Summary Report of the Briefing on Climate Change and Migration for Landlocked Developing Countries

Organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN-OHRLLS

Held on Wednesday 30 May 2018
New York
I. INTRODUCTION

UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) co-organized a briefing on climate change and migration in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) on 30th May 2018 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The event featured the following speakers:

- Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative of UN-OHRLLS;
- Mr. William Lacy Swing, Director General of IOM;
- Ms. Dina Ionesco, Head of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division at IOM Headquarters;
- Ms. Gladys Mutangadura, Senior Programme Officer at UN-OHRLLS.

Considering recent discussions on migration and climate change taking place both under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), this briefing offered a unique opportunity discuss climate migration as it affects the LLDCs. The panelists addressed key questions on the climate migration nexus in the specific context of LLDCs and stressed the need of enhancing their ability to better adapt to and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

II. PROCEEDINGS

i. Remarks by Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS)

Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu delivered opening remarks. In her remarks, she emphasized that in the face of climate change, LLDCs’ disadvantageous geography, limited economic diversification, young populations, and high vulnerability to economic and financial shocks situated them within a “perfect storm.” Noting that severe structural vulnerabilities and limited productive capacities in LLDCs are now further compounded by their disproportionate exposure to climate change.

Ms. 'Utoikamanu stressed that in the “perfect storm” of climate change and developmental challenges, the LLDCs often lack safety nets and have no options other than migration. She stated that climate migration would have an impact on the ability of LLDCs to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She thus emphasized that there was need to invest in mitigating and eventually reversing the effects of climate change. She also remarked that improving holistic sustainability can reduce poverty and ensure that the peoples of the LLDCs are included in the achievement of Agenda 2030. Ms. 'Utoikamanu concluded by suggesting that future support measures should look more closely at accelerating, simplifying and enhancing access to already
existing financing mechanisms such as the adaptation fund, the global environmental facility, the Green Climate Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund.

**ii. Remarks by Mr. William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

Mr. William Lacy Swing began his remarks by emphasizing his agreement with Ms. 'Utoikamanu’s description of a “perfect storm” in LLDCs. He noted that 29 of 32 LLDCs are member states of IOM. He stressed that given the important role that partnerships can play in migration management, a closer collaboration between UN-OHRLLS and IOM remains crucial and stressed the importance of partnership in problem-solving. He therefore emphasized that a closer collaboration between UN-OHRLLS and IOM remains crucial. Mr. Swing proceeded to highlight three points: firstly, he noted that climate change and migration – topics which have “received too little attention in the past”—are truly urgent issues of our time, and that the impact of climate change on migration has been underexplored. Citing the example of Niger, where continuing desertification poses a large threat to the country’s agricultural sector, he acknowledged the importance of addressing climate change in connection to displacement and migration, and additionally emphasized the need to focus on these issues now rather than later.

Second, Mr. Swing noted that there are luckily many opportunities and forums for the development and advancement of a climate migration agenda, and suggested that it was important to continue to think about how the impact of climate change on the inhabitants of 32 LLDCs can be managed. Finally, Mr. Swing highlighted that the IOM, in partnership with UN-OHRLLS, wants to do as much as possible to support LLDCs in terms of policy making, capacity building, and direct assistance to migrants themselves. He indicated that the two organizations were discussing the possibility of a joint publication on climate migration in various countries.

**iii. Presentation by Ms. Dina Ionesco, Head of Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division, IOM Headquarters**

Ms. Dina Ionesco began her presentation emphasizing the complexity of the issue of climate change and migration and explained its multicausality. She indicated that environmental and climatic factors in migration are often interlinked with personal factors. Such multicausality, she said, makes this topic especially complex in terms of legal frameworks and terminology, as migrants in an environmental context do not simply fall into one definitive legal category. She stressed that in framing the topic of environmental change, there are two important elements at which we should look: sudden onsets (storms, floods, typhoons), and slow onsets (land degradation, desertification, the disappearance of lakes, the melting of glaciers). She highlighted how various organizations and academic counterparts were collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data in order to better interpret the future impact of climate change. She noted that this data provides insight into how many people are at risk of forced migration due to climate
change, and suggests that many of the people impacted by climate change in the future will not have the means to move, or will be confined to relocating domestically.

