



Florida High Schools Model United Nations

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**OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)**

ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

Authors: Heather Ahles, Brian D. Sutliff, and Kyle Tavoletti

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COMMITTEE BRIEF

Introduction

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is devoted to protecting the environment and is increasingly cognizant of the environmental challenges associated with hosting a large population in small areas. In 1990, the UNHCR became increasingly concerned for the people who rely on the environment for survival. UNHCR is also concerned with climate-related displacement and the protection challenges that arise in regards to those being displaced. While working on humanitarian needs, and human rights issues relating to population displacement caused by climate change, UNHCR will also need to adapt much of its environment related planning and work to address the effects of climate change.¹

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) defines environmental refugees as “those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life. By 'environmental disruption' is meant any physical, chemical and/or biological changes in the ecosystem (or the resource base) that renders it temporarily or permanently unsuitable to support human life.”² Environmental refugees and their new host countries face additional challenges in resettling and/or repatriating these refugees as their home areas may be inaccessible, thoroughly submerged, or so devastated that further human habitation will not be possible for years.³

The events that stimulate the deterioration of environments vary greatly for each nation. While some causes of deterioration are human-induced, including common practices of logging of tropical rain forests, construction of dams, nuclear disasters, and environmental pollution, UNHCR's current focus is on environmental refugees that are displaced due to natural events, such as: hurricanes, thunderstorms, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and the increasing negative effects of climate change.⁴

Climate Change

The change in the Earth's climate has exceeded most scientific forecasts, and is changing at an unendurable rate for many nations. During times of natural tragedies, already limited resources - such as: food, shelter, energy, fire and warmth, medicine, agriculture, income generating activities, etcetera - become even scarcer. For the UNHCR, the consequences of climate change are immense. The island country of Maldives, one of the first countries in the world that may be entirely submerged by rising sea levels, proposed an amendment to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees “that would extend the UN refugee regime to include climate refugees.”⁵ While there are doubts that amending the 1951 Geneva

¹ The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “The Environment and the Effects of Climate Change” 2012

² Essam El-Hinnawi, “Environmental Refugees”, UNEP 1985.

³ Joanna Kakissis, “Environmental Refugees Unable to Return Home” *New York Times* January 3, 2010.

⁴ The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, the Environment and the Effects of Climate Change.

⁵ Frank Biekerman & Ingrid Boas, “Protecting Climate Refugees: The Case for a Global Protocol” *Environment* November-December 2008.

Convention is likely in the near future, it is critical that UNHCR, national governments, and related civil society partners integrate climate and environmental refugees into their planning and initiatives. In 2010, The United Nations' science advisory board, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, declared that the greatest consequence of climate change is migration. According to the Panel, people are being displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding, and severe drought. In 2019, nearly 25 million people were displaced by disasters brought on by natural events, with around 95% of these displacements being caused by extreme weather events such as storms and floods. According to the UNHCR, over 1 billion people live in countries with high exposure to climate related emergencies.⁶

Scale of the Problem

The environmental crisis is a worldwide phenomenon that every nation is experiencing through some form of habitat destruction or degradation. Critically, environmental refugees are now fleeing the effects of climate change, drought and desertification, flooding, pollution, and radioactive materials and/or waste are found in all regions of the world. From Arctic region refugees in Alaska, to flood victims in Bangladesh, to Saharan peoples displaced by the drying up of Lake Chad, to Japanese displaced by the typhoon and nuclear fallout from Fukushima Daiichi, the tolls of environmental disasters are creating new global security threats and horrific human costs. In 2010, 42 million people were forced from their homes by natural disasters, led by storms and floods in China and Pakistan.⁷ In September 2020, The Institute for Economics & Peace reported that by 2050 over a billion people will live in countries which are unlikely to be able to withstand the impacts of ecological events.⁸

Climate change has led to the melting of glaciers in mountainous regions. This results in unstable lakes that threaten the existence of communities living in the near valleys. Additionally, the recent increase in the frequency of glacial lake flooding, particularly in the Himalayan region, has been responsible for extensive fatalities, damage to properties, the destruction of forests, farms and mountain infrastructure to downstream areas. The rapid melting of ice in Arctic regions, including Alaska, has also led to rising sea levels and may create additional climate refugees.⁹ In such situations, forced relocations become the only viable option.

