

CAMUN'13



SECURITY COUNCIL

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

As members of the executive board of the United Nations Security Council, it gives us immense pleasure to welcome all delegates to the CAMUN 2013.

As an extremely essential organ of the United Nations, the Security Council holds regular meetings throughout the year with highly experienced representatives and 3,200+ registered non-governmental organizations. The maintenance of international peace and security are Security Council's concerns.

The agendas this year for the Security Council are:

- A. Rights of Environmental Refugees with Special Emphasis on Rehabilitation and Integration
- B. Threats caused to the World by North Korea

Both the above agendas are extremely research oriented and delegates will be required to be thoroughly aware and averse about the questions they are required to answer in their respective resolutions.

It is essential for delegates to note that the key issues associated with each agenda must be addressed in order to make the debate fruitful and beneficial for everyone.

Delegates must be well aware about the foreign policies of their respective countries, economic policies and reforms specifically.

Please note that this background guide is merely to facilitate your research and not the research in itself. It will simply guide you and gives a basic outline of the questions that the committee needs to address in regard to the agendas.

We look forward to a fruitful and conducive debate, and the main focus of the delegates should be to resolve the specific grievances of the international community as a whole. We would also entertain motions to change the order of the agendas so feel free as a committee to decide which agenda you'd like to discuss first.

Regards

Vasavi Nirjar

Chairperson

Security Council, CAMUN'13

Agenda: Rights of Environmental Refugees with Special Emphasis on Rehabilitation and Integration



The United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as: "A person who owing to a 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."

INTRODUCTION

Addressing the issue of environmental refugees is crucial, especially in developing nations because their economic and political instability limit the amount of aid they can provide to their citizens in times of abrupt crises.

Climate change is becoming an increasingly significant factor in human migration which carries with it some serious challenges. Unfortunately, this topic has not received the required attention from the international community despite the increasing number of environmental disasters.

Currently, there is no codified definition of 'environmental refugees' in International Law. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) proposes the following definition for environmental migrants:

"Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or

living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad."

The working definition used by the IOM recognizes that:

- Environmental migrants are not only those displaced by the environmental event but also those whose migration is triggered by deteriorating environmental conditions;
- Environmentally induced movement can take place within as well as across international borders;
- It can be both long and short term; and
- Population movements triggered by environmental forces can be forced as well as a matter of choice.

Another definition given by The United Nations Environment 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."

In simpler terms, this group of people can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, cyclones, deforestation and other environmental hazards. In their desperation, these people feel they have no alternative but to seek sanctuary elsewhere, however hazardous the attempts. Not all of them have fled their countries; some of them are internally displaced. But all have abandoned their homelands; there is not much hope for them to return there. In existing circumstances, the human rights protection mechanism does not cover the rights of environmental refugees.

THE ISSUE AND ITS CAUSES

Due to the increasing amount of natural disasters attributable to climate change, the number of environmental refugees has expanded so rapidly that they can no longer be ignored. There is a general lack of statistical data which would provide reliable cross country estimates of environmental migrants. There have been independent studies which have tried to estimate the same. Some studies have noted that the number of people displaced by environmental factors is more than those displaced by war and political repression combined. It has been suggested that the figure by 2050 might be as high as 250 million.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres recently predicted that climate change will become the biggest cause of population displacements, both inside and across national borders. Last year, there were 36 million environmental refugees, and 20 million of them were displaced due to changing climates. In the past, the U.N. has not passed resolutions regarding refugees of climate change because the issue was not a threat yet.

Global Warming and industrial pollution also contributes to the rise of environmental refugees. One argument states that "because the homes of these displaced people are being gradually

destroyed as a result of environmental policies pursued by industrialized nations and global warming, it amounts to environmental persecution,' which makes them legitimate refugees deserving of legal protection".

Rising sea levels, increasing desertification, weather-induced flooding, and more frequent natural disasters have become a major cause of population displacement in several parts of the world—a trend that is very likely to continue..



TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRANTS

The International Organization for Migration proposes three types of environmental migrants:

- a) Environmental emergency migrants: people who flee temporarily due to an environmental disaster or sudden environmental event. (Examples: someone forced to leave due to hurricane, tsunami, earthquake, etc.)
- b) Environmental forced migrants: people who have to leave due to deteriorating environmental conditions. (Example: someone forced to leave due to a slow deterioration of their environment, such as deforestation, coastal deterioration, etc.)
- c) Environmental motivated migrants (also known as environmentally induced economic migrants): people who choose to leave to avoid possible future problems. (Example: someone who leaves due to declining crop productivity caused by desertification)

PROTECTION UNDER HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

According to international law, refugees can be categorized four ways.

First are defined by the Convention and Protocol. Convention refugees are entitled to claim protection against return to a country in which they fear persecution. They are entitled to get institutional support from UNHCR. They may also invoke the full range of rights set out in the Convention.

Second, these refugees are protected by the regional agreement. Such person may be at risk of return to a situation of serious disturbance of public order, rather persecution. Africa and Latin American countries regional mechanism practiced it.

Third, there are refugees who fear harm as a result of serious disturbance of public order, but who are not able to invoke the protection of a special regional arrangement. These refugees from man-made harm are entitled to special consideration prior to return their state of origin, but they may not claim protection from return as of right except as stipulated in the national legislation of the asylum state.

Finally all persons who are involuntary migrants as result of natural or man-made causes may claim the institutional support from the UNHCR. But this class of refugees, however, has no special claim to protection under international law. In addition, out of this process there are some legal and extralegal vehicles adding important momentum to the protection system for refugees.

It is evident that environmental refugees aren't provided any protection under the law as they do not fall under any category. Therefore, it is up to the committee to decide whether any of these definitions could be extended to incorporate environmental refugees or whether a separate mandate altogether is required.

THE VARIOUS ROADBLOCKS

- The lack of availability of data is a serious challenge along with the absence of any attempt to identify future environmental migrants.
- Providing rehabilitation to refugees raises the question of financing the rehabilitation. There is a major burden on the economic, legal and social machinery of the country providing the refugee status. Diplomatic negotiations between nations may further complicate matters wherein countries historically opposed to each other refuse to cooperate with one another.
- The influx of environment migrants into another country also puts pressure on that country's existing resources which may lead to environmental damage in that country.
- It is maintained that the poor populate areas that are most at risk for environmental destruction and climate change, including coastlines, flood-lines and steep slopes. As a result, climate change threatens areas already suffering from extreme poverty. Different

groups and communities unequally burden the responsibility of climate change. Women and children and another group which tends to have special needs as environmental migrants.

- Climate induced migration carries the possibility of straining diplomatic ties between countries in issues of repatriation and in matters of sharing the burden imposed by rehabilitation of refugees.
- It may also lead to political tension within the nation. Giving environment refugees the right to equal economic participation, access to social welfare schemes may be opposed by the original residents of the country who now have to compete with the new migrants for jobs, healthcare facilities and other scarce resources.
- Proper records of refugees are not maintained, which leads to loss of life, families being separated and/or these refugees being exposed to certain social elements like trafficking, forced military recruitment, etc.