Ms. Ionesco also emphasized the need for countries and organizations to dedicate more attention to issues of climate-induced displacement and migration. She also described the importance of providing support for those who have already been displaced due to climate change. She listed a number of ongoing efforts related to these issues, such as the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage. Regarding future considerations and efforts, she pointed out the need to integrate climate change policy and migration policy into one-another, and to rethink consular services as well as regional, national, and bilateral agreements in terms of climate migration.

Citing the Paris Agreement as a precedent, Ms. Ionesco discussed the possibility of anchoring climate and environmental migration in a negotiated text and developing a formal policy of migration. She described this as a historical opportunity, and noted that the Global Compact for Migration is in its fourth round of negotiations.

She presented three ways of looking at problem-solving in relation to climate migration:

i. Working on solutions for people who choose to stay in their original region
ii. Working on solutions for people who are relocating
iii. Working on solutions which provide people with the opportunity to relocate

She indicated that challenges to these endeavors, involved funding as well as disorganization resulting from a multiplication of initiatives. Finally, Ms. Ionesco stated that IOM hopes to promote a vision of migration in a comprehensive way. She shared some of IOM’s effective practices focused on strengthening capacity building, on assisting and facilitating migration, as well as discussed key opportunities offered by regional dialogues and consultative processes. She encouraged everyone to visit IOM’s Environmental Migration Portal (www.environmentalmigration.iom.int) to learn more about IOM’s activities in the area of migration, environment and climate change.

iv. Presentation by Ms. Gladys Mutangadura, Senior Programme Officer, UN-OHRLLS

In her presentation, Ms. Gladys Mutangadura highlighted some of the findings of a UN-OHRLLS study on the Vulnerability of landlocked developing countries to external shocks undertaken in 2014. She highlighted that according to the study, some of the factors that render the landlocked countries more vulnerable to climate change are:

i. LLDCs have various constraints associated with landlockedness, including high trade costs, undiversified economies, limited industrialization, low FDI, and a reduced capacity to handle economic impacts
ii. LLDCs are often located in drylands
iii. LLDCs have the highest proportion of their population living on degraded land

iv. The rate of deforestation in LLDCs is high, with forest area decreasing from 17% in 2000 to 16% in 2015

v. Their populations are often rural-based and heavily rely on land resources for employment, food, and energy

vi. They lack robust early warning and information dissemination systems

vii. They possess poor data and monitoring mechanisms

viii. They have limited technology development and transfer

Ms. Mutangadura highlighted that a substantial number of LLDCs are vulnerable to desertification. She indicated that productivity in dryland regions face a multitude of challenges, including persistent water scarcity, frequent droughts, high climatic variability, various forms of land degradation including desertification, and loss of biodiversity. She stated that climate change is projected to affect the people living in dry areas and marginal lands the worst. Additionally, she noted, dryland productivity in the developing world is further hampered by many socioeconomic factors, such as limited access to technology, poor market linkages, weak institutions, lack of partnerships, and marginalization of rural people.

Ms. Mutangadura noted that the necessity to increase resilience under natural disasters remains essential for most of developing countries and LLDCs. These extreme events destroy infrastructure, natural resources, and present and future production capacity, generating impoverishment of the population and forced migration. With climate change, she said, these extreme events are growing in frequency and intensity all over the world.

With these concerns in mind, Ms. Mutangadura closed her presentation by listing the following priority actions to support LLDCs in the face of climate change:

i. Address the constraints linked with landlockedness

ii. Strive to diversify the economic base of LLDCs

iii. Develop resilient infrastructure and facilitate trade

iv. Promote regional integration

v. Strengthen early warning systems and informational/institutional capacity on climate and weather information systems

vi. Invest in climate-smart agriculture to counter the impact of climate change

vii. Promote water harvesting

viii. Strengthen international support for LLDCs and broaden their access to financial facilities

ix. Collaborate with organizations such as the Global Environment Facility; work with climate investment funds such as the Green Climate fund and Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

x. Consider establishing a special financing facility just for LLDCs

xi. Provide technological and capacity building assistance to LLDCs
xii. Scale up successful programs such as the Great Green Wall project of the Sahel

xiii. Strengthen and support the participation of LLDCs in relevant intergovernmental and multilateral processes relating to the environment.

III. NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

i. H.E. Sukhbold Sukhee, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations

H.E. Sukhbold Sukhee, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations shared Mongolia’s experience on climate change induced migration. Mr. Sukhee first thanked the various presenters for organizing the event and for highlighting the importance of addressing climate change and migration. He indicated that Mongolia was faced with increasing temperatures. He pointed out that Mongolia was also facing many impacts of climate change, including droughts, desertification, and land degradation. He noted that these numerous issues have significantly impacted pasture management and, have also sparked massive movements from rural to urban areas. This displacement of persons has exacerbated the country’s issues with urban air, water, and soil pollution, which in turn has affected the health of newborn children. Mr. Sukhee also noted that climate migration has contributed to unemployment in Mongolia.

Mr. Sukhee indicated that one of the government’s priorities was to manage pastures to protect herders from droughts and desertification. He indicated that the Government was therefore implementing policies to improve and create more modernized farms. He also briefed about the ongoing government efforts to create new jobs and industries, as well as to reduce greenhouse emissions. He indicated that they have built solar panels and wind turbines but had challenges building hydro power plants. He predicted that higher employment rates would allow more people to use resources other than coal for burning. Regarding deforestation in Mongolia, the Permanent Representative stated that the country needed to strive to protect its remaining forest areas.

ii. H.E. Mr. Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations remarked that in the past, the topic of migration in the context of climate change had not been highlighted as much as it should have been. He noted that much of Nepal’s experience with climate change is similar to that of Mongolia, and stated that Nepal has recently experienced problems with desertification, droughts, and melting glaciers.

Mr. Bhattarai highlighted that, in the face of climate change, Nepal has become both a source and a destination for migrants; as environmental factors in Nepal have induced internal migration, similar environmental issues in neighboring countries have brought a large number of foreign migrants into Nepal. This situation, he says, has placed extra pressure on urban infrastructure, and has caused a great migration towards urban areas as rural areas lack services. He also pointed out
that the snow line was also rising giving an example of the Mount Everest. He noted that climate change has impacted Nepal’s tourism industry and economy. He concluded by expressing his wish to draw more attention towards the area of data capacity. He emphasized that data and research could provide further insight into the implications of climate change and migration. He stated that climate change is indeed a serious problem for Nepal as well as other countries, and he suggested that it should perhaps be addressed during the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action including on how to support the LLDCs be able to better access resources for mitigation and adaptation.

IV. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Mr. Samadou Ousmane of the Niger Permanent Mission to the United Nations made some remarks on the effects of climate change on Niger. Noting that Niger is a largely arid country, Mr. Ousmane described how the entirety of Niger’s population is concentrated in just one third of the country, where agriculture is feasible. With an ongoing drought in the Sahel, Niger’s people are losing animals and are being forced to migrate. He noted that with various crises taking place in nearby countries, including climate change and political instability, there has been an influx of young migrants into Niger. He remarked that with the free movement of people through Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), over 70,000 migrants are passing through Niger each year on their way to Europe, especially through urban regions such as Agadez. To address this challenges Mr. Ousmane indicated that the Government of Niger in partnership with other countries, has put in place programmes to reduce migration to Europe and also to support the migrants that are being returned. He also indicated they also have programme aimed at sensitizing people about migration. He indicated that government was also exploring other opportunities.

V. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are derived from the presentations and discussions:

i. There is need to strengthen international support to the LLDCs and broaden their access to financial facilities. Consideration should be made to establish a special financing facility for LLDCs.

ii. The future support measures should look more closely at accelerating, simplifying and enhancing access to already existing financing mechanisms such as the adaptation fund, the global environmental facility, the Green Climate Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund.

iii. It is necessary to provide technological and capacity building assistance to LLDCs.

iv. There is need to enhance research and data collection to provide further insight into the implications of climate change and migration in the LLDCs.

v. The midterm review of the VPoA should take into consideration climate change issues.

vi. The implementation of the VPoA should be enhanced.
vii. It is necessary to strengthen early warning systems and informational/institutional capacity on climate and weather information systems in the LLDCs.

viii. It is important to enhance investment in climate-smart agriculture to counter the impact of climate change in the LLDCs.

ix. Water harvesting should be promoted in the LLDCs.

x. Scale up successful programs such as the Great Green Wall project of the Sahel

xi. Strengthen and support the participation of LLDCs in relevant intergovernmental and multilateral processes relating to the environment.
Annex

List of participants

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