BACKGROUND *Guide*

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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Addressing the environmental and humanitarian consequences of climate-induced displacement in vulnerable states.

Letter from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

It is with great honour and privilege that we welcome you to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) at OOBMUN 2026! We are thrilled to serve as your dais and look forward to a committee filled with insightful discussions and innovative solutions.

The UNEP, established to coordinate global environmental efforts, works towards protecting our planet and tackling problems that affect all of us: climate change, pollution, deforestation and the loss of wildlife. Throughout this conference, you will step into the shoes of your respective countries, discuss the challenges affecting our environment and debate solutions that balance national interests with our collective responsibility towards the environment.

We encourage you to use this background guide as a starting point for your research; it'll help you develop a strong understanding of the agenda and potential solutions. Whether this is your first MUN or one of many, we hope you approach the committee with confidence, curiosity, and a willingness to learn from those around you.

As your Dais, we aim to create an environment where every delegate feels comfortable contributing and engaging in constructive, fruitful debate. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

We look forward to hearing your ideas and seeing what we can achieve together. Best of luck with your preparation, and we cannot wait to see you at OOBMUN 2026!

Warm regards,

Head Chair - Falak Shabanali

Head Chair - Hussain Chandra

Co-Chair - Muhammad Huzair

Introduction to committee

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority within the United Nations, established in 1972 following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. Its primary purpose is to coordinate international environmental efforts, encourage cooperation among member states, and promote sustainable development worldwide. UNEP works alongside governments, international organizations, scientific institutions, and civil society to address major environmental challenges, including climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and the degradation of natural ecosystems. Through scientific research, environmental assessments, policy recommendations, and international partnerships, UNEP helps countries understand environmental risks and develop effective strategies to protect the planet.

An important aspect of UNEP's work is recognizing that environmental problems extend beyond ecological damage and can have serious economic, social, and humanitarian consequences. Climate change, for instance, can threaten food security, damage infrastructure, destroy livelihoods, and force communities to abandon their homes. These effects are particularly severe in vulnerable states, which often have limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and reduced capacity to prepare for or recover from environmental disasters. Consequently, addressing environmental challenges requires cooperation between countries, particularly between developed nations with greater resources and developing nations that are disproportionately affected.

At OOBMUN 2026, the UNEP committee will focus on addressing the environmental and humanitarian consequences of climate-induced displacement in vulnerable states. Delegates will examine how climate-related disasters and gradual environmental changes force people to relocate, the difficulties displaced populations encounter, and the challenges faced by the communities and countries receiving them. Discussions will explore measures such as strengthening climate adaptation, improving disaster preparedness, providing financial and technical assistance to vulnerable states, and promoting international cooperation to protect affected

populations. Delegates are expected to consider their respective countries' environmental policies, economic capabilities, and international responsibilities while working towards practical, inclusive, and sustainable solutions. Ultimately, the committee aims to encourage constructive debate and develop approaches that reduce climate-related displacement risks, protect vulnerable communities, and strengthen global environmental resilience.

Introduction to the agenda

Climate-induced displacement has emerged as an increasingly important international concern as climate change intensifies environmental hazards and threatens the safety, livelihoods, and living conditions of communities worldwide. It refers to situations in which individuals or communities are compelled to leave their homes because environmental changes and climate-related disasters make their places of residence unsafe or unsuitable for living. Such displacement can result from sudden-onset disasters, including floods, cyclones, and storms, as well as slow-onset processes such as rising sea levels, desertification, prolonged droughts, and coastal erosion. While environmental hazards have always influenced human migration, climate change can intensify existing risks and make certain areas increasingly difficult to inhabit.

The consequences of climate-induced displacement extend far beyond the loss of homes. Communities forced to relocate may lose access to employment, education, healthcare, clean water, and reliable food supplies. Farmers and fishing communities may experience the destruction of their livelihoods as agricultural land becomes infertile, rainfall patterns change, and marine ecosystems are damaged. Displacement can also separate families from their cultural heritage, ancestral lands, and traditional ways of life. Women, children, older people, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous communities may face additional difficulties because of existing social and economic inequalities, limited access to resources, and inadequate protection during emergencies. Furthermore, displaced populations may experience overcrowded living conditions, insufficient sanitation, and increased

competition for housing, employment, and essential services in receiving communities.