CASE STUDY

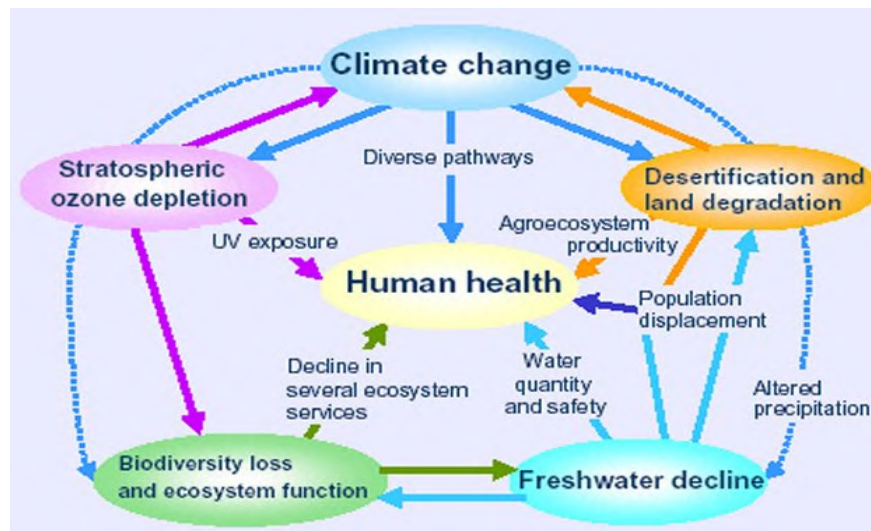
Bhola is surrounded by the Meghna on three sides, with the Bay of Bengal to the south. Over the last two decades the island has gradually narrowed because of the Meghna's erosion. Erosion is nothing unusual in Bangladesh. But the threat of climate change has made the country much more vulnerable.

Now Jalil, once a farmer, lives in a slum in the capital with his family. His two daughters, Yesmin and Rabeya, are going to school again. But his son Palash, a 13-year-old, has had to take a job at a glass factory in the old part of the city. Bangladesh's Institute of Water Modelling has shown that Bhola, home to over two million people, had a landmass of 1550 sq km in 1973, but only 1400 sq km today. The same thing is happening to other islands in the Bay of Bengal. Many people from Kutubdia Island have moved to Cox's Bazar on the mainland, where they call their neighbourhood "Kutubdia Para" (village). "We did not want to forget our island. So we named our village after it," said one old man, Mohammed Nasu Mia. Kutubdiapara: A Slum of Environmental Refugees in Cox's Bazar Urban Area. Kutubdia, an outreach island situated in the southwestern part of the Bay of the Bengal, has been eroding fast due to strong tidal action, as well as by cyclonic action and storm surges.

This island, once which was 250-square kilometer in size, lost around 65 percent of its land during the last 100 years and more than 60 percent of its population migrated in urban areas and, many others are thinking to be migrated as presently 2700 people live in per square kilometer areas. Not only Bangladesh, but other countries also face various natural calamities in every year. As a result of environmental degradation, thousands of people fled their homestead. Sometimes, they have to cross the national boundaries.

CONCLUSION

Voices have been raised at the international level to provide these refugees a respectable life and living conditions since they are victims of globalization and had no role for the fate they have been pushed into. Different human rights and environmental organizations argue that the definition of a refugee is grounded in human rights, which include the right to an adequate standard of living and access to food. The kind of suffering associated with environmental degradation is clearly a violation of these rights. Environmental refugees may not be comparing with the traditional ideas of refugees. These refugees are moving for a combination of reasons, including social and political, but ecological and environmental research is suggesting that environmental triggers most significantly influence their force displacement. This ambiguity does not justify dismissing the importance of environmental factors to determine the status of this group of refugees. The UNCHR stands and its mandate to protect refugees as defined by the Convention thus does not cover the environmental refugees' protection mechanism. It is the time to extend the language of the UN definition on refugees to those people involuntary displaced due to various natural calamities.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- a) What is to be the definition of environmental refugees that will officially be adopted?
- b) What infrastructure could be provided or worked on for refugees not protected by law?
- c) What assessment reports could be undertaken by the international committee so that the issue is given due consideration?
- d) Importance of providing medical facilities to these refugees and training of personnel for the same.
- e) What problems are faced in rehabilitating and integrating environmental refugees in the new country?

Delegates are encouraged to delve into topics that have been touched in this background guide but not to limit themselves to them. Do bring up more questions and topics for discussion in the committee.

REFERENCE

Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=115&articleid=1758>

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4a5096.html>

<http://www.iom.int/cms/envmig>