**DISEC 2019 Background Guide:**

**Topic 1: Climate refugees and international security**

**Abstract:** Even though the 2018 Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration represents a milestone in global migration management, this new treaty fails to explicitly tackle the issue of “climate refugees”. However, as the effects of climate change become more and more visible; experts envision people migrating in increasing numbers due to environmental factors whose number could easily topple that of traditional refugees in the upcoming decades.  Therefore, the Disarmament and International Security Committee will consider the implications of “climate refugees” with regards to stability and international security and propose measures to prevent, mitigate and/or adapt to the arrival of environmental migrants.

**History of the topic**

*Terminology*

The first term to describe people who are displaced by environmental factors, “environmental refugee,” was coined in 1970. Its most quoted definitions describes 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 jeopardised their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life.” Even though this term became very popular in the 1990s, international agencies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), moved towards other alternatives because they deemed its use inappropriate.

The reason is strictly legal. The *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its *1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (together known as the Refugee Convention) are the main international treaties governing refugee law. The Refugee Convention defines 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, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”  As such, international law does not recognise asylum claims based on environmental reasons. However, there are regional treaties which extend on this definition to include people fleeing from “events seriously disturbing public order.” Such treaties include the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (the OAU Convention) which have been ratified by 46 countries of the African Union and incorporated into domestic law by 44; and the non-binding 1984 Latin American Cartagena Declaration.

Therefore, the UNHCR uses the term “persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.” However, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) prefers using the terms environmental migrant and climate migrant as migrant is a legally undefined term describing all sorts of people on the move. The IOM also notes the difference between environmental migrants and climate migrants. The former can be used for all people who migrate in the context of environmental factors while the latter is a subcategory and only applies to those who move due to climate change.  Regardless, the terms “environmental refugees” and more often “climate refugees” are enjoying growing popularity in media and academia, often pushing legislators to update national and international refugee legislation to include people fleeing for environmental reasons.

*History of climate migration*

Climate change and migration was first linked together in the 1980s in academic research thanks to three influential papers. In his influential 1885 United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) paper, El Hinnawi reintroduced and defined the term “environmental refugee” (see above). Shortly after, a 1988 Worldwatch Institute report estimated that 10 million environmental refugees existed at the time. In 1990, the first IPCC report acknowledged that climate change can potentially cause large scale migration. Norman Myers in his famous albeit methodologically outdated and flawed paper estimated that 25 million environmental refugees existed at the time which could increase up to 200 million by 2050. These early reports, especially the last one, was often (mis)used by NGOs in order to raise awareness and persuade politicians to act. As a result, the issue of climate migration soon turned into a security issue.

Around the end of the 2000s, the climate change-migration-security nexus began to frequently appear in intergovernmental and governmental reports. In 2008, for example, the so-called Solaka Report to the European Council stated that environmental migration “may increase conflicts in transit and destination areas. Europe must expect substantially increased migratory pressure.” A 2011 European Union (EU) reflection paper also stated that “while climate change alone does not cause conflict, it is leading to increased competition for scarce natural resources, further weakens fragile governments and exacerbates migratory pressures.” Moreover, since the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, the US Department of Defense considers climate change as a threat amplifier for geopolitical and global economic risks.

Meanwhile, relevant international organisations also commenced addressing the issue of environmental migrations. In 2007 the IOM was requested to start working on the migration and climate change which led to the creation of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC) Division in 2015. In 2009, the UN Secretary-General put together a report on “Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications,” marking the mainstreaming of the issue. The report noted that environmental migration is a threat to peace and security. It also noted that there is no legal framework for people displayed by environmental factors which is a national security risk by itself. Furthermore, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) also debated on the connections between climate change and security both in 2007 and 2011. The 2011 Council statement expressed concern that “climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security” as well as acknowledged that “possible security implications of loss of territory of some States caused by sea-level-rise may arise.” However, the 2011 UNSC debate provoked controversy as some members of the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement contested the legitimacy of the Council to address this issue. The G77 feared that the ”securitisation of migration” through a so-called national security perspective undermines the traditional pillars of climate change governance such as the United nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNSC formally recognised the impacts of climate change in Resolution 2349 (2017) about Boko Haram’s presence at Lake Chad when it stated that it “recognises the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of the Region, including through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity...”