Storm surges linked to climate change also have a detrimental effect for nations through the depletion and degradation of crop production, and coral bleaching that extinguishes stocks of natural marine resources, while the availability of clean water supplies are threatened due to changing rainfall patterns, especially in small island states reliant on rainwater. Furthermore, coastal erosion together with the loss of land and infrastructure as a result of storm surges and unpredictable weather patterns, creates additional challenges in respect of displacement and relocation for local communities. This will force people into poverty and displacement exacerbating the factors that lead to conflict, rendering both the humanitarian needs and responses in such situations even more complex.¹⁰

The displacement of persons due to changing sea levels is currently the largest

⁶ United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *Displaced on the Frontlines of Climate Emergency*

⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council's Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Center

⁸ Institute of Economics & Peace, *Ecological Threat Register*

⁹ Suzanne Goldenberg, "America's first climate refugees" *The Guardian*. May 13, 2013.

¹⁰ United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), "The Threat of the Environment to Sustainability" 2010.

contributor to environmental refugees. While in 2006 the German Advisory Council on Global Change (GACGC) estimated that the global sea level will rise between 28-29 centimeters by 2100 as a result of “thermal expansion and the melting of glaciers and ice caps,” many scientists have discovered that this estimation has long been surpassed.¹¹¹² The inevitable rise in sea level does not only threaten small island states, but it also threatens countries with low-lying coastal areas. More than thirteen million people across the European countries could be affected due to flooding making the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, and Denmark especially vulnerable.¹³ The threat is even greater in regions with higher population density such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, and Bhutan. These rising sea levels can cause severe flooding, and salt contamination of arable land and resources. This puts pressure on the food security of many countries.

The Kashmir Earthquake

On October 5 of 2005, in the Kashmir region of South Asia, a registered 7.6 moment magnitude earthquake devastated an area of more than 30,000 square miles – including Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, and the province of Pakhtunkhwa - resulting in immediate environmental, economic, and social ruin. The severity of the damage was largely attributed to the up thrust of the plates, coupled with poor construction. Whole mountain sides to fall into rivers causing cities and villages to disappear; cities such as Balakot, Muzaffarabad, Bagh, small villages, and farmlands were razed to the ground; roads in all affected areas were destroyed; a recorded 291 hospitals were demolished, leaving only 199 functional hospitals in the entire region; 3.5 million seeking medical care; more than 75,000 people were found dead; over 4 million people homeless, along with the hundreds of thousands of homes, schools, health centers, and shops that were leveled during this natural disaster.¹⁴ This environmental tragedy created huge numbers of displaced people, forcing both temporary and permanent migration to neighboring nations to escape uninhabitable conditions.

A year after the earthquake, the secondary effects became apparent and the need of the Environmental Refugees and internally displaced people became obvious. Due to the lack of medical treatment that was available, people, especially children, were dying from treatable illnesses such as malnutrition, pneumonia, diarrhea, and tetanus; 400,000 people were still without any kind of shelter, and the youth in the region had no access to education. Unfortunately, the people of Kashmir have been subjected to further earthquakes and subsequent displacement; in May 2013, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake struck the districts of Doda, Kishtar, and Ramban in the Indian section of Jammu Kashmir, destroying at least 1,200 homes completely and damaged another 15,000 severely enough that they were deemed unsafe to occupy.¹⁵ Addressing the needs of these earthquakes victims as well as the demands of retrofitting existing structures and building new structures to withstand earthquakes and/or to minimize the casualties and threats to humans from collapsing structures is necessary to assist the UNHCR, national governments, and civil society representatives to voluntarily repatriate these refugees.

¹¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Effects of Rising Sea Levels” 2006.

¹² German Advisory Council on Global Change, “Rising Seas” 2006.

¹³ European Advisory Agency, “2006 Report” 2006 pp. 22-23.

¹⁴ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “2005 Kashmir Earthquake” 2006.

¹⁵ Betwa Sharma, “Kashmir Pressing Delhi for Aid for Quake-Hit Victims” *New York Times*. May 22, 2013.

Water, Water Everywhere...

The nearly unfathomable toll of several recent floods may well portend future cataclysmic casualties. Flooding in Pakistan in 2010 covered an area of approximately 62,000 square miles, larger than the size of the state of Florida or of England, although not the entire UK, affecting nearly 20 million people.¹⁶ In August 2014, Bangladesh and Nepal both experienced terrible flooding.¹⁷ Unfortunately, for Bangladesh at least, the world has largely grown accustomed to reading about terrible flooding tied to the annual monsoons, but with rising sea levels, Bangladesh's annual flooding is likely to become even more catastrophic, particularly as nearly 20% of the land may be inundated by 2050 with the potential to displace 18 million+ people.¹⁸ In recent months, countries as diverse as Haiti¹⁹, Malawi²⁰, and the Philippines²¹ have all experienced tremendous flooding, only adding to the litany of prospective environmental refugees. As countries that are considered particularly susceptible to natural disasters, particularly flooding, hurricanes, and typhoons, and the ravages of climate change, Bangladesh, Haiti, and the Philippines are amongst a *mélange* of countries that may experience sustained outflows of environmental refugees.

...Nor Any Drop to Drink

The flooding ravaging countries such as Bangladesh and Haiti contrasts enormously with the droughts plaguing other regions of the world, with the drying up of Lake Chad presenting especially worrisome conditions. "Over the past 40 years, it [Lake Chad] has lost 90% of its area, shrinking from 25,000 square kilometers to just 2,500. Not long ago, the lake was bordered by four countries: Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. Today, it touches no more than two."²² The economic and cultural devastation for frequently marginalized communities along the banks of Lake Chad have only been exacerbated by the recent attacks by Boko Haram, the Nigerian-based terrorist group that is now fighting in all of the countries that previously bordered Lake Chad.²³ The UNHCR immediately issued an emergency appeal for assistance for this newest influx of refugees throughout the region,²⁴ a region where the UNHCR has been working for years now to assist Sudanese and other refugees affected by climate disruption and the drying up of Lake Chad.²⁵

Fleeing the Unseen: Fukushima Daiichi

In March 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake devastated the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear

¹⁶ Carlotta Gall, "Pakistan Flood Sets Infrastructure Back By Years" *New York Times* August 26, 2010.

¹⁷ *Reuters*, "Bangladesh Floods Leave Thousands Homeless, Damage Crops" August 2014.

¹⁸ Gardiner Harris, "Borrowed Time on Disappearing Land" *New York Times* March 28, 2014.

¹⁹ *Reuters*, "Haitians Learn to Live With Disaster Upon Disaster" January 10, 2015.

²⁰ *Reuters*, "Malawi Floods Kill At Least 48, Damage Crops" January 14, 2015.

²¹ Austin Ramzy, "Typhoon Lashes Philippines, Amid Fears of a Repeat of Last Year's Devastation" *New York Times* December 6, 2014.

²² Collectif Argos, *Climate Refugees* 2010 p. 93.

²³ David Blair, "Perilous journey through the reed-beds of Lake Chad to escape Boko Haram" *The Telegraph* February 13, 2015.

²⁴ UNHCR, "As violence spills over to countries neighbouring Nigeria, UNHCR calls for urgent humanitarian access to the displaced" February 13, 2015.

²⁵ UNHCR, "Tackling climate change in eastern Chad" December 15, 2009.

power plant rendering it unfunctional. The subsequent destructive tsunami with waves up to 14 meters led to 3 nuclear meltdowns, hydrogen explosions, 4 major leaks of radioactive material with widespread health and environmental effects. This natural disaster caused a potent environmental and political issue in Japan, particularly as the lives of tens of thousands of people from northeast Japan remain in “a legal and environmental limbo while the government holds out hope that they can one day return.”²⁶

In 2013, it was confirmed that the source of the leaks of radiation had not been rectified or maintained after large traces of radiation linked to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant were discovered in the Pacific Ocean, and nearby Japanese soil and water. The presence of this radiation created hazardous fishing conditions, coastal cities, farm lands, and water sources which have displaced numerous fishermen, farm owners, and the people who now do not have access to safe drinking water. However, in April 2014, the Japanese government allowed 350+ people from 100+ households to return to Tamura for the first time since the March 2011 disaster. At the time of these first return visits, however, Tamura’s population was 38,000, with much of the population living outside of the evacuation zone.²⁷

In recent years, Japanese officials have led the initiatives to stop the leak of radioactive materials by cooling down the melted reactors with 300 tons of water each day. These initiatives have led to further mutation of surrounding environments, such as fir trees, worms, and butterflies. In November 2016, an additional earthquake struck the northeast region of Japan, causing a tsunami to hit the plant, forcing the Japanese government to suspend all initiatives to contain the situation. In order to properly address the specific and unique concerns of refugees from these nuclear disasters, further legal, political, and scientific coordination will be required by the Japanese government and the international community.

