

**Human mobility and the Paris Agreement:
Contribution of climate policy to the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration**

Input to the UN Secretary-General’s report on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, in response to Note Verbale of 21 July 2017, requesting inputs to the Secretary-General’s report on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration

Koko Warner, Manager of the Impacts, Vulnerabilities and Risks subprogramme, UN Climate Secretariat (UNFCCC)

Bonn, 19 September 2017

Contents

1. Introduction: Climate policy aims to safeguard resilience	1
2. Human mobility under the UNFCCC process including the Paris Agreement.....	2
3. Conclusions: Paris Agreement provides scope of climate impacts affecting future human mobility ..	3

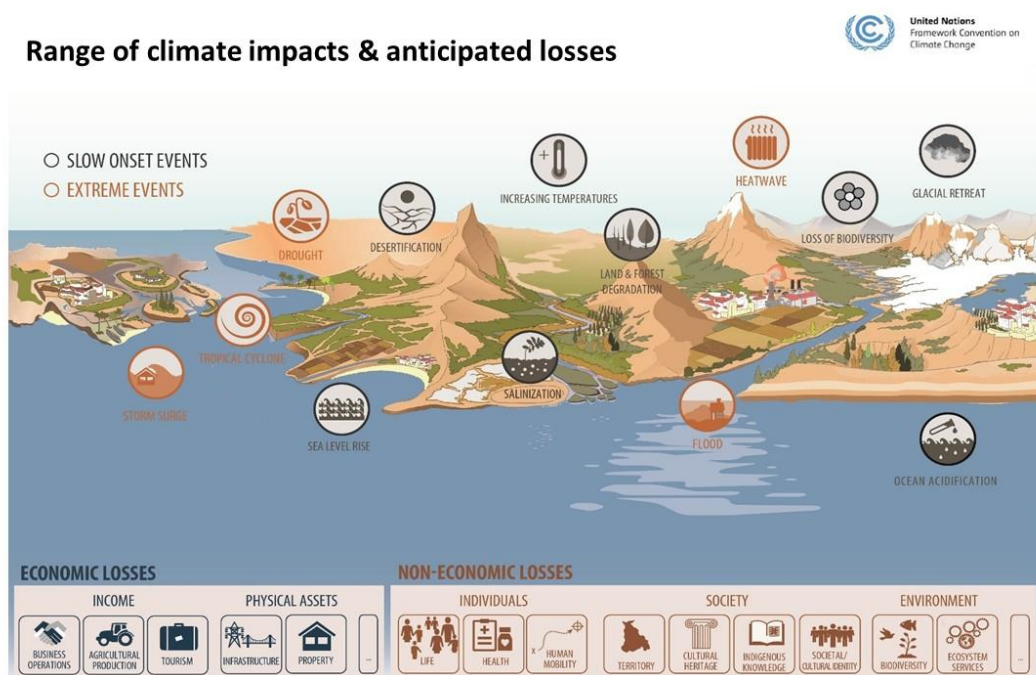
1. Introduction: Climate policy aims to safeguard resilience

Helping countries bolster resilience in the face of climatic risks – the ability to rise again when climatic disruptions pose stumbling blocks to sustainable development and food production – is a foundational part of climate policy. The topic of migration, displacement, and planned relocation, introduced in international climate policy in 2010, is framed as a climate risk management issue in the context of a “resilience continuum”. The work on climate impacts, vulnerabilities, and risks puts human mobility in the context of preempting, planning for, managing and having contingency arrangements to aid society deal with climatic stressors that get in the way of sustainable development.

The purpose of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is to hinder the disruptive potential of anthropogenic climate change across the globe to human welfare. Article 2 of the UNFCCC outlines its ultimate objective as the, *‘stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system... in order to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner’*. In 2015—the same year as the Paris Agreement was adopted—the international community committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and to leave no vulnerable group behind in the quest for improving human welfare worldwide.

