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Regional Dialogue on the Climate Change and Migration Nexus in the Arab Region

24-25 October 2022

Concept Note

I- Background

A. Climate Change and Migration in the Arab Region

The Arab region witnesses complex patterns and trends of migration, including international migration, forced displacement, internal displacement, and rural to urban mobility. These patterns and trends affect the lives of millions of people in the region. In 2020, Arab countries hosted almost 15 per cent of migrants and refugees worldwide, with 12 of the 22 Arab countries hosting 14 per cent of migrant workers globally. Moreover, nearly 9.3 million refugees have sought protection in the region. In terms of outward migration, 32.8 million people migrated or were forcibly displaced from Arab countries, 44 per cent of whom remained within the region. In the same year, there were around 2 million newly internally displaced persons due to natural disasters, and around 17 million internally displaced persons due to conflict.¹

As early as 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) noted that the greatest single impact of climate change might be on human migration. Climate change is an increasingly potent driver of migration. The 2021 Groundswell Part II report, which builds on the 2018 Groundswell report, presents new regional analyses that reaffirm how climate-driven internal migration could escalate in the next three decades. Looking at slow-onset climate change impacts on water availability and crop productivity, plus sea-level rise, it highlights the urgency for action as the resources necessary for sustaining livelihoods and human well-being are placed under increasing strain. The report highlights that people in the Arab region will also be affected by climate-driven migration.²

Climate change exacerbates environmental pressure and puts a strain on resources, diminishing agricultural production and threatening livelihoods in the process. Environmental pressure

¹ Situation Report on International Migration 2021. Building Forward Better for Migrants in the Arab Region. <https://publications.unescwa.org/2022/srim-2021/index.html>

² Rigaud KK, De Sherbinin A, Jones B, Bergmann J, Clement V, Ober K et al (2018) "Groundswell: Preparing for internal climate migration," The World Bank, Washington, D.C., (<https://doi.org/10.7916/D8Z33FNS>).

aggravated by the effects of climate events, such as drought, sea level rise, flash floods and desertification, often acts as a threat multiplier exacerbating other drivers of migration. It can also protract displacement, given that people who bear the burden of displacement rarely have the resources to cope with the results of environmental pressures and climate change. Urban expansion, land degradation and competition over increasingly scarce resources may also exacerbate conflicts and tensions leading, in turn, to more displacement and forced migration. In this context, it is crucial to recognize that migration can be an effective adaptation strategy to climate change when it takes place in a safe and orderly manner and the need to support just transitions. Just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all is key to support people affected by the impact of climate change – both those who decide to stay in their place of origin and those who decide to move.³ Given climate change’s potential to amplify preexisting drivers of forced migration and displacement, it can be difficult to isolate the impacts of climate change from other factors contributing to human mobility. However, the complex and multi-causal nature of climate-driven mobility emphasizes the need to devote more resources to the study of this relationship through the development of sensitive methodologies and increased data collection and publications on this topic.

Although countries each have unique experiences and challenges, climate change threatens every country in the region. Among the natural hazards triggering displacement in the region, flooding contributed to 58 per cent of the total share of persons displaced by disasters between 2010 and 2019.⁴ While floods form a part of the climatic variability observed in the region, warming temperatures triggered by climate change contribute to heavier rainfall, increasing the potential for and severity of flooding in the region.⁵ Additionally, climate change has the potential to exacerbate the frequency and intensity of storms, such as cyclones and snowstorms, which have resulted in displacement in some countries in the region such as Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.⁶ Drought is another extreme event which widely affects the countries in the region⁷. With respect to slow-onset hazards aggravated by climate change, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries face challenges with respect to freshwater resources. Meanwhile, in Iraq, average temperatures are soaring at a rate that is considerably faster than the global average. Finally, countries across the Mashreq subregion have overstretched food and water production systems.

³ The ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all provide useful guidance in this regard; see https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/publications/WCMS_432859/lang--en/index.htm

⁴ Anzellini, V., Benet, J., Hajžmanová, I. and Leduc, C. (2020). *A decade of displacement in the Middle East and North Africa*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva. https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC_MenaReport_final.pdf

⁵ Action Aid (2022). “Climate change and flooding.” *Action Aid*, Johannesburg, <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/emergencies-disasters-humanitarian-response/climate-change-and-flooding>

⁶ Anzellini, V., Benet, J., Hajžmanová, I. and Leduc, C. (2020). *A decade of displacement in the Middle East and North Africa*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva. https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC_MenaReport_final.pdf

⁷ *ibid.*

B. Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) 27 and 28

The dialogue is timely, as it raises awareness of the climate change and migration nexus, ahead of the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP 27) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will be held in the region in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt from 7-18 November 2022, and COP 28, to be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 6-17 November 2023.

COP 27 will focus on implementation of Member State pledges. Her Excellency Rania Al Mashat, Egypt's Minister for International Cooperation, said: "For us, what we want this COP[27] to be about is moving from pledges to implementation. And we want to highlight what are the practical policies and practices, the processes that can push the pledges [into action], to bridge that gap."⁸

At COP 28, the Global Stock Take (GST) will take place, providing the basis for the next round of Parties' emissions reduction targets for 2035 and 2040, as well as new efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to raise financial and technical resources to support developing countries.⁹

II- The Regional Dialogue on the Climate Change and Migration Nexus in the Arab Region

A. Objectives

The Issue Based Coalition on Migration in the Arab region (IBC/M), co-convened by ESCWA, IOM, League of Arab States (LAS) and ILO, together with IBC/M members¹⁰ and with support from the Regional United Nations Network on Migration in the Arab region are organizing a Regional Dialogue on the Climate Change and Migration Nexus in the Arab Region.

The dialogue aims to:

- 1) Discuss the impact of climate change on migration patterns and trends to and from the Arab region.
- 2) Explore the implications of climate change for different migrant groups, including asylum seekers and refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrant workers, with a special attention to specific vulnerabilities of women migrants and children on the move.
- 3) Highlight promising practices across the region in governance of climate-induced migration and displacement.
- 4) Foster cross-regional collaboration on climate-induced migration and displacement.

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/25/egypt-climate-finance-top-of-agenda-cop27-talks>

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/news-your-voice/news/paving-way-cop-27-bonn-climate-change-conference-2022-06-17_en

¹⁰ IBC Members: FAO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN WOMEN, WFP and WHO.

B. Participants

The dialogue will bring together Member States' representatives (both from the entities in charge of migration and climate change), the League of Arab States (LAS), UN agencies, experts, academia, and other stakeholders.

C. Date and Venue

The Dialogue will be held virtually on the Zoom platform over two days on Monday, 24 and Tuesday, 25 October 2022. Log in information will be sent to the confirmed participants shortly before the meeting.

D. Language

There will be simultaneous interpretation to and from Arabic, English, and French.

E. Outcome

The outcome of the dialogue will include key messages that will inform Member States' representatives in preparation for the COP process and discussions.

F. Programme of Work

<i>Day 1: Monday, 24 October 2022 - Beirut Time</i>	
11:00 - 11:20	Opening session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Mehrinaz El Awady, Director, Cluster Leader Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development, ESCWA• Ms. Kristina Mejo, Deputy Regional Director, IOM Regional Office for MENA Region• Minister plenipotentiary Enas El Fergany, Director of Refugees, Expatriates, and Migration Affairs Department, League of Arab States (LAS)• Dr. Ruba Jaradat, ILO Regional Director for Arab States
11:20- 11:40	Scene setting: Migration and climate trends in the Arab region; interactive Q&A Description: The Arab region witnesses complex patterns and trends of migration, while climate change is increasingly threatening the region. To set the scene for the rest of the dialogue, this session offers an overview into migration and climate trends across the Arab region and reflects on the nexus between the two. Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Sara Salman, Senior Population Affairs Officer, ESCWA• Dr. Carole Chouchani Cherfane, Director, Cluster Leader, Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability, ESCWA
11:40 – 13:00	Session 1: Climate-induced migration and displacement dynamics and trends at the global, regional and country levels; interactive Q&A

	<p>Description: This session aims to highlight the impact of climate change on migration patterns and trends on the global, regional and national levels. Recognizing that the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) offers an opportunity to anchor the environmental and climatic dimensions in the international migration governance agenda, speakers will explore the implications of climate change on different migrant groups. Furthermore, the session will highlight the urgency of policy coherence stipulated in the GCM text and which rests on a number of global instruments related to climate change, disaster and environmental governance. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Climate Agreement, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction recognize that climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in countries of origin need to be prioritized to minimize drivers of migration. The session will also explore perspectives from the Arab Region presented by IFRC as well as national efforts to accelerate action against Climate Change.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E Ambassador Neveen Elhousseiny, Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Refugees, Migration and Combatting Human Trafficking, Egypt • Ms. Rania Ahmed, IFRC Deputy Regional Director, IFRC MENA RO • Dr. Emad Adly, RAED Network • Dr. Ayman Zohri, Expert on Population and Migration Studies <p>Moderated by: Ms. Elizabeth Collet, Special Advisor to IOM Director General, IOM</p>
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<i>Day 2: Tuesday 25 October 2022</i>	
11:00 – 11:45	<p>Session 2: Migration and labour mobility as an adaptation strategy to climate change and the importance of just transitions; interactive Q&A</p> <p>Description: This session will bring together ILO’s tripartite constituents (government, employer and worker representatives), who will explore the numerous linkages between climate change, migration and the labour market. On the one hand, climate change clearly impacts working conditions and policies have been adopted to better protect workers, including migrant workers, in this context. On the other hand, adaptation strategies to climate change need to consider displacement and pay particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population, including migrant</p>

	<p>workers, who are more likely to be deprived of decent work. As such, inclusive skills development strategies to support access to green jobs can be key to move to environmentally friendly and climate resilient economies.</p> <p><u>Speakers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Fahad Dafer Al Doseri, Head of Labour Inspection, Ministry of Labour, Qatar • Ms. Sarah Zaarour, Consultant to the Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC) on Climate Change and Just Transition • Mr. Ali Serhani, Member, Social Commission, General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM) and Focal Point on Migration in Morocco, International Organisation of Employers (IOE) <p><u>Moderated by:</u> Ms. Isabelle Kronisch, Labour Migration and Mobility Specialist, ILO Algiers</p>
11:45 – 12:30	<p>Session 3: The effect of climate-induced migration and displacement on women and children; interactive Q&A</p> <p>Description: This session aims to demonstrate the links between climate change and migration/displacement from an intersectional gender equality and women’s rights lens focusing on the most vulnerable women and girls. It also aims to showcase workable good policy and programmatic practice on these linkages on the ground.</p> <p><u>Speakers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Ruby Assad, Regional Consultant and Trainer - Gender and Community Engagement in Water, Environment, and Energy Sectors • Dr. Abeer Al-Banawah, Expert Researcher, Projects Director & Consultant for the Director General for Environment and Water Issues, National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), Jordan • Dr. Jasmin Lilian Diab, Director of the Institute for Migration Studies, and an Assistant Professor of Migration Studies, Lebanese American University (LAU) <p><u>Moderated by:</u> Menatallah Salama, Programme Assistant for Empowering Women Migrant Workers in the Informal Sector, UN Women, Regional Office of Arab States (ROAS)</p>
12:30 – 13:15	<p>Session 4: Food insecurity and water scarcity as a driver and outcome of climate-induced migration; interactive Q & A</p> <p>Description: This session aims to provide an overview on the complex interactions and links between climate change, food insecurity and human mobility across the Arab region. This will be done by highlighting how climate</p>

	<p>change-related impacts on ecosystems and livelihoods, combined with poverty, significantly contribute to both food insecurity and distressed movements as well as how climate-related food insecurity often acts as a threat multiplier exacerbating other drivers of migration, protracts displacement and increases pressure on limited resources and services. This session also aims at providing an overview on existing good practices in terms of scarce natural resources management and climate-adaptive interventions aimed at strengthening resilience of particularly vulnerable communities and food systems.</p> <p><u>Speakers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Reem Nejdawi, Chief of the Food and Environment Policy Section, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA • Dr. Amel Azab, Water Resources & Capacity Development Expert and SDG Climate Facility Project Coordinator, Arab Water Council (AWC) • Mr. Oscar Ekdahl, Head of Livelihoods and Resilience, WFP Regional Bureau Cairo <p><u>Moderated by:</u> Andrea Castorina, Regional Head of Protection, Gender and AAP, WFP Regional Bureau Cairo</p>
13:15 – 13:30	Closing: Key messages and the way forward