These challenges are particularly serious in vulnerable states, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and low-income countries, which often face significant environmental risks despite having limited resources to respond effectively. Countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Maldives are threatened by rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and saltwater intrusion, which can damage farmland and contaminate freshwater supplies. Similarly, countries such as Bangladesh face substantial risks from flooding, cyclones, and coastal changes, potentially forcing large numbers of people to relocate. In regions affected by prolonged drought and desertification, declining agricultural productivity and water scarcity can undermine livelihoods and increase pressure on already vulnerable communities. These examples demonstrate that climate-induced displacement is not solely an environmental issue; it is also connected to poverty, food security, economic development, public health, and regional stability.

Another major concern is the limited international legal protection available to people displaced specifically by climate-related factors. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol do not automatically recognize climate change as an independent ground for refugee status. Consequently, people who cross international borders because of environmental disasters may not qualify for refugee protection under the Convention unless they meet its existing criteria. Although other human rights principles and national or regional arrangements may provide protection in certain circumstances, significant gaps remain in ensuring predictable and consistent assistance. Addressing these gaps requires international cooperation and appropriate migration policies and measures that protect the dignity and rights of displaced individuals.

Financial limitations further complicate the situation. Vulnerable states often lack the resources needed to construct resilient infrastructure, establish effective early-warning systems, improve emergency response services, or organize safe and planned relocation. International climate finance, technical assistance, and cooperation are therefore essential to help affected countries prepare for environmental risks and recover from disasters. At the same time, policies must recognize that relocation should not always be the first response: where possible, strengthening local resilience and enabling

communities to remain safely in their homes may help prevent displacement. Where relocation becomes unavoidable, it should be planned carefully, with consideration for housing, employment, education, cultural identity, and the long-term well-being of affected populations.

This agenda calls upon delegates to examine both the environmental factors that contribute to displacement and the humanitarian challenges experienced by affected communities. Discussions should consider strengthening climate adaptation and disaster-risk reduction, improving access to climate finance, supporting host communities, developing safe and orderly migration pathways and addressing gaps in the protection of climate-displaced populations. Delegates should also evaluate existing international frameworks and identify practical measures that can improve coordination between governments, humanitarian organisations and international institutions. By balancing national interests with shared international responsibilities, the committee seeks to develop realistic, inclusive and sustainable solutions that reduce displacement risks, protect vulnerable populations and strengthen the resilience of states facing the consequences of climate change.

Key Terms

1. Climate-Induced Displacement:

The forced movement of individuals or communities from their homes due to climate-related hazards or environmental changes that threaten their safety, livelihoods or ability to remain in their place of residence. It may occur within national borders or across them.

2. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):

Individuals forced to leave their homes due to disasters, conflict or other threats who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border. They often face difficulties accessing shelter, healthcare, education and essential services.

3. Climate Migrants:

Individuals or communities who move, temporarily or permanently, because of climate-related impacts such as droughts, floods, rising sea levels or environmental degradation. Migration may be voluntary or forced, depending on the circumstances.

4. Slow-Onset Events:

Environmental changes that develop gradually over time, including sea-level rise, desertification, prolonged drought and coastal erosion. These processes can progressively destroy livelihoods, reduce access to freshwater and make certain regions increasingly difficult to inhabit.

5. Sudden-Onset Disasters:

Rapidly occurring hazards such as cyclones, floods and storm surges that can force immediate evacuation and create urgent humanitarian needs, including emergency shelter, food, clean water and medical assistance.

6. Small Island Developing States (SIDS):

A group of island and coastal developing states that face particular environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Maldives are especially exposed to rising sea levels, coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion, threatening their land, freshwater supplies and communities.

7. Planned Relocation:

The organised movement of individuals or communities to safer locations when their original homes become uninhabitable or face serious environmental risks. Effective relocation requires consultation with affected populations and consideration of housing, employment, cultural identity and access to essential services.

8. Climate Adaptation:

The process of adjusting human and natural systems to actual or expected climate impacts. Measures such as flood-resistant infrastructure, drought-resistant agriculture, coastal protection and improved water management can reduce displacement risks and strengthen community resilience.

9. Climate Finance Gap:

The shortfall between the financial resources required to address climate change and the funding currently available. This gap particularly affects vulnerable states that lack sufficient resources to invest in disaster preparedness, resilient infrastructure, ecosystem restoration and the protection of displaced populations.

Key Issues

1. Disproportionate humanitarian impact on vulnerable groups

The most vulnerable individuals to climate change are those who are socially, economically, culturally or otherwise marginalised. Women make up 80% of climate-displaced persons, having to bear the burden of primary caretaking, increased risks of gender-based violence and trafficking. Children, the elderly, those with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples also face increased hazards when they are displaced. Children are less likely to receive an education and are more vulnerable to child marriage and exploitation. The elderly and persons with disabilities are often the last to be evacuated, as early warning systems and shelters are rarely designed for them. Indigenous peoples lose not only land but also sacred sites, language and traditional knowledge. Because these groups are underrepresented in decision-making, their needs are often left out of adaptation and relocation plans.

2. Loss of land, livelihood and food security

Rising sea levels, desertification and shifting rainfall often destroy farmland, fisheries and grazing land. This pushes rural communities toward displacement and suffering, especially smallholder farmers who are among

the most exposed: roughly 600 million of them, who feed much of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, cultivate rainfed marginal lands that are highly sensitive to shifting weather patterns. Every year these areas suffer losses of about 20 million tonnes of crops, Lake Chad is a prime example of that; it has shrunk by roughly 90% since the 1960s, and this has contributed to livelihood collapse and instability for millions living around that area. Bangladesh's coastline is another example, their rising sea-levels are expected to displace millions from the nearby areas by 2050.

3. The legal protection gap for Climate Migrants

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol only protect people who have crossed a border and fear persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a social group. Climate disasters like floods, droughts and sea-level rise are not persecution, so people that are displaced by them generally fall outside the Convention. As a result, there is no binding international treaty that gives climate-displaced people a right to asylum, resettlement or aid when they cross a border. The most cited case is Teitiota v. New Zealand (2020), in which a man from Kiribati argued that rising seas and land scarcity threatened his life. The UN Human Rights Committee rejected his claim because the danger was not judged imminent. However, it is accepted that states may not return people to places where climate change threatens their right to life; it only helps individuals in extreme situations, not whole countries/communities that may be in danger.

4. Environmental pressure on Host Communities and Receiving Areas

When climate migrants are suddenly or massively displaced, they often flood into cities and camps, putting pressure on water supplies, sanitation systems, and land. This can result in depleted groundwater, contamination, and poor hygiene for everyone. Since climate migrants settle in rural transition zones, the influx of these informal settlements could lead to the clearing of local vegetation, deforestation, and soil erosion. For example, rapidly growing

slums in Dhaka, where many climate migrants settle, are overcrowded and lack proper sanitation. And in many cases remain in the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

5. Rising Sea-Levels

Rising sea levels and coastal erosion are making low lying coasts unlivable, and entire communities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face permanent relocation. Tuvalu, Kiribati, Maldives and the Marshall Islands are the most affected, as well as regions like Bangladesh. This threatens the loss of territory, freshwater, farmland and cultural heritage. Tuvalu's highest point is only about 4.5 metres above sea level, and the World Bank's Groundswell report estimates Bangladesh alone could see up to 13 million internal climate migrants by 2050.

6. The climate finance gap

Many of these vulnerable states are already heavily indebted, so they struggle to pay for early warning systems, resilient infrastructure or planned relocation, and the funding promised by wealthier nations has been inadequate. The people who suffer most are communities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and low-income countries, who are left to face displacement without support. UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report 2023 found that developing countries' adaptation finance needs are 10 to 18 times higher than current international public flows, and the Loss and Damage Fund has received pledges of only around US$700 million against the estimated need of the hundreds of billions annually to actually see a change.

Major Stakeholders

1. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

As the leading global environmental authority within the United Nations, UNEP supports environmental assessments, climate adaptation, ecosystem restoration and international environmental cooperation. It can help vulnerable states develop sustainable strategies to reduce displacement risks and protect threatened ecosystems.

2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR works to protect refugees and other forcibly displaced people within its mandate. Its expertise in international protection, human rights and displacement policy is important in addressing the protection gaps faced by people displaced by climate-related disasters, particularly those who cross international borders.

3. International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM addresses the relationship between migration, environmental change and climate-related disasters. It supports governments in developing migration policies, improving displacement data, preparing communities for environmental risks and facilitating safe, orderly and dignified movement where necessary.

4. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP supports sustainable development, poverty reduction and institutional capacity-building. It can assist vulnerable states in strengthening infrastructure, protecting livelihoods and integrating climate adaptation and displacement prevention into national development plans.

5. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

OCHA coordinates international humanitarian responses during emergencies. Its work is particularly relevant when climate-related disasters displace large populations and create urgent requirements for shelter, healthcare, food, sanitation and emergency assistance.

6. Vulnerable States and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, the Maldives, the Marshall Islands and Bangladesh face significant risks from rising sea levels, coastal erosion, flooding and other climate-related hazards. Their governments must balance adaptation, relocation, limited financial resources and the protection of their populations' livelihoods and cultural heritage.

7. Host Communities, Displaced Populations and Civil Society Organisations

Host communities receive displaced populations and may experience increased pressure on housing, employment, water supplies, sanitation and public services. Displaced people, Indigenous communities, women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities also require particular consideration when designing inclusive humanitarian responses and relocation policies.

Past Actions

1. **UN Climate Security Mechanism, 2018**

This joint UN initiative is a mechanism that helps the UN, field missions and specific regional organizations identify climate-induced security risks and design risk management strategies like early warning systems. It encourages advocacy and joint risk assessments so that climate-induced disasters can be solved together. This was an important step in recognizing that displacement in fragile regions like the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin cannot be solved by humanitarian aid alone.

2. Nansen Initiative and Protection Agenda, 2012-2015

This initiative was launched in October 2012 by Switzerland and Norway, with the main purpose of building a consensus amongst affected states on how they could effectively respond to challenges of cross-border displacement. The initiative encourages states to use flexible immigration and protection

tools such as issuing humanitarian visas, granting temporary stay and offering work permits. It also addresses the need for policies that go beyond simply protecting the displaced but also address other ways of human mobility, like helping people avoid becoming displaced in the first place by moving internally or across borders in regular or planned ways before displacement occurs. For example, disaster risk reduction activities held in communities and infrastructure improvements, in order to prepare beforehand for a climate disaster.

3. UNFCC, 1992

Being the base of global cooperation, the The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change commits states to stabilize greenhouse gases and recognise 'different responsibilities', meaning developed countries must lead and aim to support developing countries and vulnerable states with finance, technology and funding to support climate-induced migrants. Established under the UNFCC is the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage that is a dedicated task force to help avert, minimize and address displacement caused by climate change.

4. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015-2030

This 15 year global agreement adopted by 187 UN member states aims to reduce disaster deaths, affected people, economic losses and damage to infrastructure. It also stresses early warning systems and "building back better" after disasters. It encourages countries to adopt national disaster risk strategies, which directly reduces the likelihood of mass displacement.

5. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, 2018

Adopted in 2018 as the first ever comprehensive United Nations agreement clearly recognized climate change, environmental degradation, and natural disasters as primary drivers of contemporary human mobility for climate migrants. Endorsed by 152 UN member states, it aims to strengthen joint analysis and prediction of migration movements caused by sudden-onset natural disasters like floods as well as slow-onset natural disasters like

droughts and rising sea levels. As well as enhancing migration pathways like temporary work permits, humanitarian visas, and temporary protection for people that are forced to leave their homes due to extreme environmental degradation or disasters.

Possible Solutions

1. Strengthening Climate Adaptation and Disaster Preparedness

Vulnerable states should invest in flood-resistant infrastructure, improved drainage, coastal protection, drought-resistant agriculture and effective early-warning systems. These measures can reduce disaster-related displacement and help communities remain safely in their homes.

2. Expanding International Climate Finance

Developed countries and international financial institutions should strengthen financial and technical assistance for vulnerable states. Funding should support resilient infrastructure, emergency preparedness, livelihood restoration and planned relocation, with particular attention to countries that lack sufficient domestic resources.

3. Establishing Protection Frameworks for Climate-Displaced Populations

States should strengthen national legislation and regional cooperation to address protection gaps affecting people displaced by climate-related disasters. Appropriate measures could include temporary protection arrangements, humanitarian admission pathways and cooperation on safe, orderly migration, while respecting existing international legal obligations.

4. Implementing Safe and Sustainable Planned Relocation

When communities can no longer safely remain in their homes, governments should develop relocation programmes in consultation with affected populations. These programmes should provide adequate housing, employment opportunities, healthcare, education and essential services while protecting cultural identity, land rights and community participation.

5. Restoring Ecosystems and Protecting Livelihoods

Governments should restore mangroves, wetlands, forests and degraded agricultural land to reduce coastal erosion, flooding and land degradation. Supporting sustainable agriculture, fisheries and alternative livelihood opportunities can also help vulnerable communities withstand environmental changes without being forced to relocate.

6. Supporting Host Communities and Strengthening International Cooperation

Governments and international organisations should improve access to water, sanitation, healthcare, housing and education in areas receiving displaced populations. Greater cooperation in displacement monitoring, disaster-risk reduction and humanitarian assistance can help prevent environmental pressure from worsening existing poverty and inequality.

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