Tuvalu

Located in the Pacific Ocean, the nation of Tuvalu is comprised of nine small islands. As one of the world's lowest lying countries, Tuvalu and its 11,000 residents are consistently being threatened by the rising sea levels resulting from climate change. At the third conference of the parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1997, the prime minister of Tuvalu, Bikenibeu Paeniu, brought attention of the circumstances that his nation-state is facing due to the rising sea levels, along with increased frequency of cyclones, tornados, flooding, and tide surges.²⁸ Less than ten years later, the population of Tuvalu is one of the first to be forced to migrate as a result of climate change.

As a result of the impacts of climate change to the area, a large number of Tuvaluans needed to migrate. To combat the large number of people displaced, attempts to establish a plan for relocation with neighboring nations, such as Australia, were put underway; however, were unsuccessful. While a fraction of the Tuvaluans has now been relocated to Fiji, New Zealand, and other neighboring islands, there still remains a threat for those remaining in Tuvalu. Since

²⁶ Martin Fackler, “Japan’s Nuclear Refugees, Still in Limbo” *New York Times* October 1, 2013.

²⁷ *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)*, “Japan lets Fukushima evacuees back into nuclear no-go zone” April 1, 2014.

²⁸ Laurence Boisson de Chazournes, “Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” 1997.

the beginning of 2013, Tuvalu has been actively pursuing an expansion of the Pacific Access Category (PAC) agreement between New Zealand and Tuvalu, which establishes a specific annual quota for citizens from Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji, and Tonga, to be granted residence in New Zealand, to accept more people from Tuvalu; however, this has thus far been unsuccessful as well.²⁹

Research released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as part of its Fourth Assessment Report, emphasized the predicament small islands, such as Tuvalu, are facing while noting characteristics that make these islands especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It elucidated that “sea-level rise is expected to exacerbate inundation, storm surge, erosion and other coastal hazards, thus threatening vital infrastructure, settlements and facilities that support the livelihood of island communities.”³⁰ Thus, the great risk caused by global warming to small island states within the South Pacific has heightened concerns over an influx of environmental refugees migrating to neighboring nations such as New Zealand and Australia. While it is acknowledged that such individuals do not fall within the scope of the Refugee Convention, New Zealand's Refugee Resettlement organization has recognized the effects of climate change. Therefore, future refugee scenarios must consider the seven million people inhabiting the islands of the South Pacific.³¹ The Refugee Resettlement organization, however, considers that “such displacement of Pacific populations is not likely to occur suddenly and there is therefore time for New Zealand to plan for an appropriate graduated response to such an unfolding scenario.”³²

Continuous Devastation in Haiti

Fifty years ago, Haiti's forests covered more than 60% of the country; however today the country of Haiti only has 30% tree coverage. The soil erosion and deforestation have caused frequent and severe flooding, killing thousands of people each time. In January of 2010, Haiti was struck by a catastrophic 7.0 magnitude earthquake followed by 52 aftershocks measuring 4.6 or greater in magnitude. Approximately 250,000 residences and 30,000 commercial buildings were destroyed, and 160,000 people lost their life. Since the devastation struck the nation, the Haitian government, UNHCR, various NGOs, and the international community focused on the rehabilitation of the nation and its people, focusing primarily on immediate relief for the citizens of Haiti.

2016's category 4 Hurricane Matthew once again left Haiti in what United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called “absolute devastation.” Hurricane Matthew claimed the lives of nearly 1,000 people, destroyed 80% of the nation's buildings, left over 175,000 without homes, 2.2 million people were affected, and at least 1.4 million Haitians in urgent need of clean water, food, and medicine while an ongoing cholera epidemic still threatens to make the situation worse. UNHCR, UNDP, and UNEP have been actively working together since October to 1.) reduce Haiti's disaster risk to prevent any further devastation, 2.) provide immediate support to national and local authorities to coordinate immediate response teams, 3.) created immediate short-term jobs for the Haitian people to work on alleviating the situation, and 4.) provide for

²⁹ Immigration New Zealand, “Quota and Pacific Access Category” 2014.

