to ensure freedom of movement considering crises, while keeping in mind the situations of vulnerable populations, such as emergency migrants.⁹¹

UNHCR assists emergency migration and through its insurance of safety, aims to avoid non-refoulement for emergency migrants while considering the Refugee Convention.⁹² Additionally, UNHCR and its team of expert staff work continuously to ensure protection, shelter, resources, and respective aid to emergency

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Organization of American States. *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*. 1984.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration*. 2012.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ International Organization for Migration. *Migration Training*. 2024.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Global Data Institute. International Organization for Migration. *About DTM*. 2024.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028*. 2024.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *What We Do: Respond to emergencies*. 2024.



migrants.⁹³ Furthermore, UNHCR co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC), an Inter-Agency Standing Committee coordination mechanism, with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and together they support emergency migrants by providing shelter.⁹⁴ UNHCR and IFRC co-chair 44 partnerships of operational, technical, and academic organizations, donors, and other stakeholders who participate in GSC and while IFRC leads in instances of natural disaster, UNHCR leads in situations of conflict-generated displacement.⁹⁵ Launched in 1990, Refworld is a global law and policy database, which allows users to search for legislation, case law, and UNHCR guidance on refugees, stateless, and IDPs.⁹⁶

OHCHR, through a human rights-based approach, works to promote, protect, and fulfill the human rights of all migrants.⁹⁷ OHCHR also provides technical advice on the laws, policies, and practices of Member States to be aligned with international human rights standards, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁹⁸ In its movement, #StandUp4Migrants, OHCHR hopes to retell the story of migrants, aiming to illustrate a compassionate narrative that promotes inclusion as opposed to those that are discriminatory.⁹⁹ Other bodies and entities involved in the work of ensuring human rights for migrants are the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants (1999), the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW), and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons (2010).¹⁰⁰ While the Special Rapporteurs are individual expert mandates and CMW is a treaty body, all three entities serve roles within the United Nations human rights system to advance protection for vulnerable populations in the context of human mobility.¹⁰¹

In 2022, the United Nations Task Force on Children Deprived of Liberty under the United Nations Special Rapporteur of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children published an advocacy brief after a joint pledge at the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).¹⁰² Furthermore, the advocacy brief calls for an end to the immigration detention of children, which violates their human rights regardless of their own (or their parent's) legal status.¹⁰³ In addition, the advocacy brief highlights policy actions needed to protect migrant children's rights, such as strengthening legal frameworks, investing in child rights-based alternatives to detention, and ensuring inclusive child protection systems.¹⁰⁴ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in tandem with IOM, UNHCR, OHCHR, and other United Nations agencies, assembled "End Immigration Detention of Children".¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the aforementioned United Nations agencies play an active role in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, which considers General Assembly resolutions, "Rights of the child" (74/133) (2020) and "Human rights in the administration of justice" (75/185) (2020).¹⁰⁶

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is a primary arbitrator of international law and has passed judgment on migrant issues since 1947.¹⁰⁷ In the case *Columbia v. Peru* (1950), the ICJ suggests the duty to uphold non-refoulement and provide access to asylum procedures still applies under international

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Global Shelter Cluster. *Global Shelter Cluster*. N.d.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Refworld. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *About Refworld: History*. 2024.

⁹⁷ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Migration*. 2024.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Stand Up for Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *#StandUp4Migrants*. 2024.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Migration*. 2024.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² United Nations Children's Fund. *Advocacy Brief: End Immigration Detention of Children*. 2024.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ International Court of Justice. *History*. 2024.



law.¹⁰⁸ ICJ states this is especially pertinent in situations of mass influx of asylum seekers and in situations that may be viewed by states as threatening to national security or causing political strain.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, *Columbia v. Peru* suggests non-refoulement obligations are not legally contingent on or able to be disregarded because of a lack of support from other Member States in responding to the influx, for instance.¹¹⁰

The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants was established in 1996 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an organ of the Organization of American States (OAS).¹¹¹ In the context of human mobility, the mandate of the rapporteurship aims to promote dignity, respect, and protection of the rights of emergency migrants.¹¹² Of its primary functions, the Special Rapporteur consults Member States of OAS and provides policy recommendations upon request.¹¹³

The Human Rights Watch (1978) Refugee and Migrant Rights Division defends the rights of emergency migrants globally.¹¹⁴ Through reporting of migrants across the globe, Human Rights Watch highlights their varied precarious situations and recognizes migrants should be treated with dignity and respect for their fundamental human rights.¹¹⁵ Amnesty International aims to look beyond the label of emergency migrants, for instance and inspires others to see their humanity and human rights and, for decades, has promoted the human rights of such migrants.¹¹⁶ Via campaigns, such as *I Welcome*, Amnesty International aims to encourage Member States to process claims of asylum seekers who can be left in abeyance indefinitely.¹¹⁷

