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Joint written statement* submitted by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD), Union of Arab Jurists, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, International Educational Development, Inc., World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Climate Change, Conflict, and Refuge in East Africa*

Introduction

Approximately 12 million people in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia have been affected by climate change and the El Niño effect and are now in desperate need of food aid and humanitarian assistance¹. Since 2013 food shortages, particularly amongst pastoralists and nomads, have been the result of poor rains (long and short), unpredictable weather, and increased temperatures that brought about extensive droughts making it near to impossible to have stable and abundant crop production. Not only has this led to extensive hunger but it has led to a number of other predicaments such as mass displacement and in some cases violent conflict. This phenomenon is also due to a combination of indirect factors namely, poverty, poor governance, and conflict (in some areas such as South Sudan).

It is important to keep in mind the above-mentioned factors including governance and politics at all levels that are interrelated with climate change. For instance, South Sudan is in the midst of a brutal civil war that has been on-going since 2013 and the fighting and violence involved burning of farms and fertile land used for crop production. Kenya is lacking the management to properly distribute and provide resources for adequate food security across the country; in this instance, better governance can lead to better distribution of wealth and priorities need to be established with regards to vulnerable people. Somalia on the other hand has been facing serious political instability and has had to deal with violent conflicts thus making the majority of the population vulnerable to any other phenomena. Climate change in these instances may be the direct catalyst of a crisis and/or conflict or it can act as a multiplier/magnifier that exacerbates an already existing one.

The effects of climate change and variability

Climate change and variability, meaning increased weather extremities and unpredictability² can have adverse effects on a number of crises, phenomena, and people's lives. In some cases, it may be the cause and in others it may intensify or worsen the situation but nonetheless it has some a relevant degree of effect. This is currently the case in East Africa, especially in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and to some degree South Sudan. It is most likely due to the political instability of the country as governments have failed to manage disputes and reduce tensions. It could also be the case that they are oblivious or unconcerned about the plight of people living in the rural area. If this is the case then awareness-raising, political will and pressure by the international community and the Human Rights Council should heighten the attention to the human rights concerns.

In these regions, pastoralists, agricultural based livelihoods, and the poor are hit hardest by the adverse impacts of climate change. Aside from direct effects such as longer droughts, climate change can disrupt food stability by upsetting an individual's and the government's food security strategies. This occurs when, for example, there are inconsistencies in food availability, accessibility and utilization. However, the government can prevent such adverse effects by providing humanitarian assistance and developing well-functioning food programs for emergencies with the help of the international community and United Nations (UN) agencies. Also, climate changes and variabilities can increase "diseases and mortality in livestock"³. These can spread to other animals or be passed on to children and young adults. Moreover, this means that poor households would have to re-strategize and re-organize their budget in order to cope with additional hardships and prioritize for their families. Planning for emergencies as well as short-medium term strategies is crucial for households and the government when it comes to climate change and food security.

1 <https://intpolicydigest.org/2017/01/21/fresh-drought-east-africa-heralds-new-wave-refugees/>

2 Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility. Perspectives from refugees from the Horn of Africa. UNU-EHS. No 1. 2012

3 Ibid

Kenya

Conflict in relation to climate change should be of major concern to governments and the international community. Already in parts of Kenya where food and water is scarce due to high temperatures, drought, and lack of food production pastoralists are having to move to already occupied areas that are also in dire situations. For instance, in Northern Kenya in late 2016 several incidents of cattle theft left three dead and one seriously injured⁴. According to the Isiolo Deputy County Commissioner such incidents have been on the rise in terms of spread, frequency, and severity.

In such areas livestock is vital to the livelihood of a community as it is considered as a symbol of wealth and one of the most valuable resources. Normally pastoralists live in communal areas and necessary resources such as water is shared. However, when such resources reach severe scarcity disputes and in some cases violent conflict erupt. In what is now infamously known as the Todonyang massacre in 2011, traders attacked women and children, which was then followed with retaliatory attacks leaving 46 people dead. The attack was again due to “natural resource scarcity” in terms of fish, grazing pastures, and water and the root cause is climate change⁵. In normal temperatures land is fertile for grazing and lakes and rivers do not dry up from high temperatures thus making it sustainable for fish and other animals to live.

