

UN Environment input to Secretary General's report on Global Compact

1/. Structure and elements of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration

We would encourage a full consideration of the drivers of migration – going beyond some of the proximate issues of poverty, disaster, conflict and lack of opportunity to assess the underlying causes of these 'push' factors.

We would argue that environmental degradation and mismanagement are at the root of many of the political, economic and social drivers of migration and displacement.

The impact of environmental change on migration and displacement will increase in future. The interlacing trends of climate change, population growth, rising consumption, and environmental degradation may lead to greater numbers of people displaced.

It is also important to remember that displacement itself can have environmental impacts, causing environmental degradation that can worsen or prolong the humanitarian emergency. Rapid urbanization or poorly managed refugee camps and IDPs settlements can put pressure on scarce water, energy and food resources, lead to uncontrolled waste disposal, and put refugees and migrants in direct competition with local communities.

We need to better understand, and mitigate, those complex factors. Ultimately, unless we can deal with long-term environmental vulnerability, huge numbers of people being displaced every year will become the new normal.

2/. Actionable commitments that may be included in the global compact

Ultimately migration is not just a political challenge. We argue that we also need to think of it as a development challenge and, critically, an environmental management challenge. The scale of possible future displacement under even moderate climate change scenarios means that environment, humanitarian and displacement-focused actors must work together.

In terms of actionable commitments this may involve:

- A focus on building resilience in source countries of migration and areas of possible displacement.
- Support for countries hosting large numbers of forced migrants or displaced people in terms of addressing the added demands on their own ecosystem services.
- Large-scale regeneration programmes in environmentally compromised areas
- Consideration of international temporary labour migration as a win-win development intervention in areas hit by natural disasters

3/. Means of implementation and a framework for the follow-up and review of implementation

We think the environmental community has an important role to play in building understanding of the ecological drivers of displacement; strengthening the capacity of communities and countries to withstand shocks and environmental change; and helping to plan the relocation of communities that stand to be displaced by unavoidable environmental change.

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