



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
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**INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON  
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**INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION 2011**

***The future of migration: Building capacities for change***

28 April 2011

**INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION 2011**  
*The future of migration: Building capacities for change*

1. This discussion note provides an update on International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) activities in 2011 and proposes two possible overarching themes for the membership to choose from to guide the IDM in 2012.

**IDM 2011: The future of migration: Building capacities for change**

2. The first IDM intersessional workshop for 2011 took place in Geneva on 29 and 30 March 2011 and discussed “Climate change, environmental degradation and migration”. The workshop was attended by 230 participants, of which 80 and 16 represented governments and international organizations, respectively, and 29 were from non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia and the media.<sup>1</sup>

3. The workshop was framed by the notion that a comprehensive approach to managing environmental migration would aim to: (a) minimize to the extent possible forced migration resulting from environmental factors; (b) ensure assistance and protection for those affected by forced migration and seek durable solutions for their situation; and (c) facilitate the role of migration as an adaptation strategy.

4. In managing environmental migration, IOM’s approach consists of five main elements: (a) *preventing* forced migration by reducing migration pressures, for instance through in situ climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures; (b) *preparing* for migration and displacement, which, in some cases, are necessary and legitimate strategies for adaptation and survival; (c) *managing* migration so as to provide protection and assistance to those on the move; (d) *mitigating* the potentially negative impacts of forced or mass migration on environments and communities of transit and destination; and (e) *addressing* environmental migration comprehensively by integrating strategies on environmental migration with planning for sustainable development and by fostering the role of migration as an adaptation strategy.

5. The discussions focused on three main areas of capacity-building: improving knowledge and data collection; strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks; and reinforcing operational and technical capacities. Specific emphasis was placed on the need for comprehensive approaches to environmental migration, for instance on how to link migration management with climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. Participants also stressed the importance of preparedness for the possible migration consequences of climate change, including the implementation of protection and assistance mechanisms for those moving on account of environmental factors.

6. A summary of the workshop discussions, including an outline of proposals for future action, is provided in the annex to this discussion note.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on the workshop, including the Chair’s Summary, the final agenda, list of participants, background paper and presentations, please visit [www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en](http://www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en).

7. The second intersessional workshop, on “Economic cycles, demographic change and migration”, will be held in Geneva and has been provisionally scheduled for 12 and 13 September 2011. The workshop will focus on migration policymaking that effectively reconciles labour market needs and demographic trends. Using the lessons learned from the recent global economic crisis, the purpose of the workshop is to better understand the impacts of economic fluctuations on migration in relation to larger demographic parameters. It will also help assess the effectiveness of various migration policy measures taken by governments in response to the downturn. In line with the overarching theme of IDM 2011, the workshop will pay particular attention to the capacity requirements in this area of migration policy. As always, the Administration would welcome suggestions for case studies and speakers or other input by the membership.

### **IDM 2012: Proposed themes**

8. The Administration takes this opportunity to request the membership to select an overarching theme for IDM 2012 from the suggestions below, or to make alternative suggestions. The two proposals presented below were both designed to build on the discussions that have taken place in the IDM to date, and to deepen consideration of aspects of migration that have been identified as a priority, but which have not yet received thorough attention. In addition, IOM’s organizational knowledge of and experience in the two proposed topics will directly contribute to the policy dialogue.

#### ***First proposal: Managing migration in crisis situations***

9. This overarching theme would address the spectrum of policy and operational challenges that arise when human mobility takes place in the context of crises and complex humanitarian emergencies. Conflict, unrest and natural disasters propel people to take flight and seek refuge elsewhere, often in large numbers. So-called “fragile” or “failed” States can be migration sources, while post-conflict and post-crisis situations may generate migration flows of their own, including return. Displacement can be internal or spill across international borders, with subsequent regional repercussions. Forced migration of this kind can leave the people it affects in an extremely vulnerable situation and presents governments with a very complex task.

10. When acting at the interface between crises, complex humanitarian emergencies and human mobility, a variety of capacities, resources, mechanisms and partnerships are needed to alleviate human suffering, to provide protection and assistance to affected populations (particularly the vulnerable groups among them), and to devise long-term solutions. Some of the many issues that can be discussed under this theme include: “mixed migration flows” consisting of migrants, asylum-seekers, smuggled or trafficked persons and other groups with specific needs and vulnerabilities; internal displacement and displacement in urban settings; human rights and human security in humanitarian and complex emergencies; the needs of vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied children; long-term resettlement; and return following an emergency. The plight of stranded migrants merits special attention: in countries experiencing crises, non-nationals, such as migrant workers, often find themselves in particularly vulnerable and precarious circumstances when caught up in conflict or emergency situations.