Somalia

Somalia is already facing an on-going drought and El Niño amidst political instability and recent conflicts. Somalia typically has two rainy seasons but in 2016 received only 40 percent of the usual rains and in some specific areas only 20 percent⁶. This has greatly affected food security in a negative way for about 40 percent of the population who are in dire need of emergency food assistance according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

In Somalia, the extremist group al-Shabab (who have ties with al-Qaeda) took control over large parts of the country around the mid-2000s. Since, they have organized themselves to instil Sharia Law among the population and launch deadly attacks such as the Westgate Mall Attack⁷. They recruit boys to increase their militant base. The most vulnerable and in need of basic resources are the ones they target. Climate change in Somalia has adversely affected crop production and with little support from the government to provide humanitarian and food aid many are left starving without any food security. Moreover, al-Shabab banned all aid agencies that would have helped people and in-turn they can attract and recruit hungry people as they can manipulate and exploit them with offers of food, money, and security.

The people most affected in Somalia are nomads as their lifestyle consists of constantly moving from place to place. However, as waters sources and pastureland dry up they are forced to move farther and farther away from their usual routes and homelands. Additionally, the droughts are becoming longer and more frequent.

People seeking refuge

The indirect and direct effects of increased extremities climate events, unpredictable weather and droughts has led to a myriad of serious problems for thousands of households in the region of East Africa and the Horn of Africa. The most prevalent is that of food and crop production and the most serious is violent conflict resulting in deteriorating social cohesion. Even though pastoralists and farmers use the strategy of mobility they need assistance in coping with climatic stress.

As a result of severe food shortages, widespread hunger, and encroaching violent disputes and conflicts in the East African region, millions have been displaced and are now searching for refuge in and outside of their respective countries. Internal movement, termed first migration, generally occurs as a direct result of environmental changes and

⁴ <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/ureport/article/2000215071/climate-change-exacerbating-conflicts-in-northern-kenya>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ <https://www.climatecentral.org/analyses/somalia-drought-2016-2017/>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/04/westgate-mall-attacks-kenya>

considerations. These changes are usually a result of climate change that also affects other parts of the ecosystem that in-turn impacts the livelihoods of people. Cross-border movement on the other hand, termed second migration happens when there is drought, violent disputes and conflicts, or both⁸.

Conclusions and recommendations

More research is needed to fully understand the direct connections between climate change, violent conflict, and mass displacement as they are all interlinked. Despite these hardships pastoralists and farmers are using mobility strategies but are nonetheless in need of humanitarian assistance from governments, the international community, and relevant UN bodies.

Pastoralists and farmers have solutions but lack the means to implement these solutions. Furthermore, states should turn to The Paris Agreement as good measures and best practices are encouraged to be shared among all nations⁹.

Regarding immediate and short-term responses, the governments of each country should responsibly allocate food to the most vulnerable and remote communities. Additionally, novel strategies and technologies should be introduced to ensure self-sustainability.

We, therefore recommend the Council to:

- *Pressure* the governments in East Africa to provide and enhance food security for pastoralists and families suffering from extreme food shortages in remote areas,
- *Develop* programs and technologies such as food banks to increase food security in precarious situations,
- *Support and promote* environmental sustainability that includes best practices and solutions in schools and universities.
- *Address* root causes of climate change and involve the affected in dialogues and solutions.

*Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), The Arab Lawyers Association- UK, The Brussels Tribunal, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), The Iraqi Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRD), Alliance to Renew Co-operation among Humankind, General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), Organisation for Justice & Democracy in Iraq (OJDI), The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights, International Anti-Occupation Network (IAON), NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

⁸ Climate change, vulnerability and human mobility. Perspectives from refugees from the Horn of Africa. UNU-EHS. No 1. 2012

⁹ Specifically Article 7.7 and Article 10.1 of the Paris Agreement.