

**Seminar on Environmentally Induced Migration
and Climate Change Climate change and migration**

**Session III: Forging International Law and National Policy Responses to
Environmentally Induced Migration and Climate Change**

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Introduction

First of all, allow me to thank UNITAR for the organization of this very interesting Seminar, on a topic that is, for several reasons, of special importance for Mexico.

As you might know, Mexico will be the host by the end this year (actually with only a few weeks of difference) of two major international events. First, from 8 to 12 November 2010, we will be hosting the 4th Session of the Global Forum on International Migration and Development, in Puerto Vallarta. And later on, from 29 November to 10 December, Mexico will be the host of the 16th Session of the Conference of State parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP 16.

We believe that both topics are of capital importance for shaping the world's future. Migration is a major component of its demographic evolution, and it is not exaggerated to say that climate change has to do with the very survival and the conservation of the way of life of human societies. Therefore, reflecting on the link between the two topics is more than timely.

Now, I must say from the outset that the approach that the participants in the processes are taking towards this topic differ from one forum to the other.

In the frame of the UNFCCC process, there have been several proposals concerning the inclusion of the topic of migration, and other population related topics (such as fertility, population growth and urbanization, to name a few), in the discussions. Nevertheless, the complexity of the negotiations is such (and the process has been so long) that it has not been deemed convenient insert a new and complex items in the discussion.

However, evidence proves that the impact of climate change in the rearrangement of populations, nationally and internationally, is potentially severe. Therefore, Mexico, as host of the 2010 GFMD, decided to insert the issue in the agenda for the first time. This proposal was endorsed by the Friends of the Forum (which is the grouping of countries mostly involved in the preparatory process of the Forum).

Now, on a first stance, allow me to make a brief reference to some relevant organizational arrangements of the 2010 GFMD, followed by some comments on the relationship between climate change and migration.

On the 2010 GFMD

As you may know, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) provides a space for governments to discuss the links between migration and development in an informal, comprehensive and cooperative way. It enables policy makers and experts to debate and exchange ideas, best practices and experiences that support governments in designing effective and coherent migration and development policies. Importantly, the Forum involves civil society representatives, who also hold meetings and share their deliberations and outcomes with the states.

Mexico considers that so far the GFMD has been a successful experience, which has enabled Governments and other stakeholders to address different aspects of International Migration. We also recognize that the GFMD is an evolving process, and that its agenda has to evolve in order to better capture reality, and provide an effective support for Governments in designing and implementing policies, fully taking into consideration the multidimensional aspects of migration and development. We do believe that the positive discussions that we have had in the frame of the Forum have demonstrated how the topic of international migration and development can be discussed internationally going beyond the traditional “political barriers”, and also helped in breaking stereotypes and pre-conceived ideas about migrants and migration.

In that regard, the GFMD 2010 dialogue provides an opportunity to strengthen the conceptual basis of the GFMD process and make a substantial contribution to the international debate on these matters.

The central topic of the 2010 GFMD will be "Partnerships for migration and human development¹: shared prosperity – shared responsibility". It will be comprised by 3 Round Tables, which will be addressing several topics, as follows:

Roundtable 1 - Partnerships for migration and development

RT 1.1 Partnerships for more regular and protected migration.

RT 1.2 Joint Strategies to address irregular migration.

Roundtable 2 - Human mobility and human development

RT 2.1 Labor, health and education: strategies for human development.

RT 2.2 Migration, gender and family.

Roundtable 3: Policy and institutional coherence to address the relationship between migration and development

RT 3.1 A comprehensive approach to address the cause-benefit relationship of migration and development.

RT 3.2 Assessing the relevance and impact of climate change on migration.*

RT 3.3 *How to include the migration and development nexus in Regional processes and Interregional fora?*

Climate change and migration

Two decades ago, the concept of “environmental refugees” was outlined for the first time (El-Hinnawi, 1985). Since then, the number and significance of the discussions on the impacts of environmental change and its links with population movements have increased. There is as yet no precise concept to define persons who may move or be displaced as a result of environmental factors. However, the literature refers to them as “environmental migrants”, “environmental refugees”, “environmentally displaced people” and “climigrants”.

More recently, the scientific evidence available on expected impacts of climate change in different regions has reinforced the perception that it is necessary to analyze more thoroughly the migration patterns caused or influenced by changes in ecosystems. Scholars have identified four ways in which climate change can potentially increase population movements: acute natural disasters, such as hurricanes and cyclones, which force people to relocate; intensification of slow-onset natural disasters, such as drought and desertification, which undermine livelihoods; conflicts resulting from competition over natural resources, which displace populations; and rising sea levels that destroy habitats and livelihoods, making it difficult for people to remain at home. In recent times, millions of people have moved - internally and internationally, temporarily and permanently – as a result of these phenomena.