³⁰ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Growing Concern for Tuvalu” 2007.

³¹ UNHCR, “Tuvalu: UNHCR sub-regional operations profile - East Asia and the Pacific” 2015.

³² “Report on the World Social Situation: Recognizing Climate Change” 2010.

humanitarian needs.

International Laws

Per the current definition of a refugee by the Refugee Convention, people displaced by environmental factors, such as degradation and climate change, are not considered to be refugees. Attempts to recognize and grant legal status to environmental “refugees” have been channeled through the Refugee Convention; however the Convention accepts a “strict definition consequently limiting refugee status to a fairly narrow legal interpretation.”³³ One of the many concerns with adding environmental refugees into the existing Refugee Convention is that the addition of the term “environmental” to the category of “refugee” does not allow for a separation of political and economic changes. Furthermore, much extant international refugee law focuses on the responsibilities of the state from which the refugees originated, particularly as many of the conditions that typically lead to refugee outflows stem from violence and armed conflict. While human activities may frequently create climate and environmental impacts, human beings and their attendant governments lack the ability to negotiate directly with climatic and environmental factors in any manner comparable to ceasefire and/or peace negotiations between belligerents. As for the new host states, their obligations would likely mirror their existing obligations under international law, if in fact climate and environmental refugees are granted international legal standing equal to those categories already recognized.

Impacts on Indigenous Populations

Due to the close relationship indigenous peoples have with the environment, they are often among the first populations impacted by climate change. The impacts of climate change also intensify systemic issues that already exist in indigenous communities, such as land and resource loss, political marginalization, and human rights violations. In Northern Europe, reindeer populations are dwindling due to rain and warmer temperatures preventing them from accessing their main food source. This is troublesome for Saami communities where reindeer are both culturally and economically significant. Saami herders have been forced to feed their herds with fodder instead of lichen, a naturally occurring food source in the region, which is not economically viable in the long run.³⁴

UNHCR member states should take action understanding that indigenous people are at a greater risk for displacement from the threat of climate change. Indigenous communities often lack land rights acknowledgements or legal rights to their communal lands, which significantly decreases the likelihood of populations returning post-displacement. Indigenous peoples are also often not provided the necessary protection and assistance by governments during resettlement.³⁵ Pushing for better documentation of indigenous lands and greater support from countries with vulnerable indigenous populations is vital for ensuring the longevity of these communities.

Conclusion

Climate change and the effects of greenhouse gasses have displaced an average of 27 million people each year. While environmental refugees have not officially been incorporated

³³ Mostafa Mahmud Naser. International Law. Global Governance to Climate Change Migration: In Search of Recognition 2008.

³⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs- Indigenous Peoples: Climate Change

³⁵ UNHCR: Indigenous Peoples’ Knowledge and Climate Adaptation

within the existing framework of the Refugee convention; the increasing effects of climate change, accompanied with environmental degradation and humanitarian issues has led to an urgent need for a response from the international community. Climate change is expected to result in more frequent and intense weather, additional rises in sea levels, and other hazardous environmental changes.

In 2015, UNHCR along with the Advisory Group on Human Mobility and Climate Change developed planned relocation guidance to move people out of disaster and climate change effects while respecting their human rights. Planned relocation is a “process in which persons or groups of persons move or are assisted to move away from their homes to places of temporary residence, are settled in a new location, and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives. Planned Relocation is carried out under the authority of the state, takes place within national borders, and is undertaken to protect people from risks and impacts related to disasters and environmental change... Planned Relocation may be carried out at the individual, household, and/or community level.”³⁶ While these and other efforts have been put into place to help Environmental Refugees, more needs to be done to provide immediate relief to those already displaced by the environment, to combat different forms of environmental change affecting countries, and to recognize the inevitability of climate change displacement.

Over the past few years, the international community has further developed frameworks and guidelines, including the October 2015 Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, the COP21 decision to establish a task force on displacement at the Paris Climate talks in December 2016 and the May 2016 launch of the Platform on Disaster Displacement.³⁷ Delegates to the UNHCR may wish to examine these proceedings and their associated documents as they prepare to develop more effective responses to the challenges posed by environmental catastrophes and climate change.

