

Declaration on climate migrations

This declaration was adopted at the conference on Climate migrations organised in the European Parliament, Brussels, on June 11th 2008 by the Greens/EFA group. It gathers reports, analysis and possibilities of actions identified during the conference.

Les migrations climatiques
Populations menacées par les dérèglements climatiques:
quelles protections?

Conférence du Groupe des Verts/ALE au Parlement européen
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Parlement européen, Bruxelles
Salle 1 G 2, Bâtiment ASP


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Fredrik Svedersjö / Photo Europe Web / Ankerhof Agency

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Considering that the report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, establishes with a degree of certainty never previously achieved that human activities are responsible for climate disturbances and that these are unequivocal;

Considering that the programmes for prevention (or mitigation) adopted by the international community have not succeeded at this time in slowing down environmental degradation;

Considering that the effects of climate change, in particular rising sea level, the phenomenon of desertification, floods and heat waves, affect the living conditions of populations insofar as they can generate degradation, disappearances of territory, increased pressure on natural resources, attacks on fundamental rights and sometimes intensify certain tensions or provoke conflicts

Considering that the impacts of climate change on human societies are already being felt in numerous spots such as the Sahel, strongly affected by the phenomenon of desertification, Bangladesh, which is subject to repeated floods, certain European regions, but also in several islands in the Pacific, destined to disappear under the water, leading to the future disappearance of national states;

Considering that the most vulnerable populations are the ones most affected by the effects of climate change and that they are less equipped to deal with them;

Considering that indigenous people are particularly touched by the impacts of climate change and climate induced migrations, that regarding to their specific situation, the recent UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is a framework;

Considering that the coping strategies implemented by these populations are not at the present time either sufficiently encouraged or sufficiently complete, and that they will not be able to prevent significant population displacements;

Considering that these displaced people can be defined as people forced to leave their homes, temporarily or permanently, due to the impacts of climate change that put their existence at risk or seriously affect their living conditions;

Considering that there are well-founded fears according to which the populations fleeing from unliveable environmental conditions could increase exponentially over the course of the next few years;

Considering that the causes of migrations are numerous, complex and interdependent; that the climate factor, which is still not taken into consideration very much in these processes, could experience increased incidence;

Considering that these displaced persons might remain within their country, but might also be forced immediately or in the long term to leave it, depending upon the nature and the magnitude of the environmental degradation; that the population movements created can be diffuse and continuous as in the case of desertification, or massive and specific in reaction to a brutal climate event;

Considering that these climate migrations can be seasonal and temporary, but also sometimes definitive, that they are in line with climatic and geopolitical regional problems; that it is therefore necessary to envisage both a local and a global point of view;

Considering that in accordance with article 1.A of the Geneva Convention, a refugee is a person owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it, that this article is neither interpreted nor applied currently with a view to the protection of people displaced for climate reasons;

Considering that in an environmental climate disruption its natural origin and a share of human responsibility are always mixed;

Considering that in the current state of international law, no instrument allows the implementation of measures of compensation for the harm suffered, and that these displaced persons do not benefit from any statutory recognition, the only response envisaged being of the humanitarian type;

Considering on the other hand that these climate-induced migrations pose questions in terms of North-South responsibility and of sustainable development, expressed in particular by attacks on human safety and security as well as on cultural diversity since these displacements can lead to the disappearance of ways of life, of ancestral cultures and knowledge¹;

Considering the urgency of the situation and the foreseeable nature of increased incidences of the climate factor in the migratory processes of the years to come;

Considering the lack of studies in the field on these questions, the absence of consideration taken of the climate factor and of the inequalities that it will lead to in discussions on the migratory flows;

Considering the human impacts of climate change the responsibility of the international community, and the necessity of rapidly implementing measures for the prevention, compensation and protection of affected population, included migrants, who are victims of a clear climatic injustice,

The participants in the present seminar on environmental migrations invite the European and international institutions to promote the following objectives

- **Intensify** the battle against emissions of greenhouse gases;
- **Support** programmes of prevention and back up to the strategies of adaptation to impacts of climate change, included restoration of affected living areas, habitats and intensify international cooperation on these questions;
- **Implement** instruments for compensation for the economic, social and cultural harm suffered by these displaced persons;
- **Anticipate**, the displacement and the welcome of displaced people in order to organise them if needed with the greatest possible respect for human dignity and specific cultural features, and the accommodation of the displaced people

¹ Human Heritage, cf. Agenda 21 for Culture of Barcelona 2004, article 1

- **Organise** legal protection for the victims of climate disruptions and of possible displaced persons (current or future) who do not benefit today from any recognition;
- **Develop** research programmes concerning the quantitative and qualitative study of the human impacts of disruptions of the climate and of their corollaries in terms of forced migrations;
- **Encourage** the raising of the awareness and the sensitivity of the populations and of the authorities, in the North as well as in the South, concerning these questions;

As a consequence, the participants in the present seminar on climate migrations recommend

- That the programmes both for prevention and for support for adaptation strategies be strengthened, and that the climate constraints be integrated into the financing, the design and implementation of cooperation, humanitarian aid and development projects, at all levels of cooperation: international, national, and local:
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- That a transversal and high level working group on the questions of the accommodation of populations forced to move due to the impacts of climate change and of the protection of their rights and cultural specificities be put in place within the European institutions, with a view to a later positioning of the Union on these questions,
- That an international fund be created which would be intended for the management of the population movements generated by climate change, taking into consideration the responsibilities of the states
- That a specific working group be created within the GIEC which would focus its research (quantitative and qualitative) on the displacements due to climate change,
- That mechanisms of governance be put in place among the different sectors and institutions concerned by these questions.
- That consistency between the different policies carried out by the EU (economic, agricultural, cooperation, etc.) be a goal for European policies on this matter.
- That coping capacities of host areas be reinforced

Brussels, June 11th 2008