Some scholars see the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on development as one of the major migration push-factors. They stress that if the proper measures are not taken promptly, this push-factor will have greater impact in the medium and long term. Others note that, historically, migration of some household members has been a coping or adaptation strategy, particularly in areas with variable weather patterns. The diaspora also often help home communities to rebuild after disasters, which in turn helps others to cope more effectively with changing conditions without migrating. Some scholars believe that there are still insufficient data, and more research is needed before starting a specific debate on this matter.

There is no doubt that climate change will pose new challenges to international migration and development. These challenges will require policy planning and cooperation aimed to design strategies to help decrease or alleviate the vulnerabilities of affected people. In light of the objective of the GFMD to discuss multidimensional issues of migration and development, the Chair-in-Office considers it useful to start a dialogue on the link between this phenomenon and migration and development. This will help identify the actions needed, if any, in the medium and long term on this important issue.

Some studies on this subject emphasize the need to promote new international principles on the implications of climate change. These principles could help governments to address the challenges raised by this topic.

From the beginning, the GFMD has dedicated one of its roundtables to data and research, as well as to the debate on strengthening policy and institutional coherence.

Mexico, as Chair of the 2010 GFMD, considered that devoting one of the sessions of this Roundtable to climate change would allow the theme-leading states to take stock of current data and knowledge, share their experiences and explore initiatives in this regard. This would also stimulate further research to enrich the debate on this topic.

Possible consequences of Climate Change for Migration

Strong evidence exists showing that demographic change, including migration, is closely associated with greenhouse gas emissions, and that population dynamics will play a key role in attempts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of changes in the climate system in the future. It is clear that analyzing the compositional change of populations, specifically the age composition, the distribution of people in urban and rural areas, and household size and composition, is very important for understanding future needs and potential for mitigating carbon emissions and climate change. Some very strong analysis show that by including only population size as the demographic variable in climate models, the contribution of "population" to climate change has been underestimated.

Similarly, understanding demographic trends, including fertility, population growth, urbanization, **migration** from environmentally depleted areas, and growing population density in marginal and vulnerable areas, is also crucial for the world to adapt to and cope with the adverse impacts of current and projected climate change.

In that regard, a range of development policies are urgently needed to address this situation, including renewed commitment to meeting the globally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Investments in family planning and reproductive health, girls education, economic opportunities and empowering of women, and in youth could help least developed and developing countries to speed up their demographic transition, enabling them to achieve demographic windows of opportunity which may contribute to economic growth and a greater capacity to cope with climate change impacts. Population dynamics should not continue to be ignored in climate change adaptation strategies, and effective measures must meet the needs of the world's most vulnerable citizens, including the needs of women.

Combating climate change calls for the spirit of environmental stewardship and international cooperation on a range of emissions reduction and adaptation approaches. These approaches will benefit from greater attention to population dynamics, including growth, household structure, urbanization and aging. Population policies and programs that promote universal access to voluntary contraception, when linked with broader efforts to address a range of demographic factors and meet development and poverty reduction objectives, such as the MDGs, will help lead to a more sustainable

demographic future that will play a crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Possible Actions

Adaptation

1. Adaptation: most vulnerable groups: women, children and indigenous people.
2. Adaptation planning should include analysis of population trends and population distribution.
3. Pro-active urban planning is required for adaptation
4. Demographic information should be incorporated into impact and vulnerability assessments of national and international migration.
5. Provide support to address climate-induced displacement and mobility as an important method of adaptation.
6. Develop contingency planning for vulnerable areas and populations, as well as pro-active urban planning for anticipated growth of vulnerable urban populations.

Mitigation

7. Climate harmful human activities and rapid growth of the world population.
8. Increased investment in reproductive health and voluntary family planning can make significant contributions to strategic climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes.

Concluding remarks

As host of both the 2010 GFMD and the COP 16, Mexico is very interested in listening to the different views on this very important topic. We are convinced that for adequately responding to the challenge of climate it will be necessary to cope with its impact and consequences primarily for people, migration, among other population trends, being one of the most relevant.

Please rest assured that the results of today meeting will be adequately considered in the frame of the substantive preparations of the 2010 GFMD.

Thank you