Extreme events, changing weather patterns, glacial melt, coastal inundation, desertification – interact with other factors that affect how well and where people can live (Figure 1). These climate stressors interfere with many of the factors that facilitate a safe, dignified, sustainable life in some areas of the world. These stressors contribute to key insecurities in livelihoods, food systems, health, social stability and others that are often considered push factors in migration, displacement, and planned relocation.

Figure 1: Range of climate impacts, anticipated vulnerabilities and risk of losses



Source: UNFCCC loss and damage team

2. Human mobility under the UNFCCC process including the Paris Agreement

The first time that human mobility was recognized in international climate policy was at COP16 (2010), when Parties to the UNFCCC adopted the Cancun Adaptation Framework, including para 14(f) to invite action that addressed the full range of movements people may take when faced with climate risks:

14. Invites all Parties to enhance action on adaptation under the Cancun Adaptation Framework... by undertaking, inter alia, the following: (f) Measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at national, regional and international levels;

This text features a range of measures (research, coordination, cooperation), mobility (displacement, migration, planned relocation), and levels (national, regional, international) of action. Inclusion of a subparagraph on migration and displacement gave options for undertaking activities to address human mobility.

Another significant milestone in international climate policy happened with the 2015 adoption of the Paris Agreement and its accompanying decision, which established a Task Force on Displacement:

49. Also requests the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism to establish, ... a task force to complement, draw upon the work of and involve... existing bodies and expert groups under the Convention including the Adaptation Committee and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, as well as relevant organizations and expert bodies outside the Convention, to develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change:

The Task Force reflects the focus of the work outlined in Article 8 of the Paris Agreement, which targets *“averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events, and the role of sustainable development in reducing the risk of loss and damage”*.

The UNFCCC process actively invites technical and scientific input, and the Paris Agreement has a section devoted to the involvement of non-Party stakeholders. The language reflected in paragraph 49 above illustrates how current climate policy work on human mobility engages relevant experts and communities of practice. This makes a difference because the mainstream perspectives and knowledge about migration and refugees combine with unique perspectives from the climate policy arena. Appointed members of the Task Force on Displacement draw from organizations that are also actively engaged in the discussions on the Global Compacts. The inclusive approach of the Task Force on Displacement promotes a cross fertilization of ideas with the Global Compacts at a decisive time when both processes move into the critical implementation phase.

Figure 2 introduces the institution that houses the Task Force—the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage—and its functions, strategic workstreams, and the technical arms of the Executive Committee including the Task Force on Displacement. Human mobility features both as a theme in the workplan, as well as a technical arm of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism.

Refer to Figure 2: Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage

The milestones and scope of work for the Task Force can be seen in figure 3. The Task Force will develop its recommendations in the course of 2018. The task force’s work spans evidence and experience with human mobility, gathering questions and challenges facing countries and institutions, and considering approaches that avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse effects of climate change.