Safeguarding the Rights of Emergency Migrants

Protecting the rights of emergency migrants is an important humanitarian imperative and legal obligation that the international community continues to reconcile with.¹¹⁸ From refugees fleeing conflict or persecution to IDPs uprooted by natural disasters or climate change impacts – these populations face heightened vulnerabilities and violations of fundamental rights.¹¹⁹ Lack of secure legal status, discrimination, exploitation, and denial of basic services like food, shelter and healthcare are common issues.¹²⁰ In addition, unaccompanied children and women face threats of violence and abuse.¹²¹ With the number of displaced people globally, Member States are overwhelmed by the capacity to receive and protect emergency migrants in light of international refugee and human rights law.¹²²

These systemic rights deficits play out in various contexts: in Bangladesh, nearly one million Rohingya refugees live in overcrowded camps after fleeing genocide in Myanmar, facing restrictions on movement,

¹⁰⁸ Noll. *The International Court of Justice and Migration*. 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Noll. *The International Court of Justice and Migration*. 2020.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Organization of American States. *Mandate and Function*. 2024.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch. *Refugees and Migrants*. 2024.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020.

¹¹⁹ Migration Data Portal. *Forced migration or displacement*. 2023.

¹²⁰ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.

¹²¹ Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020; Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Migration, human rights and governance*. 2015.

¹²² Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020.



education, and work opportunities.¹²³ Displaced Syrians in Lebanon lack legal residency pathways causing a lack of security and an inability to self-determine.¹²⁴ IDPs in Ethiopia's conflict-affected north confront hostilities, blocked aid, and limited access to justice.¹²⁵ In Mexico, caravans of migrants from violence-torn Central America face dangers en route with few safe pathways.¹²⁶ At the Belarus-Poland border, asylum seekers were pushed back with riot tactics.¹²⁷ These examples reflect a widespread pattern of Member States struggling to uphold the safety, dignity, and basic rights of those displaced by crises.¹²⁸

To remedy these challenges, GCM and related mobility compacts provide a foundation for more robust international commitment and accountability.¹²⁹ However, implementation requires political will from Member States.¹³⁰ Expanding resettlement and complementary pathways for vulnerable emergency migrants through humanitarian visas and family reunification can protect more lives by reducing exposure to violence, exploitation, and risk of refoulement.¹³¹ Investing in resilience and prevention measures, like climate adaptation in high-risk regions, can decrease future displacement crises at the source.¹³² Eliminating migrant detention, enhancing registration mechanisms, and increasing access to legal counsel and due process bolsters access to justice by increasing accessibility of services for migrants.¹³³ Ensuring forced migrants are seen as human beings, entitled to rights and safe passage during emergencies, rather than security threats, is essential for effective protection policies.¹³⁴

According to UNHCR and Amnesty International, empowering refugees and IDP facilitates greater autonomy and dignity, by ensuring their involvement in shaping responses is vital for developing appropriate, rights-based solutions.¹³⁵ This can be done by creating leadership in camp coordination, centering their voices, and lived experiences in advocacy while creating pathways to contribute skills in host communities.¹³⁶ Moreover, combating xenophobia and discrimination through education campaigns, media narratives focused on our common humanity, and community dialogues to ease tensions with host populations are also imperative.¹³⁷

¹²³ Ibid; Human Rights Watch. *Future Bleak for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Myanmar: No Justice, Freedom since 2017 Atrocities*. 2023.

¹²⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Lebanon: Needs at a Glance*. 2024.

¹²⁵ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Ethiopia: Situation Overview*. 2024.

¹²⁶ Hale et al. Baker Institute for Public Policy. *Migrant Caravans: A Deep Dive Into Mass Migration through Mexico and the Effects of Immigration Policy*. 2023.

¹²⁷ Gall. Human Rights Watch. *To Really Help Migrants, Poland Should Stop Pushback at Belarus Border: Border Guard Aid No Substitute for Access to Asylum*. 2024.

¹²⁸ Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020.

¹²⁹ Riemsdijk et al. Third World Quarterly. *New actors and contested architectures in global migration governance: continuity and change*. 2020.

¹³⁰ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.

¹³¹ International Organization for Migration. *Resettlement Assistance*. 2024.

¹³² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Towards 2035, Strategic Foresight: Making Migration and Integration Policies Future Ready*. 2020.

¹³³ American Immigration Council. *Challenging the Government's Barrier to Access to Counsel in Immigration Detention Centers*. 2022.

¹³⁴ Stand Up for Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *#StandUp4Migrants. 2024*; Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.

¹³⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Migration. 2024*; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Empowering refugees and internally displaced persons through digital identity*. 2018.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Stand Up for Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *#StandUp4Migrants. 2024*; Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.



Despite complex challenges, Member States can work multilaterally by drawing on migrant participation and demonstrating political resolve.¹³⁸ Then, the global community can realize the rights to safety, non-discrimination, family unity, and essential services to which all emergency migrants are entitled.¹³⁹ Closing the persistent protection gaps is not just imperative, but an investment in global shared security and sustainable development for all.¹⁴⁰ Subsequently, IOM can provide expertise, coordination, and capacity-building to ensure the protection of migrants, while advocating for inclusive policies and sustainable solutions.¹⁴¹

Human Rights Violations During Emergency Migration

Conflict, persecution, natural disasters, and other emergencies are forcibly displacing record numbers of people within and across borders.¹⁴² According to UNHCR, migrants represent approximately 4% of the global population, but their social, economic, and cultural contributions can be significant geopolitically.¹⁴³ Thus, how Member States choose to govern and respond to these situations has profound human rights implications for the lives and dignity of emergency migrants.¹⁴⁴

According to IOM, effective migration governance involves the protocols, policies, and institutional capacities that states employ to manage cross-border movement and uphold obligations to displaced people under international law.¹⁴⁵ This includes securing territory and screening arrivals for security purposes, but critically ensuring rights like non-refoulement, access to asylum processes, protection from arbitrary detention, and provision of basic humanitarian services.¹⁴⁶ International refugee law, dating back to the Refugee Convention and international human rights law, provides the legal scaffolding that should support Member States' governance and treatment of emergency migrants.¹⁴⁷ The reality across many parts of the world reflects a failure of governance that has led to widespread violations of these established human rights norms and protections.¹⁴⁸ At borders from the United States to the European Union, pushbacks denying asylum processes have become harsh realities.¹⁴⁹ Inside host countries, refugees and migrant children languish for years or decades in legal uncertainty within camps suffering from trauma and lack of freedom of movement, work opportunities, or sufficient services, according to researchers.¹⁵⁰

For internally displaced populations, the lapses in governance are even starker.¹⁵¹ In conflicts like those in Ukraine and Ethiopia, IDPs face relentless attacks on their camps, blocked humanitarian access, and

¹³⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Towards 2035, Strategic Foresight: Making Migration and Integration Policies Future Ready*. 2020.

¹³⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Migration*. 2024.

¹⁴⁰ International Organization for Migration. *Global Compact for Migration*. 2024.

¹⁴¹ International Organization for Migration. *What is a Migration Crisis and How to Address it Integrally*. 2024.

¹⁴² Ibid; Migration Data Portal. *Forced migration or displacement*. 2023.

¹⁴³ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *The Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of Migrants in an Irregular Situation*. 2014.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Protection of Migrants' Rights and State Sovereignty*. 2013.

¹⁴⁵ International Organization for Migration. *Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF)*. 2020.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Convention and Protocol Relating to Status of Refugees*. 2010.

¹⁴⁸ International Organization for Migration. *What is a Migration Crisis and How to Address it Integrally*. 2024.

¹⁴⁹ Bochenek. Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute. *The Persistent, Pernicious Use of Pushback against Children and Adults in Search of Safety*. 2023.

¹⁵⁰ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024; Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020.

¹⁵¹ Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.



cycles of displacement and re-displacement without any semblance of protection from authorities.¹⁵² In crises, like the tragic earthquakes in Turkiye and Syria, lack of preparedness and resources to assist displacement has potentially cost lives.¹⁵³

Beyond the moral catastrophe of dignity violated, these governance gaps foster environments ripe for human trafficking, rights abuses including gender-based violence, and high mortality rates.¹⁵⁴ This immense human uncertainty is a threat to regional and global stability as migratory pressures mount and grievances fester.¹⁵⁵

It is incumbent on Member States to uphold their obligations and reform their migration governance systems to truly prioritize the human rights of emergency migrant populations.¹⁵⁶ Strengthening asylum processes and humanitarian pathways, empowering displaced communities to participate in response planning, and capacitating conflict prevention and disaster risk reduction are just some of the policy realms requiring concerted global commitment to rights-based governance.¹⁵⁷ Failure to do so can perpetuate complacency where human rights and human potential are routinely sacrificed due to political expediency.¹⁵⁸ The capability for effective, human rights-centered migration governance exists; it is a matter of mustering the political will to transform legal obligations into lived realities on the ground for those most vulnerable.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

Scholars denote the scale of human displacement due to conflict, persecution, and environmental crises as an issue of importance to the international community.¹⁶⁰ As these emergencies intensify, upholding the rights and dignity of emergency migrants should be a global priority.¹⁶¹ Member States should consider investing in prevention, preparedness, humanitarian assistance, and pathways to protection.¹⁶² This requires political will, equitable responsibility-sharing, dismantling discriminatory barriers, and centering the voices of displaced populations themselves in shaping responses.¹⁶³ To help fulfill legal obligations and moral imperatives to safeguard the human rights of emergency migrants, the international community can build a more just, secure, and sustainable future for all.¹⁶⁴

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How do actors create a common understanding of ways to manage migration? How are collectives in migration governance being perpetuated, destabilized, or reconstituted? How do formal and informal actors interact

¹⁵² United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Ukraine: Millions of displaced traumatised and urgently need help, say experts*. 2022; International Organization for Migration. *Over 1.7 Million People Displaced Due to Conflict Need Urgent Assistance in Northern Ethiopia: IOM*. 2021.

¹⁵³ United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees. *Emergency Appeal: Turkiye-Syria earthquake*. 2024.

¹⁵⁴ Migration Data Portal. *Human trafficking*. 2024; Migration Data Portal. *Gender and migration*. 2024; Migration Data Portal. *Migration and health*. 2023.

¹⁵⁵ Migration Data Portal. *Public opinion on migration*. 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Migration Data Portal. *Migration policies and governance*. 2022.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Migration Data Portal. *Public opinion on migration*. 2023; Amnesty International. *Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants*. 2024.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Migration Data Portal. *Forced migration or displacement*. 2023.

¹⁶¹ Migration Data Portal. *Migration policies and governance*. 2022; Shultz et al. Journal of Macromarketing. *The Global Refugee Crisis: Pathways for a More Humanitarian Solution*. 2020.

¹⁶² Migration Data Portal. *Migration policies and governance*. 2022.

¹⁶³ International Organization for Migration. *What is a Migration Crisis and How to Address it Integrally*. 2024.

¹⁶⁴ International Organization for Migration. *Global Compact for Migration*. 2024.



and deliberate on the creation of new architectures and collectives of migration governance? How do definitions and concepts like 'crisis' and 'emergency' influence governance responses? What tensions exist between state sovereignty and the pursuit of collective migration governance models? How do norms around rights, humanitarian protection, or asylum diffuse into domestic policies and practices?



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2. Addressing Migration Due to Environment and Climate

Introduction

Since the 1800s, increases in the global average temperature have been tied to changes in human activity, namely the burning of fossil fuels.¹⁶⁵ As a result of more recent anthropogenic influences, the Earth is approximately 1.1 degrees Celsius warmer than during the industrial period with the last decade (2011-2020) documented as the warmest period on record.¹⁶⁶ Over the next three decades, the World Bank estimates more than 200 million people will be forced to migrate due to the impacts of climate change unless action is taken to mitigate rises in Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emission levels.¹⁶⁷ The effects of climate and environmental changes are seen in migration patterns today: in 2022, 84% of refugees and asylum seekers emigrated from highly climate-vulnerable countries.¹⁶⁸

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has published definitions for climate migration, environmental migration, and environmental migrant, but the international community has not officially defined the term “climate migrant.”¹⁶⁹ In place of climate migrant, the term “climate refugee” is commonly used interchangeably by the media and advocacy groups.¹⁷⁰ This common misuse undermines the fact that these individuals are not recognized under international law and, therefore, are not provided climate change-specific refugee status or associated rights and protections.¹⁷¹

IOM defines climate migration as the movement of humans away from their place of residence, primarily due to rapid or ongoing changes caused by climate change to their local environment.¹⁷² This movement may be either temporary or permanent and can take place both internally and across national borders, although internal migration is assessed to be more common.¹⁷³ Climate migration is a subcategory of environmental migration, which is similarly defined but focuses more broadly on the impacts changes in a migrant’s surrounding environment have on their movement patterns.¹⁷⁴

It is estimated that between 3.3 and 3.6 billion people live in regions and situations that make them more susceptible to the impacts of climate change and increased probability of migration.¹⁷⁵ The most vulnerable populations to migration due to climate change come from regions that have historically contributed the least to increasing GHG emissions.¹⁷⁶

Research shows that climate and environmental change will have many secondary impacts on human health and security; these indirect impacts are additionally anticipated to affect migration patterns and

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *What Is Climate Change?*. N.d.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.

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¹⁷⁵ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymakers*. 2023.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.



trends.¹⁷⁷ Increased drought periods, rising oceans, and a heightened risk regarding poverty and food scarcity will further impact displacement and forced migration.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the world's urban areas may feel the magnified effects of climate change, including the impacts of increasing heat and heavy precipitation in addition to influxes of migrants.¹⁷⁹

International and Regional Framework

The *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (Refugee Convention) was the first framework to provide a widely accepted definition of a refugee, giving these individuals the legal status needed to receive legal protections, refugee-associated rights, and humanitarian assistance.¹⁸⁰ Although displaced climate migrants may seek refugee status under this framework, the Convention does not specifically note climate change as a reason to do so.¹⁸¹ Nearly four decades later, the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (1990) set the standard for the proper treatment of migrants and their families and acts as a guide for the promotion of migrant rights within Member States.¹⁸² It similarly does not mention the impacts of environment or climate change.¹⁸³

In 1992, the adoption of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) created the basic legal foundation and principles for Member States to work collaboratively to combat climate change and to reduce its impacts globally.¹⁸⁴ Before the implementation of UNFCCC, migrants went almost entirely unnoticed in discussions relating to climate change.¹⁸⁵ In 2010, UNFCCC first identified three forms of climate change-induced migration under *The Cancun Agreements on Climate Change Adaptation*: displacement, migration, and planned relocation.¹⁸⁶

In 2011, the *Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement* helped to create a closer working relationship and general dialogue between actors across multiple sectors in the intersection of climate change and displaced individuals.¹⁸⁷ The Nansen Initiative, subsequently launched in 2012, works to help Member States understand and address the gaps that remain in protecting people displaced across state lines by natural disasters.¹⁸⁸ In 2015, the Nansen Initiative released the *Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change: Volume I* (Nansen Protection Agenda) which promotes the development of a toolkit of migration policies in place of creating

¹⁷⁷ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Causes and Effects of Climate Change*. N.d.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*. 2021.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² United Nations General Assembly. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (A/RES/45/158)*. 1990.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992.

¹⁸⁵ International Organization for Migration. *COP21 Paris Agreement: A Stepping Stone for Climate Migrants*. N.d.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *The Cancun Agreements on Climate Change Adaptation*. 2010.

¹⁸⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *The Nansen Conference: Climate Change and Displacement in the 21st Century*. 2011.

¹⁸⁸ The Nansen Initiative. *Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change: Volume I*. 2015.



a new status for these individuals.¹⁸⁹ The Agenda clarifies that the decision on the legal status of persons displaced by disasters should be left up to each State.¹⁹⁰

Adopted in 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many of which play a critical role in the discussion of climate and environmental migration issues.¹⁹¹ Under SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), target 10.7 works to “...facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people...”.¹⁹² This target is increasingly important when combined with SDG 13 (climate action), specifically targets 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3.¹⁹³ These targets respectively increase resilience and adaptive capacity to climate hazards, integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies, and expand education and awareness of climate change’s impact and early warning signs.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, the work of SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) is especially relevant regarding shifts in migration trends to urban regions caused by the impacts of climate and environmental changes.¹⁹⁵

In the same year, *The Paris Agreement* (2015) set legally binding guidelines to create a unified, cohesive effort in reducing global GHG emissions, directing Member States to provide funding for efforts relating to climate resiliency, adaptability, and mitigation.¹⁹⁶ In 2016, *The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* was instituted to reaffirm the importance of protecting all refugees and migrants worldwide and called for Member States to safeguard these persons.¹⁹⁷ The Declaration recognizes the role that climate change, natural disasters, and environmental factors play in human mobility and set the stage for the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration* (GCM) in 2018.¹⁹⁸ Under the General Assembly, the GCM is the first ever intergovernmental negotiated agreement to include such a comprehensive perspective of migration issues worldwide, directly connecting both climate and environment to the world’s migration governance and management.¹⁹⁹ While an important step forward, the GCM is not legally binding and does not discuss the legal status of climate migrants.²⁰⁰

In 2022, the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) regional group adopted the *Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change*, improving collaboration and cooperation among African states on climate migration.²⁰¹ Seemingly following EHOA’s lead, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States adopted the *Eastern Caribbean Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment, and Climate*

¹⁸⁹ Ionesco. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Let's Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees*. 2019.

¹⁹⁰ The Nansen Initiative. *Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change: Volume I*. 2015.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *The Paris Agreement*. 2015.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. 2016.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ International Organization for Migration. *Environment and Climate Change in the Global Compact for Migration*. 2024.

²⁰⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*. 2019.

²⁰¹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change*. 2022.



Change (2023), recognizing the intersection between migration and climate change in the region.²⁰² In the same year, the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Programme adopted the *Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility*, which is considered the premiere regional framework to address the issues of migration, displacement, and climate change together.²⁰³

Role of the International System

IOM plays a key role in fostering discussions and action around climate and environmental migration, certifying collaborative and coordinated efforts on these issues.²⁰⁴ IOM's *Strategic Plan for 2024-2028* (2024) specifically highlights climate migration as a critical focal point of the future.²⁰⁵ The plan notes the organization's efforts to assist climate change-affected communities, engage in policy advocacy, invest in research efforts and data collection, and connect with a range of entities to address the intersection between climate change and migration.²⁰⁶ IOM has created additional entities to increase progress toward these objectives, including the dedicated Migration, Environment, and Climate Change Division tasked with leading intergovernmental efforts on the intersection of these areas.²⁰⁷

Migrants impacted by the effects of climate change are typically given general migrant assistance from organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) but are not specifically designated as climate migrants.²⁰⁸ UNHCR has worked to develop legal considerations for applying previously established international and regional refugee and humanitarian laws to individuals experiencing cross-border displacement due to climate change.²⁰⁹ Further efforts to achieve a true legal status for such migrants have been unsuccessful thus far.²¹⁰

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), first established in 1988, also deals heavily with research and data collection by preparing reports, strategy reviews, and recommendations regarding the most up-to-date scientific knowledge of climate change.²¹¹ These reports have played an important role in informing debates on climate change policy, with one such area being climate migration.²¹² IPCC estimates more than 1 billion people worldwide could be exposed to coastal-specific climate hazards, in turn leading tens to hundreds of millions of individuals to become uprooted from their homes.²¹³

With a similar objective, the World Bank has played a major role in the scientific study of climate migration, most notably with its work on the Groundswell Reports: *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration* (2018) and *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration* (2021).²¹⁴ According to the original Groundswell Report, 170 million people across six regions were estimated to be

²⁰² International Organization for Migration. *Eastern Caribbean Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change launched at COP28*. 2024.

²⁰³ International Organization for Migration Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. *Pacific Islands Countries Lauded for Endorsing Regional Framework on Climate Mobility*. 2023.

²⁰⁴ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028*. 2024.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ International Organization for Migration. *Migration, Environment and Climate Change*. N.d.

²⁰⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *What We Do: Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*. 2024.

²⁰⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters*. 2020.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *About: History of the IPCC*. 2024.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. 2022.

²¹⁴ Rigaud et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. 2018; Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.



displaced by climate change by 2050; this included 143 million specifically from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.²¹⁵ *Groundswell Part 2* revised this estimate, projecting climate change will cause the internal movement of an estimated 216 million people across six regions of the world, further predicting that most climate migrants will be more likely to move within their home country's borders.²¹⁶

More recently in 2023, the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) came together with IOM and the United Nations Network on Migration to create the CLIMB Database: Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters, Climate Change, and Environmental Degradation.²¹⁷ It is a repository of both international and national frameworks to be utilized by both policymakers and researchers alike, representing a significant step forward in accessible information-sharing practices.²¹⁸ PDD was implemented following the 2012 Nansen Initiative, and later the 2015 Nansen Protection Agenda, to ensure the work of these frameworks is completed by building connections between stakeholders.²¹⁹ Similarly, the United Nations Network on Migration was established to ensure States were supported in implementing GCM.²²⁰

In January 2024, the Summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development was attended by over 1,200 delegates and had a special focus on the impact of climate change on human mobility.²²¹ Attendees included the private sector, local and regional governments, youth, and United Nations representatives.²²² The Summit notably mirrored the six themes of IOM's Strategic Plan for 2024-2028: the impact of climate change on human mobility; rights and migration; diaspora; labor migration; improving public perception of migration, and governance for migration management.²²³

On a regional level, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has played a major role in implementing targeted solutions, including the Pacific Climate Change and Migration Project (PCCM).²²⁴ Funded by the European Union and enlisted to 'Enhancing the Capacity of Pacific Island Countries to Manage the Impacts of Climate Change on Migration,' PCCM worked from 2013 to 2016 to create targeted national and regional policies regarding vulnerable individuals in addition to creating opportunities for Pacific Islanders.²²⁵ ESCAP also contributed to the implementation of the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Programme (PCCMHS), with phase I occurring between 2019 to 2021 and phase II occurring between 2023 to 2025.²²⁶ PCCMHS aims to build resilient solutions for Pacific Islanders to successfully face the issues of climate, migration, displacement, and relocation, including skills training and local government capacity building.²²⁷

²¹⁵ Rigaud et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. 2018.

²¹⁶ Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.