The first major international development in the field of climate change, disasters and human migration was the Nansen Initiative on Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement. This intergovernmental consultative process was created by Norway and Switzerland in 2012 after the failure of the UNHCR’s 2011 Ministerial Meeting on the development of a global guiding framework on cross-border displacement. The Initiative’s aim was “to build consensus among states on the elements of a protection agenda, which may include standards of treatment” through a serious of consultations with civil society, expert organisations and member states. Even though only nine countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Germany, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines and Switzerland) participated in the process, its outcome document,” Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the context of Disasters and Climate Change” (Protection Agenda), was endorsed by 109 countries. It identifies efficient practices States can use in their own legislation to address the normative gaps in the area of migration and displacement due to disasters and climate change. The Platform for Disaster Displacement was established in 2016 to continue the work of the Nansen Initiative.

The next big step on the international scene was the “A New Climate for Peace” report which featured on the agenda of the 2015 G7 Annual Meeting. It outlines seven major compound climate and fragility risks which could threaten international stability. It states that “the increased movement of people driven by climate change impacts could, if migration and resettlement are poorly managed, lead to local and regional instability.” In their statement, the G7 mentions “dire economic and ecological situations” as one of the causes of nowadays "unprecedented global flow of refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants” and commits to finance climate change related disaster management and resilience building.

In September 2016, Heads of State and Government met in the UN General Assembly to discuss all migration and refugee-related questions for the first time at a global level. For this meeting, the UN Secretary-General wrote a report titled “In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants” calling for the creation of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. It also stresses the importance of addressing the causes of large-scale migration movements, implementing climate agreements and ensuring the protection of migrants under all circumstances. On that high-level meeting the 193 UN member States adopted the” New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants” in which they commit to the creation of the global compact including a promise to ”combat environmental degradation and ensur[e] effective responses to natural disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change.”

**Current situation**

According to the 2019 *Global Report on Internal Displacement,* there are currently 17.2 million people displaced by sudden-onset hazards, such as storms, floods and earthquakes, situated in 144 countries and territories. This number does not include displacements by slow-onset hazards such as droughts or epidemics, as only partial data is available and only in a few countries. An estimate for international environmental migration is also missing. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) may also be significantly higher as some hazard-prone countries failed to provide adequate data. The report also notes that around 17 million people is endangered by flooding alone each year as well as extreme wildfires annually displace hundreds of thousands of people in the US, Australia and Southern Europe.

The IOM warns that the number of environmental migrants could be anywhere between 40 million and 1 billion by 2050 due to the high degree of uncertainty regarding how climate change will affect human livelihoods and which of the current IPCC climate scenarios will borne out. Most estimates project between 150 and 200 million environmental migrants which equals the present number of all international migrants. However, at this point the only certainty is that the number of environmental migrants will considerably increase by the end of the century. For example, the IOM projects that 30 to 60 million people will live in areas with too hot average temperature for human conditions in the hottest month even if we keep the global temperature increase at 1.5°C. The number could rise to more than 100 million in case of 2°C increase. Furthermore, around 1.79 million km2 land could be lost by 2100 according to the business-as-usual climate scenario. This would mean the displacement of 187 million people.

The adverse effects of climate change on migration would not affect the globe equally. The heatwaves mainly concentrate in Africa, with North Africa and the Middle East becoming uninhabitable to humans and other species due to extremely high temperatures and drought under the business-as-usual scenario within this century. Climate change will also expand the geographical area of deadly vector-borne tropical diseases like Zika, malaria and cholera. Sea-level rise will be most impactful in the tropical area, albeit low lying coastal cities in the moderate climate zones, such as New York or Amsterdam, are endangered as well. The main hotspots are densely populated river deltas such as the Niger and Mekong deltas and the Bay of Bengal. In Bangladesh, for example, the projected number of displacements due to flooding and sea-level rise could threaten with the collapse of state. In case of tropical islands in the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific, the physical existence of the states is in danger. Prime examples of island nations in peril include Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Maldives which lie only a couple of centimetres above sea-level and lack the financial means of building protective structures.

