



KleMUN
Kleve Model United Nations



UNEP

Study Guide - KleMUN 2014

Study Guide United Nations Environmental Programme

- **Topic A – Coping with Migration caused by new aspects of environmental change**
- **Topic B – Acting on the signal of climate change in the changing frequency of extreme events**

Topic A – Coping with Migration caused by new aspects of environmental change

“The greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration.”

This statement was given by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change already in 1990. However, the international community is only slowly recognizing the wider linkages and implications that a changing climate and environment has on human mobility, still being at the very beginning in tackling the issue of environmentally induced migration. At this stage adequate data is rare and the connected knowledge about the linkages between migration and environment needs enlargement by further assessments. However, it can be said that environmental migration does not result from a single cause, but rather incorporates complex interactions of existing social, demographic and political contexts. In this regard, adaptation strategies play a decisive role. Migration itself can also be considered as an adaptation strategy. Migration can be interpreted as a means of adapting to the socio-economic and political realities under the conditions of a changing environment. Above that, migration does not have to specifically have negative consequences, (e.g. remittance payments). Therefore, when considering migratory movements in association with climatic processes or events, a distinction must be made between climatic and non-climatic migration factors, since migration is not necessarily going to occur for reasons of climatic events alone.

Climate change is expected to trigger growing population movements within and across borders, as a result of such factors as increasing intensity of extreme weather events, rising sea-levels and acceleration of environmental degradation. In addition, climate change will have adverse consequences for livelihoods, public health, food security, and water availability. This in turn, will impact human mobility, likely leading to a substantial rise in the scale of

migration and displacement. With regard to anthropogenic climate change, it has to be mentioned that those countries who are the most effected by it are most likely the ones with the least contribution to it. Simply said, the consequences of climate change are mostly borne by the poorest countries as they have the smallest capabilities for adaption.

The mutual influence and overlapping of environmental factors with political, social and cultural aspects of migration means that it is not possible to differentiate clearly between voluntary and forced migration which in turn has an effect on the definition and treatment of people affected by environmental migration.

The affected people are mostly referred to as *environmental migrants*, but also as *forced climate migrants*, *environmental refugees* or *environmentally displaced persons*. The terms used for affected people is of decisive importance for categorisation as a migrant or refugee and the resulting consequences with regard to the international obligation to protect or provide for such people. In contrast to migrants, refugees are granted rights by the Geneva Convention concerning aid and services of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and may not be deported by receiving states.

With regard to UN agreements it has to be stated, that neither the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, nor its Kyoto Protocol include any provisions concerning specific assistance or protection for those who will be directly affected by the effects of climate change. The United Nation Environment Program (UNEP) formally started working in this field in 2008. UNEP has together with the International Organization for Migration, UN University and the Munich Re Foundation initiated the Climate Change, Migration and Environment Alliance (CCEMA). As the UN's environmental agency, UNEP can not pass binding resolutions, in contrast to, for example the United Nations Security Council. Nevertheless, UNEP is an important part of the United Nations and with its competences can become a leading figure in the UN's work in the field of environmentally induced migration.

Starting points for further research:

UNEP: Climate Change And Environmentally Induced Migration

<http://www.unep.org/conflictsanddisasters/Policy/DisasterRiskReduction/ClimateChangeAndMigration/tabid/282/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

IOM Migration Research Series “Migration and Climate Change”

http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2008/migration_climate.pdf

Forced Migration review “Climate Change And Displacement”

<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR31/FMR31.pdf>

IOM “Migration, Environment and Climate Change”

Topic B – Acting on the signal of climate change in the changing frequency of extreme events

Topic Abstract

The signals of climate change have been undoubtedly more present in the last decades than ever before. It is not only shrinking glaciers or the melting polar ice. The frequency of extreme events, like the “intensification of heavy precipitation events over much of the land area of the Northern Hemisphere”¹, has increased. Therefore, the international community needs to act on this matter. The UNEP has now been asked to work on suggestions to assist the United Nations’ member states to cope with the effects of global warming.

Climate Change is defined as “*a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the*

¹ <http://www.unep.org/pdf/RIO20/UNEP-%20Emerging-Issues.pdf>

increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels."² Dealing with climate change is nowadays one of the most discussed topics in the United Nations System, especially in the UNEP.

The year 2014 might be the warmest year on record. In most parts of the world the average temperature was higher than before. From January to September the combined average temperature – global land and ocean surface – was higher by about 0.72°C than the 20th century average, namely 15.72°C³. Some extreme events have become more frequent due to the increased average temperature. All in all, those extreme weathers are a threat for human health and the world's prosperity.

The crucial points for the UNEP to discuss will be to find suitable and affordable actions on climate change which shall not be reduced but include establishing a mid-term early warning system. It is of utmost importance to manage the risks of the increased number of extreme weather occurrences.

Effects of Climate Change

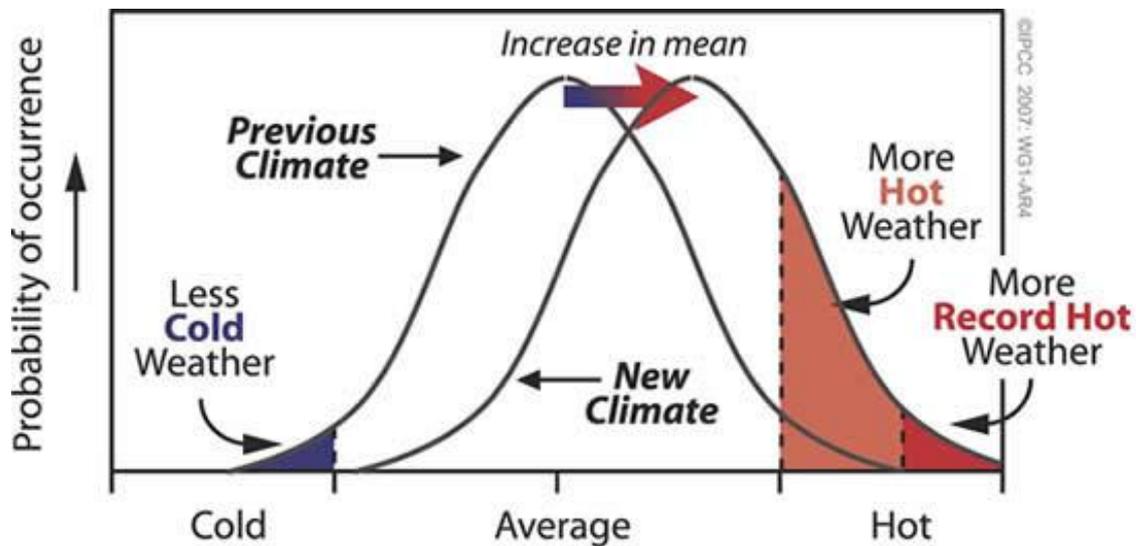
Without doubt the global climate is changing on a large scale. It is already 1°C warmer compared to 1990. Global warming has, therefore, high impacts on nature, people and the economy. Since the process is happening so fast, the impact for many plants and animal species will be massive. If there were to be another warming of 1.5°C to 2.5°C beyond today's levels it would put "as many as 20-30% of plant and animal species at increased risk of extinction"⁴. Especially important are the effects on extreme weathers, since they can be severe threats to sustainable development.

The rise of the global average temperature is the key factor of the increasing frequency of these extreme events. Climate can be described in a curve model, as stated in the graph below. Shifting the climate to the warmer end increases the possibility of hot weathers and possible record highs. This leads to a vicious circle, hence cold weather events become more unlikely and global warming may even accelerate.

² <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/climate-change>

³ <http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/news/Jan-Septtemperaturesbreakrecords.html>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/brief/consequences/index_en.htm



For further explanation, during the 1950s in the United States there had been roughly an equal number of new record high and low temperatures. Today, the number of new record highs is nearly double as the number of record lows. Global warming is not only a United States' issue. 2010, saw 19 new all-time record high temperatures in different countries and not a single all-time low.⁵

Moreover, climate change has a great impact on the world's water supply. In Africa, between 75 and 250 million people are estimated to be living under increased water stress conditions by 2020.⁶ This will also lead to an increasing risk of erosion, desertification and droughts. It will have an impact on the surface and the groundwater recharge rates. However, other parts of the world, mainly in the northern hemisphere, may have to face an increasing number and more intense precipitations. Accordingly to the rise of sea level and precipitations, the risk of flooding – both coastal and inland – rises and threatens water infrastructure.⁷

Consequently, extreme events have a major impact on the global economy. Between 1980 and 2011 flooding in the European Union caused economic losses of more than €90 billion.⁸ Global costs of climate change by 2030, according to the Vulnerability Monitor, are projected around \$700 billion (approx. €550 billion).⁹

⁵ <http://www.climatecommunication.org/new/features/extreme-weather/overview/>

⁶ <http://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>

⁷ <http://www.theclimatechangeclearinghouse.org/CLIMATECHANGEIMPACTS/CHANGESSTORMINTENSITYFREQUENCY/Pages/default.aspx>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/brief/consequences/index_en.htm

⁹ <http://www.businessinsider.com/terrible-effects-of-climate-change-2014-10>

Key Questions

While discussing this issue, you will need to bear in mind two main fields that should show the current problems with the increasing frequency of extreme events due to climate change. The following list is by no means exclusive, but it seeks to clarify key issues of the challenges the UNEP has to deal with.

Managing the Risks of Extreme Events

- How can a mid-term Early Warning System be established?
- Which long-term actions can be taken to lower the risks of extreme events?
- How can a “Disaster Risk Management”¹⁰ be financed?

Conclusion

Acting on the signal of climate change is important for the peoples in the early 21st century. The United Nations Environment Programme needs to find solutions to cope with the increasing number of extreme weather events. It is a fact that the climate is changing. Nowadays the world’s community lacks measures to predict, warn and handle these extreme climate situations. The way, in which the world deals with these events needs to be improved. It is of utmost importance for the creation of a sustainable development that the world’s peoples manage and minimize risks of extreme events, caused by climate change.

Sources

- <http://www.unep.org/pdf/RIO20/UNEP-%20Emerging-Issues.pdf>
- <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/climate-change>
- <http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/news/Jan-Septtemperaturesbreakrecords.html>
- http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/brief/consequences/index_en.htm
- <http://www.climatecommunication.org/new/features/extreme-weather/overview/>
- <http://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>

¹⁰ http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/images/uploads/SREX-SPMbrochure_FINAL.pdf,
pg. 15

- <http://www.theclimatechangeclearinghouse.org/CLIMATECHANGEIMPACTS/CHANGESSTORMINTENSITYFREQUENCY/Pages/default.aspx>
- <http://www.businessinsider.com/terrible-effects-of-climate-change-2014-10>
- http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/images/uploads/SREX-SPMbrochure_FINAL.pdf