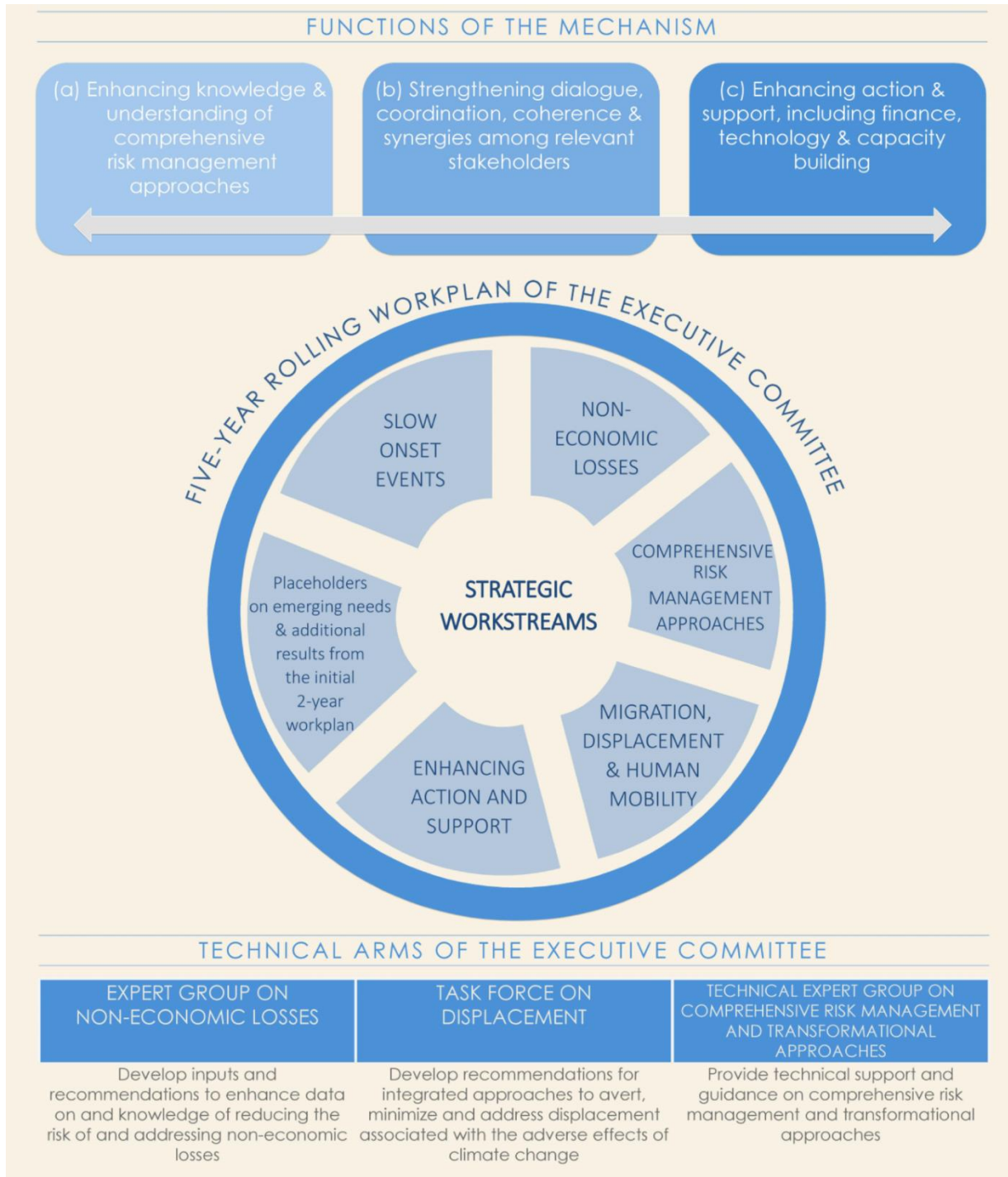
Refer to Figure 3: Timeline and work of the Task Force on Displacement

3. Conclusions: Paris Agreement provides scope of climate impacts affecting future human mobility

Building societal resilience to climate stressors is a central aim of climate policy under the UNFCCC process. The Paris Agreement set the parameters for a climate neutral world by mid-century (e.g. between 1.5 and 2.0 Celsius above pre-industrial averages), which provide the international community the scope of climate impacts that could affect large scale movements of people.

