



**STATEMENT DELIVERD
BY MD SHAHIDUL HAQUE
DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS DEPARTMENT
TO THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SEMINAR TO "ADDRESS THE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE
CHANGE ON THE FULL ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS"**

I am honoured to take the floor and I will build on their statements and primarily focus on the migration and human mobility dimension of climate change and environmental degradation.

My intervention will focus on the following 4 points:

- **First, a quick review of migration and human mobility in the context of climate change and environmental degradation;**
- **Second, a glance on how environmental migration features today on the international policy agenda;**
- **Third, a closer examination of some of the protection related issues in the context of human mobility and climate change impacts.**
- **Fourth, sharing IOM's approach and experience**

First, a quick review on migration in the context of climate change and environmental degradation.

Environment has always been a driver for human mobility, based on both sudden and slow onset environmental phenomena. We have increasing evidence of the growing and palpable *impact* of environmental factors on human mobility. If any question about the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on humanity --- in 2010 alone, 350 natural disasters affected more than 300 million people -- the vast majority in poor, vulnerable communities – around the globe. We are also witnessing the consequences of the **gradual deterioration of the environment**, such as coastal erosion, salt water intrusion and desertification. While they do not tend to make the headlines, these “slow” environmental crises have a more profound impact on the movement of people in the long run. All natural, sudden, slow onset and human-induced humanitarian disasters seem likely to continue with a disproportionate impact on **vulnerable populations**.

As you know, environmental migration is **a complex multi-causal phenomenon**. It is driven by a variety of factors including social, economic, demographic and political factors. Climate change may trigger **forced migration** and we witness that much of the environmental migration is internal, with a smaller proportion taking place between neighbouring countries and smaller numbers migrating long distances. Displacement is one form of forced migration. In this context, migration is often viewed as a survival strategy.

However, migration can be an adaptation strategy and can also take **a voluntary form**. It helps people to cope with changes in their environment that are having an impact on their ways of life and livelihood. In fact, migration has always been an integral part of the

interaction of humans with their environment and therefore recognized as one possible and legitimate adaptation strategy.

Second, let's have a quick look on how environmental migration features today on the international policy dialogue:

We witnessed a slow but **growing policy awareness** of climate change and other environmental changes and their impacts on migration. In 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) had remarked for the first time that “the gravest effects of climate change may be those on human migration”. However, it is only in 2010 that migration was for the first time included in the climate change negotiations text in **Cancun** (Paragraph 14F) referring to human mobility in the forms of “migration, displacement and planned relocation”. The last COP, in **Durban** 2011 has made further advances in building the architecture for climate change adaptation in most vulnerable countries. Again in 2011, the **Climate Vulnerable Forum** (currently chaired by Bangladesh) held in Dhaka adopted a Ministerial declaration that includes human mobility aspects. Also, the **European Union** launched a consultation on migration and climate change. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights mentioned, the Global Migration Group (GMG), a platform of 16 agencies that work in the field of migration have adopted a common Statement on the topic.

So climate change and migration has now **reached the table of multilateral policy debate**. However, much more needs to be done to ensure that it is fully integrated in the sustainable development equation.

Third, I would like to share with you a few thoughts about protection and responsibility issues in the context of human mobility and climate change impacts.

There are indeed a **number of specific human rights concerns that are directly linked to environmental migration** including risks incurred during the phase of mobility, especially when crossing borders in an irregular manner; cities being unprepared for the large influx of internal migrants; displacement onto more marginal lands (i.e., urban slums) which could lead to low access to services and potentially vulnerable conditions; prolonged displacement (including in camps); or the uncertainty of status for persons who cross borders due to environmental factors.

To address these, we consider that shared responsibility and respect for human rights are central to managing migration, thus including migration driven by environmental factors. Fundamental human rights such as the right to life, liberty and security of person are contained in instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ICESCR¹ and ICCPR² are also applicable to environmental migrants.

¹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 3 January 1976

² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 23 March 1976

People displaced by environmental factors including those crossing an international border, remain under the protection of the State of which they are nationals. The responsibility to protect and respect their human rights is however also an obligation of the destination state, who has the duty to extend to environmental migrants the rights enjoyed by non-nationals under international law.

Fourth, let me now say a few words about IOM's involvement in the environmental migration field and related human rights issues.

To start, let me explain IOM's **approach for managing environmental migration**³:

- The first goal is **to minimize forced migration that could result from environmental factors**: This means that migration is taken into account in climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and that we should invest in measures to build resilience and reduce vulnerability especially at the local level.
- The second goal is to **focus on the protection and assistance when forced migration occurs**. This entails preparations for both temporary and permanent movement of people, mobilization of humanitarian responses and emergency preparedness, providing assistance and protecting the rights of those on the move. It also means to mitigate negative impacts of forced or mass migration on environment and communities of transit and destination countries.
- The third goal is **to facilitate the role of migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change** impacts. To assist affected people in effectively using migration as a tool to address environmental impacts as well as to enhance the adaptation potential of migration by supporting the use of remittances' in a more targeted way to address the needs of environmentally vulnerable individuals and communities.
- Mirroring these goals, **IOM's programmatic activities** in this area has steadily increased. In the past 10 years alone, IOM has implemented more than 500 projects in climate change and migration areas. This includes responses to natural disasters, disaster risk reduction activities as well as projects dealing with adaptation (Stabilization of populations or on the contrary facilitation of migration in areas affected by climate change).
- As part of IOM's annual International Dialogue on Migration, the IOM membership selected the topic "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration" as the focus of a workshop in Geneva, Switzerland on 29 and 30 March 2011. (I brought a few copies of the final report to share with you today). Participants acknowledged that in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, migration can be both

³ In 2007, the IOM membership deliberated for the first time migration and the environment at the Council level, concluding on several principles of effective environmental migration management: proactive policy and early action, coherent policies, bilateral, regional and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

considered a challenge and a solution. Where displacement means harm and suffering, measures are needed to stabilize populations as much as possible. However, migration's positive role as a potential adaptation strategy has also been highlighted widely.

- Moreover, in 2011, we worked closely with the Asian Development Bank to enhance research and policy capacities to integrate migration into adaptation strategies at regional level.
- We also focus our efforts and partner with key organizations such as UNISDR, UN-HABITAT and other agencies to ensure that migration is part of the RIO +20 declaration and that we also bring migration into the Post 2015 context. The objective is to include migration concerns in the three sustainable development pillars, the economic, the social and the environmental ones.
- At the end of 2011, the IOM Member States in the 60th Anniversary Council, expressed their interest to further explore the linkages between migration and climate change, calling upon IOM as the leading migration management agency-to support their efforts and progress.

Let me conclude by flagging the following three points:

- **First, climate change induced migration can lead to broader complex, often fluid migration crisis.** It is also argued that complex crises produce varied mobility patterns which are better addressed using both humanitarian and migration management concepts and tools. Currently, in IOM, we are exploring, with our member states, ways to complement humanitarian strategies with migration management approaches in responding to such crises.
- **Second, in order to respond to the many challenges generated by climate change, states and other stakeholders require the capacities to assist and protect their affected populations.** Capacity implies having the right institutional, legal, administrative, financial, research and operational frameworks to manage migration driven by climatic factors. Having sufficient capacity is also crucial in order to raise awareness, inform and involve potentially affected populations.
- **Third, we need to reconsider our understanding and approach in dealing with the migration component of climate change.** Migration if well managed and planned can be part of the solution, part of adaptation strategies and an integral component of sustainable development.

Thank you