11. In summary, the principal questions that could be asked under this theme include: What must be done to prepare for potentially large-scale movements in crises and complex humanitarian emergencies? How can timely and effective responses to such events be set in motion? What are the options to ensure that displacement does not turn into a protracted condition?

***Second proposal: Families and migration***

12. This theme would aim to give visibility to the migrant family, as a key player both in terms of accompanying families and family members who remain behind in the country of origin. Although family-related migration has been the main channel of legal entry into traditional immigration countries, policy interest has largely focused on the role and fate of the primary migrant. This theme would particularly focus on issues and policy perspectives surrounding youth and child migration, given that globally there are an estimated 33 million migrants under the age of 20, who thus make up a significant proportion of people on the move.<sup>2</sup> The dynamics of family migration can be analysed in terms of the social, economic and human costs and benefits of migration, and also have a direct impact on the link between migration and the achievement of development goals. The workshop would share experiences and map out main areas for policy action.

13. Family migration presents particular challenges, not only because it cuts across numerous domains of policymaking (e.g. social policy, education, health, labour market policy and others), but also because of its long-term implications: decisions and measures taken now can affect, for example, levels of social cohesion or the characteristics of labour markets in the future. Specific areas that could be examined include policy developments related to family reunification policies, marriage migration, spouse/family mobility and access to labour markets and employment (including questions surrounding the recognition of degrees and skilling and de-skilling in the country of destination). The issue of unaccompanied children has attracted significant policy attention, as have the challenges facing children left behind by a migrant parent(s), and also covers vulnerabilities and the challenges posed to the long-term achievement of development goals. Youth migration, education and access to employment are other aspects that merit closer examination. In all these areas, gender-sensitive analyses are crucial for understanding the reality of family migration and designing appropriate policies.

14. Once an overarching theme has been selected, more specific workshop topics relating to that theme will be proposed to the membership for selection at the next IDM consultations (autumn 2011). As with all IDM activities, partners will be sought for the organization of relevant workshops, and a broad range of stakeholders will be encouraged to participate, in the light of the specific intersessional workshop themes selected by the membership.

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<sup>2</sup> Children, Adolescents and Migration: Filling the Migration Gap. Factsheet prepared by UNICEF, with the support of UN DESA, UNDP, and the University of Houston. November 2010.

## Annex

### International Organization for Migration

### International Dialogue on Migration 2011

### INTERSESSIONAL WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND MIGRATION

#### CHAIR'S SUMMARY

As part of IOM's annual International Dialogue on Migration – dedicated in 2011 to the theme *The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change* – the IOM membership selected the topic "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration" as the focus of a workshop in Geneva, Switzerland on 29 and 30 March 2011.<sup>1</sup> The workshop identified some of the main areas in which governments and institutions may need to reinforce their capacities to manage the complex interactions between climate change and environmental degradation and human mobility.

The workshop was framed by the notion that a comprehensive approach to managing environmental migration would aim to minimize to the extent possible forced migration resulting from environmental factors; where forced migration does occur, to ensure assistance and protection for those affected and seek durable solutions to their situation; and, lastly, to facilitate the role of migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change.

Three main areas of capacity building emerged: building knowledge and improving data collection; strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks and reinforcing operational and technical capacities.

This document summarizes the workshop discussions through a series of main messages and makes proposals for future activities to take forward the conclusions of the workshop.

#### MAIN MESSAGES

##### **1. Main messages on the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and migration:**

- Environmental migration, like all migration, is a multi-causal phenomenon. There are no simple causal relationships between the environment and migration.

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<sup>1</sup> The workshop background paper *Climate change, environmental degradation and migration* and other conference material can be found at: [www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en](http://www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en)

- While the empirical evidence base remains thin and needs reinforcing, it is recognized that environmental drivers play a significant and increasingly determinative role in migration phenomena.
- Environmental migration is multifaceted: it can be internal, regional or international, temporary or permanent, forced, voluntary or a mix of those characteristics. The blurred distinction between forced and voluntary migration was mentioned repeatedly at the workshop.
- Participants at the workshop acknowledged that, given the complexity of the phenomenon, it is not easy to establish clear definitions and standard terminology. There was a general understanding, however, that the term “environmental / climate change *refugee*” should be avoided due to the specific meaning of “refugee” in international law.
- The importance of preparing for internal migration, in particular rural-urban migration, was a strong theme throughout the workshop; as was the need to reckon with increasing urbanization and the vulnerabilities of and in cities in the context of climate change.
- It was acknowledged that in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, migration can be both considered a challenge and a solution. Where displacement means harm and suffering, measures are needed to stabilize populations as much as possible. However, migration’s positive role as a potential adaptation strategy was also highlighted numerous times.
- Participants reflected on how to talk *about* and how to talk *with* the populations affected by climate change and possible migratory consequences.
- Speakers underlined that the concept of vulnerability is important but needs to be applied carefully. It was repeated that often the most vulnerable populations are in fact those *not* able to move.

## **2. Main messages on capacities and policy processes:**

- There was a strong call for inclusive and participatory processes involving affected populations as directly and as early as possible.
- It was repeatedly stated that local communities should form the primary locus of action and attention. Consultations, training and capacity building at the local level were cited.
- Particular emphasis was placed on capacities in developing and least developed countries that are at the greatest risk of suffering the effects of environmental degradation and climate change.
- Systematic budgeting and long-term planning of resources was called for, especially to allow for flexibility in responding to emergencies.
- The workshop reiterated the significance of adopting human rights based strategies in addressing environmental migration and suggested that multi-pronged legal approaches may be the best way to tackle the diverse manifestations of environmental migration.

- As a starting point, it was suggested that policymakers should make full use of all existing bodies of laws and instruments, both hard and soft law (humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, instruments on internal displacement, disaster management, legal migration and others).
- It was emphasized that migration management systems should be linked with other policy objectives in terms of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian responses and sustainable development, in comprehensive policy strategies.
- The discussions sent out a strong message of urgency: even if not all consequences of climate change are visible now and even if there are still many gaps in our understanding of environmental migration, this should not be a disincentive to start acting now.
- Strong political will and the building of partnerships are indispensable for progress in dealing with environmental migration.

## **WAY FORWARD**

Based on the discussions that took place during the workshop, a number of possible future activities emerged in three main areas of capacities: building knowledge and improving data collection; strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks; and reinforcing operational and technical capacities.

### **1. Building knowledge and improving data collection:**

- Developing a strategic research agenda to enhance data and knowledge on the linkages between migration and the environment, as recommended also by the Global Forum on Migration and Development Round Table 3.2 in 2010, *inter alia* by:
  - Producing analytical frameworks that help isolating the climate change drivers of migration;
  - Analyzing how other factors (such as gender, conflict or economic, political, cultural elements) interact with environmental ones and impact on vulnerabilities and possible migratory outcomes;
  - Using scenario-based approaches to obtain a better picture of future migration patterns and flows related to climate change and environmental degradation;
  - Clarifying the terminology related to environmental migration.
- Preparing country / regional reports, in particular for the most vulnerable countries, to assess the existing evidence on migration and environment issues and sharing lessons learned.

### **2. Strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks:**

- Formulating strategies that involve local public, private and non governmental actors at all stages of policy design, from the assessment of needs to planning and implementation.

- Extending regional consultation and cooperation in addressing migration and environment / climate change, possibly in conjunction with regional bodies and / or Regional Consultative Processes on Migration.
- Acting in partnership at all levels and among a variety of actors, for example through inter-ministerial coordination, through inter-agency collaboration, and by bringing together stakeholders from migration, climate change, humanitarian, and development communities.
- Devising strategies to facilitate regular migration in response to environmental factors and developing solutions for those already on the move, including temporary authorization to stay for environmental migrants and temporary protection models.

### **3. Reinforcing operational and technical capacities:**

- Developing preparedness measures and programmes to prevent and manage displacement and to minimize the impacts of forced migration in natural disaster scenarios, through such measures as early warning systems, contingency planning and bolstered capacities for humanitarian assistance and protection, especially for the most vulnerable groups.
- Focussing on local communities, particularly in vulnerable areas, in efforts to mitigate any negative impacts of environmental factors on livelihoods and prepare for potential movement of people.
- Building comprehensive migration management approaches by mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction, Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation strategies into existing migration management policies as tools and frameworks that contribute to sustainable development.
- Facilitating migration as an adaptation strategy by incorporating migration issues into existing tools such as National Adaptation Programmes of Action, Poverty Reduction Strategies Plans and National Climate Change Programmes.

According to priorities defined by the IOM membership, based on the Organization's mandate<sup>2</sup> and experience, and in partnership with appropriate organizations, IOM will continue to support and facilitate the management of environmental migration.

Geneva, 30 March 2011

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<sup>2</sup> IOM Constitution and IOM Strategy: Council Resolution No. 1150 (XCIII) and Annex