²¹⁷ United Nations Network on Migration. *CLIMB Database: Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters, Climate Change and Environmental Degradation*. 2023.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Platform on Disaster Displacement. *The Platform on Disaster Displacement*. N.d.

²²⁰ United Nations Network on Migration. *About Us*. N.d.

²²¹ International Organization for Migration. *Global Forum on Migration and Development Addresses Impacts of Climate Change on Human Mobility*. 2024.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *Pacific Climate Change and Migration Project*. N.d.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ International Organization for Migration. Environmental Migration Portal. *[PCCMHS] Enhancing Protection And Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific Region*. 2024; United Nations, International Labour Organization. *Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security – Phase II*. N.d.

²²⁷ Ibid; Ibid.



Women, Migration, and the Environment

Decisions to migrate away from the impacts of climate hazards, on top of the capability to do so, are deeply impacted by gender.²²⁸ Women and girls' roles as caregivers and food providers make them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate events, such as floods and droughts.²²⁹ This is due to women making up a high percentage of poor communities worldwide, where the livelihood of themselves and their families are tied to access to local natural resources.²³⁰ In addition, added pressure is often put on girls to leave work indefinitely or permanently to ensure secure access to income and resources for their families, especially during periods of climate events.²³¹ As the impacts of climate change worsen, girls are often restricted from migrating away from hazards and dangers due to these responsibilities.²³² This can potentially make them part of a trapped population, where their inability to migrate makes them more vulnerable to the impacts of environmental changes, including the risk of poverty.²³³ They may additionally be forced to travel longer distances on dangerous routes to access clean water and fuel during times of climate-caused crises.²³⁴

Even if women and girls can migrate, they are often disproportionately affected in the direct aftermath of disasters.²³⁵ Oftentimes, women and girls are not as able to receive proper assistance and relief in the wake of such events.²³⁶ Many emergency shelters may be inadequately equipped to assist their needs, especially those related to women's health.²³⁷ Women and girls may lack access to sanitary products, among other essential resources, during these periods.²³⁸ Women and girls may additionally lose access to women's services and healthcare, increasing risks to maternal and child health.²³⁹ Combined, these inequalities make women and girls increasingly vulnerable to future climate events, creating a cycle that impacts women's well-being, livelihoods, and long-term ability to recover.²⁴⁰

While an important area for the international community to agree on, there has been a lack of comprehensive frameworks that adequately work to link responses between gender, migration, and climate change.²⁴¹ SDG target 13.b calls to increase focus on women, among other groups, in increasing sustainable climate change planning and management in developing countries and small island developing states.²⁴² In 2018, *General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions*

²²⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Policy Brief: Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate change*. 2023.

²²⁹ Halton. BBC News. *Climate change 'impacts women more than men.'* 2018.

²³⁰ Osman-Elasha. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Women...In the Shadow of Climate Change*. 2009.

²³¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected*. 2022.

²³² Osman-Elasha. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Women...In the Shadow of Climate Change*. 2009.

²³³ International Organization for Migration. *International Migration Law: International Glossary on Migration*. 2019.

²³⁴ Osman-Elasha. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Women...In the Shadow of Climate Change*. 2009.

²³⁵ Halton. BBC News. *Climate change 'impacts women more than men.'* 2018.

²³⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected*. 2022.

²³⁷ Halton. BBC News. *Climate change 'impacts women more than men.'* 2018.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected*. 2022.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Policy Brief: Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate change*. 2023.

²⁴² United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.



of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change (CEDAW/C/GC/37) highlighted steps that need to be taken to alleviate gender disparities that will ultimately help increase resilience in climate change-impacted communities.²⁴³ Alongside CEDAW, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the Commission on the Status of Women have also played key roles in this area.²⁴⁴ UN Women, for instance, has released reports such as *Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change* (2023), guiding education on the subject.²⁴⁵

Urban Infrastructure and Development Amidst Climate Migration

Cities, in many ways, are the center of the subject of climate change and climate migration; urban centers make up higher than 70% of global GHG emissions and often feel heightened vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.²⁴⁶ At the same time, trends showcase individuals are more likely to move from rural areas to urban regions after losing their homes and livelihoods.²⁴⁷ By 2050, the World Bank estimates that climate change will cause the internal migration of more than 200 million people, many of whom will relocate to cities.²⁴⁸ This may be because cities represent a prime destination for migrants looking for new opportunities and are thus increasingly forced to bear the burden of the nation's migrating populations.²⁴⁹

As a consequence of rapid resettlement trends, there is increasing pressure placed on urban areas' infrastructure, public services, and environmental quality, subsequently creating undue tensions between migrants and long-time residents.²⁵⁰ Additionally, many low- and middle-income countries are experiencing an increase in population residing in informal or city-adjacent settlements.²⁵¹ Recommendations to fix these issues on the local level include strengthening governance through engagement and trust building to improve cohesion between migrants and residents, increasing funding for the provision of essential services, and investment in adaptive and nature-based solutions.²⁵²

Without the proper infrastructure to support both long-term residents and incoming climate migrants, surges to urban areas may result in disruption and stability both at the local and national levels.²⁵³ Moreover, a lack of proper infrastructure to help cities face both the direct consequences of climate change and prepare for incoming climate migrants, people may be forced to migrate across borders to find security and safety.²⁵⁴ Taking steps to ensure urban regions have the proper infrastructure to withstand the effects of climate change will have positive impacts beyond city stability.²⁵⁵ For instance,

²⁴³ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. *General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change (CEDAW/C/GC/37)*. 2018.

²⁴⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Policy Brief: Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate change*. 2023.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ International Organization for Migration. *Climate Migration in Urban Areas: Challenges, Representations and Inclusion*. N.d.

²⁴⁷ Watson. PBS News. *Climate Change is Already Fueling Global Migration. The World isn't Ready to Meet People's Changing Needs, experts say*. 2022.

²⁴⁸ Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.

²⁴⁹ International Organization for Migration. *Climate Migration in Urban Areas: Challenges, Representations and Inclusion*. N.d.; Alverio et al. United States Institute for Peace. *Displaced to Cities: Conflict, Climate Change and Rural-to-Urban Migration*. 2023.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.

²⁵⁴ Watson. PBS News. *Climate Change is Already Fueling Global Migration. The World isn't Ready to Meet People's Changing Needs, experts say*. 2022.

²⁵⁵ Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.



Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration highlights the potential for these infrastructure-ready regions to see opportunities to drive economic transition, act as hubs for innovation and technology, and additionally develop green technology and resilient infrastructure tools to share with other areas.²⁵⁶

SDG 11 plays a key role in the nexus between building resilient urban infrastructure and climate migration trends toward cities.²⁵⁷ Target 11.3, planning for inclusive and sustainable urbanization, and target 11.5, reducing casualties and economic losses caused by disasters, are of particular importance regarding urban climate migration.²⁵⁸ In 2016, the *New Urban Agenda* explicitly linked urban strategic planning and management to migration, emphasizing the need to integrate migration as a key consideration into both practices.²⁵⁹ More recently, the *2022 IPCC's Summary for Urban Policymakers* explicitly acknowledged the role climate change has played in migration to cities.²⁶⁰ The summary specifically notes planned migration or relocation as a possible adaptation pathway, where focused efforts to resettle populations away from coastal or urban locations could accelerate adaptation processes.²⁶¹

Conclusion

Environmental factors have always influenced migration patterns.²⁶² However, the impacts of climate change have caused drastic shifts in migration trends, with extreme weather patterns, disasters, and environmental changes predicted to displace an unprecedented number of individuals in the 21st century.²⁶³ Women and girls, alongside other vulnerable populations, continue to be disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate and environmental changes, influencing their ability to migrate.²⁶⁴ Moreover, urban city infrastructure may struggle under the weight of climate migrant surges in the coming years.²⁶⁵ In the coming years, further work must be done to ensure migrants affected by climate and environmental changes receive proper legal assistance, rights, and protections.²⁶⁶ While IOM and the international community have worked hard to address the complex intersection of migration, environment, and climate change, efforts must continue to create sustainable and accessible solutions that meet the ever-changing needs of migrants.²⁶⁷

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address climate and environmental migration, they should consider the following: How will climate migration trends impact the country they are representing? What are the impacts of climate and environmental migration in their country and larger

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. *The New Urban Agenda*. 2016.

²⁶⁰ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *The Summary For Urban Policymakers of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report*. 2022.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² International Organization for Migration. *Environmental Migration*. 2024.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ United Nations Women. *Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change are Interconnected*. 2022; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymakers*. 2023.

²⁶⁵ Clement et al. The World Bank. *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*. 2021.

²⁶⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters*. 2020.

²⁶⁷ International Organization for Migration. *IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028*. 2024; International Organization for Migration. *Global Forum on Migration and Development Addresses Impacts of Climate Change on Human Mobility*. 2024.



region? What initiatives, if any, have their country instituted to protect and recognize climate migrants? What can be done to support migrating women and girls impacted by climate change? How can urban areas better prepare for increasing surges of climate migrants? What other gaps need to be addressed to provide climate and environmental migrants with the proper assistance, rights, and protections?



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