 When assessing environmental migration, it is important to differentiate between relocation due to sudden-onset hazards and migration because of slow-onset hazards. In the former case, the displacement is usually internal and short term with high return rates, thus the potential for instigating conflict is low. However, unstable and urban and rural populations have a higher risk of civil war and common low-level communal conflicts during times of environmental disasters, still making frequent flooding and earthquakes a security risk. In the case of slow-onset hazards, there is no place to return to after reaching the tipping point. In destination countries where the competition for resources in already tight, the possibility of violent social conflict is high if the situation is left unchecked. Even if basic resources are available, it is almost impossible to say how migrants who just lost their homelands and have no possibility of return would cope with the social and cultural trauma. The reactions of the host society to large numbers of people of different backgrounds is also difficult to predict.

On 19 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the non-legally binding “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” (Marrakesh Compact on Migration) outlined in the 2016 “New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.” This compact is the first comprehensive international treaty since the Refugee Convention. It is also the first to include any reference to the connection between migration and climate change as objective 2 aims to “minimise the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.” However, the Marrakesh Compact on Migration is incomplete as it fails to mention the delicate situation of “climate refugees” and stays quiet on how environmental migration might affect the stability and security of countries.

Therefore, this session of the UNGA Disarmament and International Security Committee has the following items on its agenda:

1. Establish or strengthen mechanisms to monitor and anticipate the development of risks and threats that might influence migration movements in the context of climate change;
2. Create a framework for assessing the impacts of climate migration on emitter and destination countries with regards to prosperity, social order and political stability; and
3. Decide on how climate migration should be managed to prevent its unwanted and facilitate its desired effects.

**Recommended readings**

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Nansen Initiative. *Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the context of Disasters and Climate Change.* 2015. <https://nanseninitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PROTECTION-AGENDA-VOLUME-1.pdf>

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United Nations Secretary-General. “Climate change and its possible security implication,” September 11, 2009 <https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/350>

United Nations Secretary-General. “In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants,” April 21, 2016 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/112/62/pdf/N1611262.pdf?OpenElement>

**Recommended websites**

Climate and Migration Coalition <http://climatemigration.org.uk/>

Environmental Justice Foundation <https://ejfoundation.org/>

Environmental Migration Portal <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/>

Migration Data Portal <https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs_&t=2017>

Platform on Disaster Displacement <https://disasterdisplacement.org/>

Refugees International <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/about-our-climate-program>

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**Topic 2: Government Surveillance:**

**Introduction:**

As global technological development progresses, the issue of the surveillance of private individuals and organizations has become a much more focal point for national governments and bodies such as the United Nations. The balance between rights to privacy and a desire for security in the modern age is difficult to maintain as new developments give governments access to increasingly sophisticated surveillance methods. The emergence of the internet, has too complicated the nature of surveillance, as expression through digital media becomes a primary form of socio-political interaction. The international community must clarify its stance on this evolving issue and produce a resolution to address the growing changes in the world of surveillance. The clash between those states which seek a resolution which emphasizes the human right to privacy and those which look for a reaffirmation of national sovereignty in these matters is bound to be visible in any meaningful discussion on a resolution on government surveillance.

**History:**

The history of government surveillance of private citizens is as old as governments themselves, however the methods of observation have never in history been as refined and omniscient as they are today. Where for most of history surveillance systems relied on the word of mouth of informants, modern surveillance has become far more technologically sophisticated and intricate.

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, the British and American governments sought to increase mutual coordination in espionage and observation by founding the United Kingdom-United States of America agreement. This secret treaty allowed for signal information sharing among likeminded allied nations. This agreement would pave the way for the emergence of the so-called ‘Five Eyes’ intelligence organization formed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Five Eyes organization is heavily secretive and operates a massive intelligence infrastructure system across the globe. It surveys and analyzes large amounts of encrypted communications, leading to concerns about the ethics of its data gathering[[1]](#footnote-1). Despite concerns, the Five Eyes organization has historically justified its mass surveillance through the political necessity of the Cold War and increasingly the threat of global terrorism and rogue state activities.

In May 2013, the *Guardian* newspaper released several articles which included sensitive information regarding US intelligence gathering operations in the United States[[2]](#footnote-2). The disclosures shocked the American populace and revealed the US National Security Agency (NSA) had been collecting, recording, and analyzing the phone calls, emails, and texts of individuals without a warrant. The whistleblower at the center of this scandal was revealed to be a man named Edward Snowden, then twenty-nine years old, who contracted in national security for the corporation Booz-Allen Hamilton. His release of information led to massive outcry about the violation of the right to privacy, however yielded little substantive reform to intelligence gathering in the United States. Snowden himself, despite a myriad of supposed whistleblower protection acts, was brought up on charges of theft of government property and violation of the Espionage Act. In wake of these accusations, he was forced to flee to the Russian Federation for asylum. Snowden, among other similar whistleblowers’, treatment raised questions about the extent to which governments are willing to protect or encourage the exposure of illegal or unethical practices by their agencies or offices.

Article 12 of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that “no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation”[[3]](#footnote-3). This principle has underpinned the United Nations position on matters of privacy since the organization’s creation. In December 2013, the UN general assembly adopted resolution 68/167 which reaffirmed the body’s commitment to upholding privacy in the digital age[[4]](#footnote-4). While 68/167 was the most recent UN legislation passed on the topic, it contained few actionable clauses other than broadly recommending states act to allow freedom of privacy and internet usage. There exists a need for a more comprehensive resolution on the issue of surveillance and privacy in the internet age.

**Current Situation:**

Significant division exists among member states as to the extent of the UN’s jurisdiction over matters of surveillance within independent nation-states. While the UN’s stated position on personal privacy, in person or digitally, is a favorable one, a key element of the UN’s existence is a respect for the internal politics of its member states. The tension between these two pillars of UN belief make the debate over privacy, surveillance and security a sincerely difficult one to come to a decision on. The split amongst member states is very visible, and in the past the General Assembly has shied away from major action on the topic to avoid the internal divisions it will undoubtedly exacerbate.

The international humanitarian community has been dismayed by the rise of so-called “digital authoritarianism”, characterized by extensive censorship and persistent invasive surveillance.[[5]](#footnote-5) By using modern technology to monitor the actions, opinions, and whereabouts of its citizenry states have become capable of asserting a much greater deal of authority in the lives of individuals. This model of cyber-surveillance and societal control has been pioneered in the People’s Republic of China, where mass surveillance of the internet has become commonplace. The optimistic belief that authoritarian and undemocratic states would be unable to regulate the sheer volume of expression and ideas on the internet has proven woefully naïve[[6]](#footnote-6). Through the usage of apps and more ubiquitous traditional surveillance such as cameras and government agents, the natural freedom of the internet is now being challenged by states seeking to clamp down on human rights and the freedom of information. As this model has proven worthwhile to government interests in the case of China, it has been mirrored elsewhere by other states seeking control over online expression. While the principles of such action are clearly against the ideals of the United Nations, it is difficult to determine an ‘easy answer’ which allows for promotion of freedom and personal liberties while still respecting the state’s intrinsic rights to self-determination and sovereignty. This development raises questions as to the extent that the UN can, and should, become involved with the internal affairs of nation-states, especially in regards to such sensitive topics as privacy and surveillance.

While states opting for directly digital authoritarianism focus on internal surveillance and monitoring, there are others which pioneer these techniques with the goal of resale. The Israeli intelligence services are some of the most qualified in the world, however many of their techniques are later marketed to governments around the world. The Israeli Defense Force’s (IDF) Unit 8200 produces intelligence analysts, hackers, and surveillance operatives of the highest class, many of whom go on to work in intelligence consultation in nations across the world, exporting what they have learned[[7]](#footnote-7). While Israel is a prominent case, there are dozens of other nations who are seeing former intelligence agents making profit through the sale of surveillance equipment and techniques across the world, including to actors of dubious reputation. This begs the question: does the United Nations have a role in restricting the sharing of intelligence secrets and equipment through the free market?

There has been a proliferation of surveillance technology and techniques in the digital age which now require a UN position in regards to regulation and acceptance. While some states have embraced surveillance measures against their population at their greatest extent, even those who claim to oppose violation of privacy rights have moved progressively towards their restriction. The temptation to extend state control over individuals, particularly through the internet is difficult to restrict, particularly for supranational bodies such as the UN. It is the job of the delegates to the Disarmament and International Security Committee to understand the nuance of this issue and develop innovative and intelligent solutions.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Does your country have more of a preference towards assuring state sovereignty or championing individual privacy rights?
2. What role should the United Nations play in internal government surveillance?
3. How has the development of newer technologies affected methods of government surveillance?
4. Should the rights of whistleblowers be considered in a resolution?
5. Do concerns of national security outweigh the desire for privacy?

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