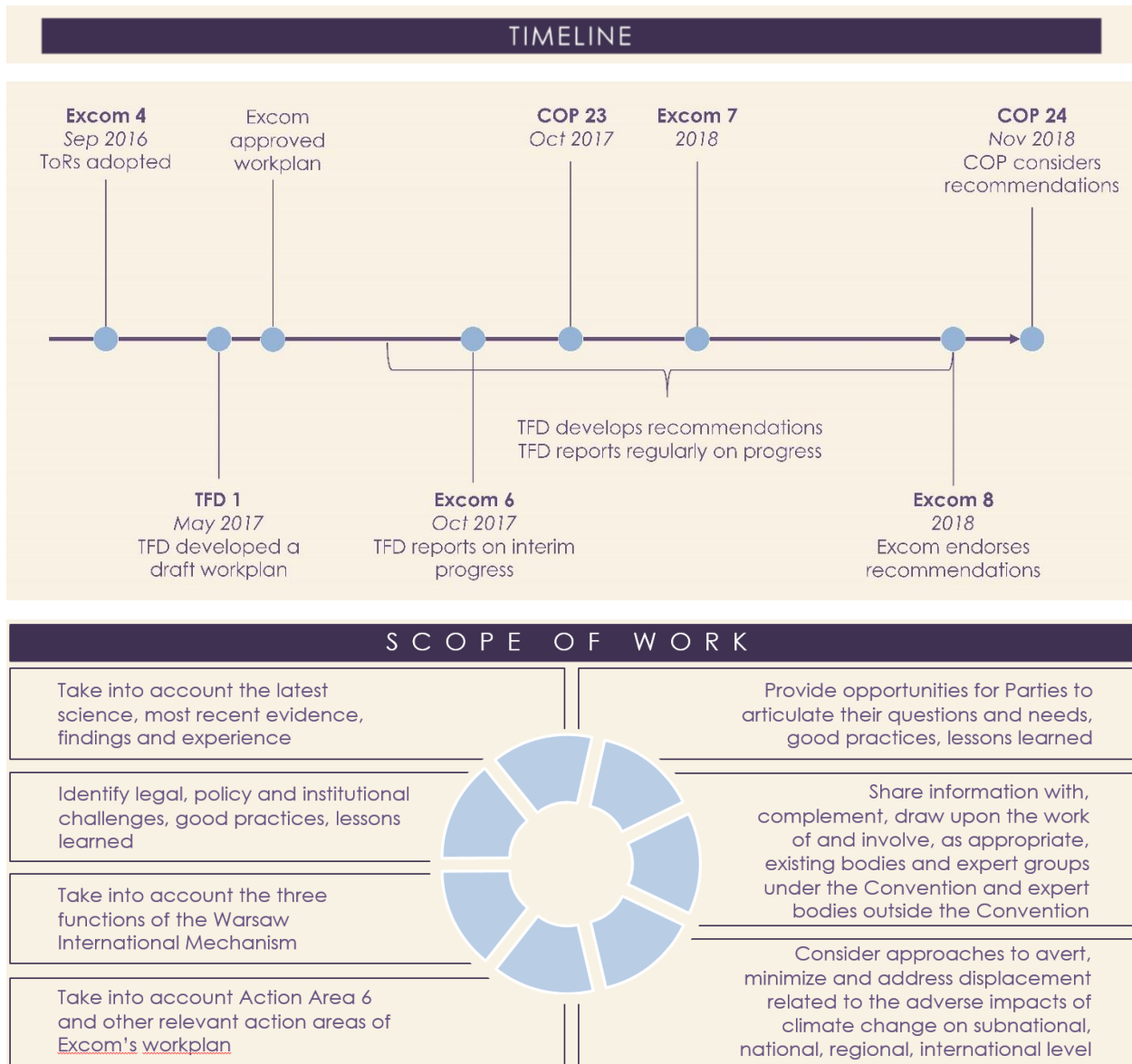
Ongoing work under the UNFCCC process, such as the Warsaw International Mechanism, aims to bolster the capacity of countries to make risk-informed decisions about preemptive activities, planning, and contingency arrangements that affect where and how people live. At present, the Task Force on Displacement is developing recommendations that will be considered at COP24 in Poland at the end of 2018. The next steps include the global community devising ways to take up the recommendations in ways that avert, minimize, plan for, and put contingency arrangements into place for human mobility in a climate-resilient, sustainable future.

Figure 2: Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage



Source: UNFCCC loss and damage team

Figure 3: Timeline and work of the Task Force on Displacement



Source: UNFCCC loss and damage team