³⁶ “Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation” UNHCR, Georgetown University, Brookings. 7 October 2015

³⁷ Platform on Disaster Displacement, “Resources” 2017. Found at: <http://disasterdisplacement.org/what-we-are-learning/>

RESOURCE REVIEW

United Nations Documents

United Nations General Assembly. "Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees" A/77/457 (A/RES/77/198). 15 December 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/unhcrannual/63be99554/resolution-adopted-general-assembly-15-december-2022-office-united-nations.html>

This report emphasizes the importance of intergovernmental cooperation on the matter of refugees. This includes both the host nations and the nations of origin of refugees. The report notably is concerned about the low level of refugees returning to their country of origin, both due to the inability to return and the lack of protections in place when they return. The report also notes appreciation for states who make permanent residency and citizenship an option for refugees, and urges these programs to be expanded.

United Nations General Assembly. "Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa" A/77/457 (A/RES/77/199). 15 December 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/unhcrannual/63cfeae24/resolution-adopted-general-assembly-15-december-2022-assistance-refugees.html>.

This report focuses on refugee crises in Africa. Internally displaced peoples within Africa should be protected by the states on the continent. The countries involved in refugee situations should encourage voluntary repatriation, especially by improving the safety of the countries of origin of refugees. The report also notes that local integration (remaining in the country of asylum) and third-country resettlement (moving to a country that is neither the country of origin or country of asylum) are options for refugees who are unable to return home.

Resources & Notes

- The UN Refugee Agency: Climate Change and Disaster Displacement (<https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>)
 - Climate change is a grave disaster and has had profound affects on numerous populations.
 - Refugees, internally displaced peoples, and the stateless are the most vulnerable to climate crises.
 - Many people do not have the resources needed to adapt to changing and potentially hostile environments.
 - Combat the growing and disproportionate affects climate change has had on vulnerable populations.
 - Support countries in their efforts to create measures to prepare for incoming climate catastrophes.
- UN News: Climate change link to displacement of most vulnerable is clear (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090432>)
 - An average of 21.5 million people are forced to move due to natural disasters each year.
 - 90% of climate refugees come from countries least prepared to adapt to climate

change.

- These same countries also host 70% of people displaced due to internal conflict and violence.
- Afghanistan has been one of the most disaster-prone countries.
 - Nearly half of Afghans did not have access to enough food in the first quarter of 2021.
 - Nearly 2.6 million Afghans are internally displaced, and nearly 2.7 million are refugees in other countries (2020).
- UNEP: Climate Change Refugees: A catastrophe of our own creation (<https://unep.medium.com/climate-change-refugees-a-catastrophe-of-our-own-creation-8e45c5c96e68>)
 - Altered weather patterns in the Pacific Ocean pose a more immediate threat to small island nations than sea level rise.
 - Cyclone Winston hit Fiji in 2016 and was classified as the most severe storm recorded in the southern hemisphere.
 - Villages in the Gilbert Island Group of Kiribati have begun relocating due to severe storms and coastal erosion.
 - Countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change cannot continue to adapt forever without the help of the international community and the developed world.
 - Climate change is likely to cause mass displacement of people from low-lying Pacific Island nations.
- Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) (<https://thecvf.org/about/>)
 - The CVF is an international forum of 58 member states that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
 - Member states are mostly located in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.
 - Member states represent over 1.4 billion people worldwide.
- UN News: Women bear the brunt of the climate crisis (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105322>)
 - The impact of climate change disproportionately affects women and girls
 - Women have unequal access to land and resources.
 - Cultural and social norms cause women to often be ignored in decision making on planning and management of nature.

Guiding Questions

In what way(s) has your country contributed to the immediate relief of Environmental Refugees?

Has your country accepted any environmental refugees? Have any of your own citizens become environmental refugees because of natural disasters, climate change, and/or pollution?

Has your country contributed financially to the UNHCR or related civil society partners to assist the environmental refugees? If not, does your country plan to provide financial or related assistance to those being relocated due to environmental degradation?

Does the international community need to amend the 1951 Geneva Convention to include the new category of climate refugees? If so, what would be the most judicious way for UNHCR to propose amending the Convention? If not, how might the treatment of climate refugees be best improved under existing international law?

Has your country developed a Planned Relocation to be carried out within its borders? If so, where are you relocating these people to?

Does your government support the Platform on Disaster Placement and/or its predecessor, the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda?