

Forum:	Human Rights Council
Issue:	Addressing the humanitarian impact of climate change focusing on displacement and climate refugees
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Description of the issue:

Climate change is most certainly one of the biggest challenges humanity has to face in the present and will have to face in the future. The Australian bush fires in 2019 alone killed an estimated 1.25 billion animals, with as yet unknown consequences on biodiversity. Apart from the devastating environmental impact global warming can have, climate change also creates humanitarian problems.

First, natural hazards are becoming more and more frequent. The world is stuck in a cycle of disaster-respond-repair-repeat and the costs this pattern requires are rising, as well as the number of people affected by it.

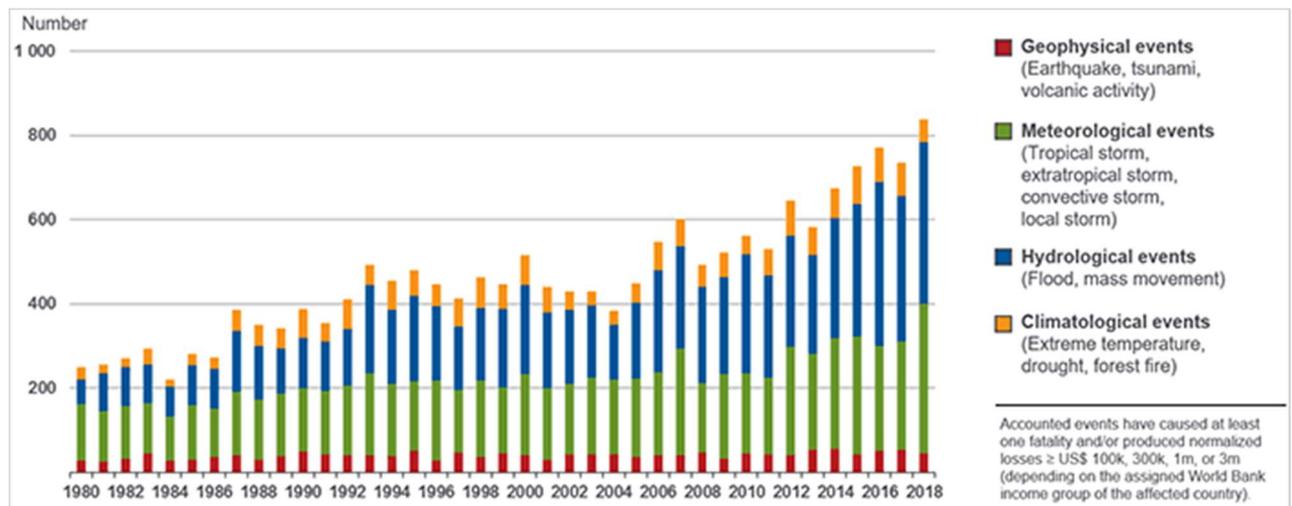
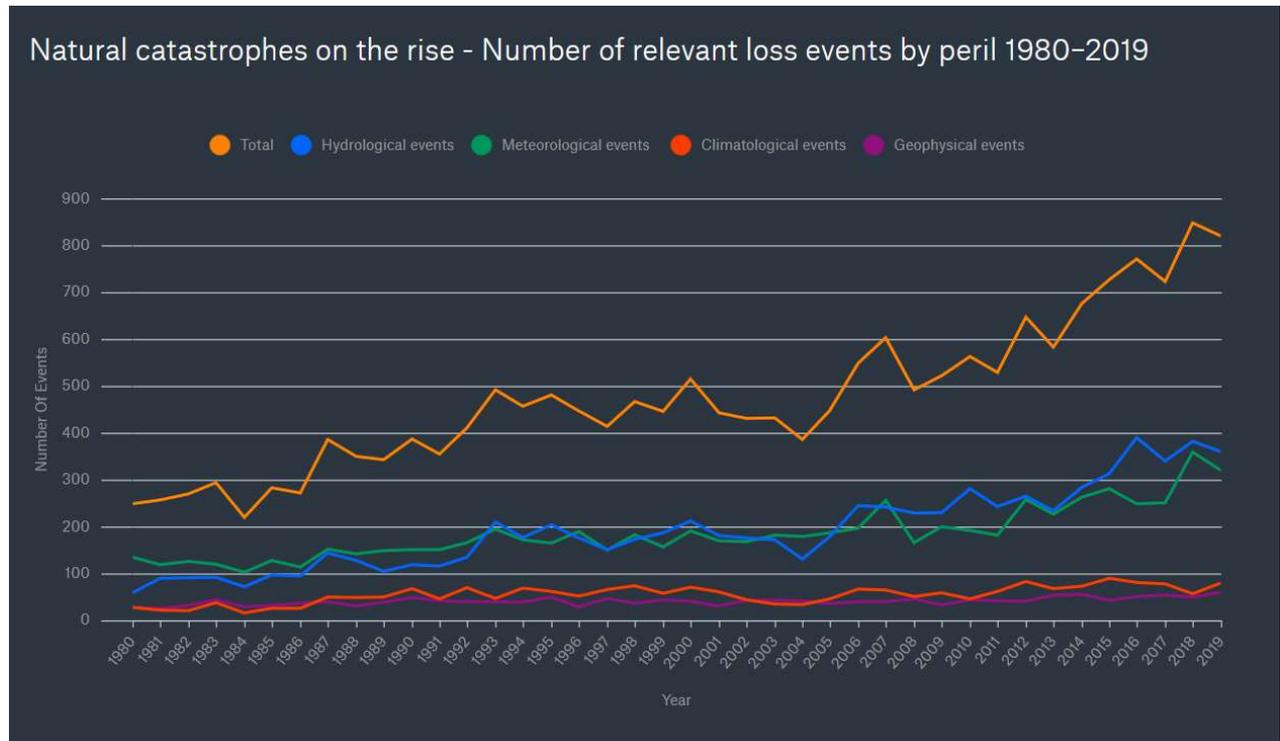
These devastating natural hazards, paired with rapid urbanization and global population growth, lead to more and more people, losing their home and living conditions to consequences of the climate change.

Moreover, limited natural resources, such as drinking water, are likely to become even scarcer in many parts of the world. Crops and livestock struggle to survive in areas affected the most by climate change, where conditions become too hot and dry, or too cold and wet, threatening livelihoods and intensifying food insecurity.

Therefore, many poor people, trying to adapt to the changing environment, are being forcibly displaced from their homes by the effects of climate change. This displacement and the increasing scarcity of natural resources can lead to conflicts between communities. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is providing legal advice and guidance, protection and assistance, research and field-based activities for persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change and governments struggling with those displacements, in order to minimize conflicts and facilitate a life of climate refugees. However, the UNHCR recognizes that those are only short-term solutions, and the long-term solution remains to follow the Paris agreement to reduce and end climate change as a whole.

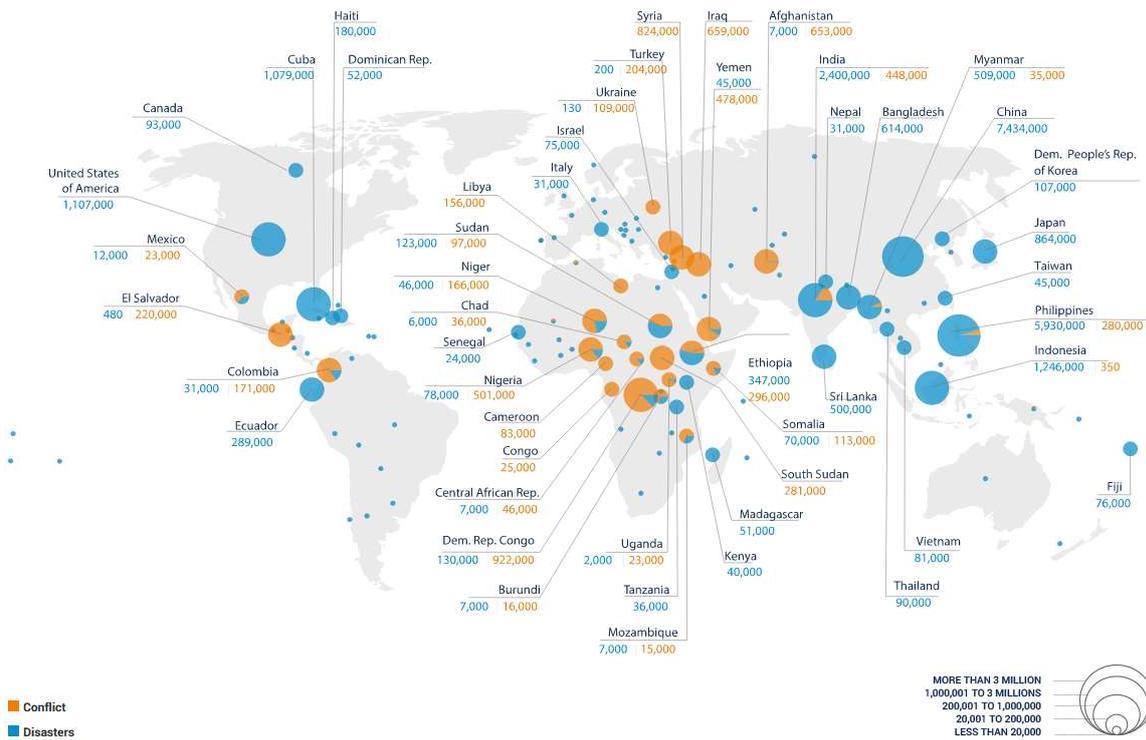
Background information:

Disastrous storms, floods, heatwaves and droughts have, according to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), increased more than threefold in the course of the past 40 years. In 2019, over 200 million people suffered from natural hazards and caused \$232 billion in damages.



World Weather-Related Natural Catastrophes, 1980-2018

In the two graphics above, the increase in the number of natural catastrophes, detected by the ISDR and caused by climate change, can be seen. Especially meteorological events, such as storms, and hydrological events, such as floods, have increased more or less steadily for the past 40 years.



Displacements by conflict and disasters in 2016 by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)

In this graphic the amount of displacements caused by conflicts and disasters in 2016 are shown by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), with the orange dots representing displacements caused by conflicts and the blue dots representing displacements caused by disasters. As can be seen, especially Eastern Asia as well as Central and Northern America are suffering heavily from climate change caused disasters, leading to displacements and climate refugees. But also, Eastern Africa and Europe are affected majorly by the issue.

In 2019, over 50 million people were displaced by events of extreme weather, and researchers suggested that the figure might be as high as 250 million by 2050. Most of the displaced people in the last decades were able to return to their homes when conditions improved, but an undetermined number became migrants, usually within their own country, but also across international borders. Often, especially after big natural catastrophes, the neighbouring countries of the affected country are suffering significantly by the rising numbers of refugees, as to be seen in Ethiopia, where a lot of Somalian citizens flew to, after massive droughts and heat waves in Somalia. These conflicts and instabilities within the affected countries, but also in their neighbouring countries, often lead to further aftermaths, even as destructive as war.

Following the recent numbers and predictions by the IDMC and The World Bank, the poorest and most vulnerable communities, which are contributing least to global warming, are affected the most and hit hardest by the crisis. Apart from natural disasters, other threats, economically less countries would have to face, are multiplied by climate change, such as food and water insecurities and competition over resources. Even though we refer to “Climate Refugees”, persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change do not qualify for refugee protection under international law. The 1951 Refugee Convention offers protection to those fleeing war and conflict who face persecution along grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. Persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change do not fulfil those criteria and are, therefore, often not protected or supported in their displacement.

The countries most directly affected by natural disasters are Iran, hit by three major waves of rain and floods in 2019, known as the “2019 Iran floods”, Niger, being extremely vulnerable to floods, droughts and landslides, and Yemen, e.g. the “2008 Yemen cyclone”, all with insufficient economic strength to provide sufficient safety measures or alternatives for displaced citizens. But also, more developed countries, such as China and the United States are majorly affected. 10.000 people have left the Minqin County in the People’s Republic of China, due to major sandstorms and falling levels of ground water. The USA might face more climate related challenges in the future, since its current president is slowly dismantling all environmental protections and is actively denying climate change.

Glossary:

- Climate change: the global phenomenon of climate transformation characterized by the changes in the usual climate of the planet (regarding temperature, precipitation, and wind) that are especially caused by human activities. As a result of unbalancing the weather of the earth, the sustainability of the planet’s ecosystems is under threat, as well as the future of humankind and the stability of the global economy
- Natural hazards: atmospheric, hydrologic, geologic (especially seismic and volcanic), and wildfire phenomena that, because of their location, severity, and frequency, have the potential to affect humans, their structures, or their activities adversely

Urbanization: the process by which more and more people leave the countryside to live in cities

Paris agreement: the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate change agreement, adopted at the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015, including a long-term goal of keeping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, the aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C and the need for global emissions to peak as soon as possible, recognising that this will take longer for developing countries

Meteorological event: natural event that occurs as a result of one or a combination of the water cycle, pressure systems and the Coriolis effect

Hydrological event: natural event caused by the water in the biosphere of the earth, including the water itself, its physical, chemical and biological attributes and its interaction with the environment and living creatures

Climate Refugees: (not existing in international law) people displaced or forced to leave their countries in the context of climate change or natural disaster.

How to prepare as a delegate:

The issue of “addressing the humanitarian impact of climate change focusing on displacement and climate refugees” affects every single country in our committee. However, the economically less developed countries are affected more heavily and face more and more serious problems at the moment, than the economically more developed countries. Please consider these two facts when developing your country's view on the issue. Moreover, the focus is on displacements caused by climate change, which also includes all the effects of climate change, causing those displacements.

You are required to write at least one draft resolution and two position papers, one document for each issue. Please choose the issue of your draft resolution based on your country's involvements in the issue and your strategy for the debate. The deadline for all documents is the 23rd of August 2020. All documents sent in after the deadline will not be corrected by us

as Student Officers. We might implement further restrictions if we feel it is necessary, like expelling unprepared delegates from lobbying.

Have fun writing your documents, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or concerns.

UN resolutions:

The UNFCCC Paris agreement 2016

https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

ESCAP/76/14 Subregional and regional approaches for disaster resilience

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/B20/001/85/pdf/B2000185.pdf?OpenElement>

A/RES/74/219 Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/436/09/pdf/N1943609.pdf?OpenElement>

A/HRC/38/21 Addressing human rights protection gaps in the context of migration and displacement of persons across international borders resulting from the adverse effects of climate change and supporting the adaptation and mitigation plans of developing countries to bridge the protection gaps

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/116/26/pdf/G1811626.pdf?OpenElement>

Useful links:

Article by the former Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and former Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator at the United Nation, Margareta Wahlström “Before The Next Disaster Strikes: The Humanitarian Impact Of Climate Change”:

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/next-disaster-strikes-humanitarian-impact-climate-change>

The website of the United Nations Refugee Agency:

<https://www.unhcr.org/>

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reductions Annual Report 2019:

<https://www.undrr.org/media/47138/download>

The website of the independent project “Climate Refugees”:

<http://www.climate-refugees.org/>

The website of “The Climate and Migration Coalition”:

<http://climatemigration.org.uk/>

A UN News article “Climate change recognized as ‘threat multiplier’, UN Security Council debates its impact on peace”:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031322>

Sources:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/home.aspx>

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/next-disaster-strikes-humanitarian-impact-climate-change>

<https://www.undrr.org/publication/undrr-annual-report-2019>

<https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>

<http://www.climate-refugees.org/why>

<https://youmatter.world/en/definition/climate-change-meaning-definition-causes-and-consequences/>

<https://www.oas.org/dsd/publications/unit/oea54e/ch05.htm>

<https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/climate-change-in-the-security-council/>

<https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf>