

GFMD Thematic Workshop

“Climate change and human mobility: towards dignified, coordinated and sustainable solutions”

Rabat, Morocco
24 May 2017

Introduction

- It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of the 2017 GMG Chair, Dr. David Malone, Rector of United Nations University. Please accept our apologies that we cannot represent GMG in person due to unforeseen circumstances. Thank you to our hosts Morocco for the kind invitation.
- We have just concluded the two day thematic session on drivers of migration in New York.
- One panel discussion was dedicated to consideration of the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters as drivers of migration. The historic significance of including climate change in the Global Compact on Migration was highlighted by many speakers.

Climate Change and Migration: Background

- Unprecedented environmental change and degradation are altering where and how people are able to live. We have entered a new epoch called the ‘Anthropocene’, in which human activities are fundamentally redrawing the map of our world.
- With a global population projected to reach 9 billion by the middle of this century, population pressures and human consumption present serious challenges to sustainability.
- If increases in average global temperatures reach 1.5°C by the end of the century, tens of millions of people will live in increasingly inhospitable areas.
- Yet the effects of climate change do not directly cause population movements alone, but are interlinked with other drivers of migration. Climate change accelerates the frequency and intensity of both environmental degradation and sudden-onset disasters, hitting vulnerable populations the hardest. The resulting movements of people can affect urban systems and surrounding ecosystems.
- While diaspora remittances are the primary vehicle to support adaptation, skills and knowledge transfers (social remittances) and investments in “green” sectors help build resilient communities.

The Path Forward

- Evidence on the migration-adaptation nexus has considerably improved over the last few decades, and points to the necessity to address the challenges arising in that context. Yet there remain clear gaps in research on many aspects, including:
 - Immobility and so-called ‘trapped populations’

- How climate affects the scale, location and time periods of migration patterns
- How climate change mitigation policies can lead to increasing displaced populations (through large scale land acquisitions, for example)
- The composition of the GMG reflects the multiple and interrelated issues at play - environmental, political, economic, human rights - and speaks to the sort of collaboration needed. In its contributions to the Global Compact process, the GMG has heeded the call from Member States to utilize and to produce better evidence to help forge the path forward.
- The Compact represents a strategic and significant opportunity to advance international governance of migration, including environment- and climate-related migration. Migration provides challenges in terms of development and environmental management, but also presents opportunities.

Conclusion

- In closing, may I thank the GFMD co-chairs for organizing this important workshop. We welcome the contribution your discussions will make to our understanding of the diverse and complex impacts of climate change on human mobility.
- Thank you.