

**9th Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-IX):
Towards a just transition that delivers jobs, prosperity and climate resilience in Africa:
leveraging the green and blue economy**

Hilton Hotel, Santa Maria, Sal Island, Cabo Verde

**UNHCR Pre- Event on Climate Change and Displacement
Physical and Virtual Event, 14 September 2021**

Concept Note

**1. Background information on the 9th Conference on climate change
and development in Africa**

UNHCR will host a pre-event on climate change and displacement on the margins of the Climate Change and Development in Africa Conference (CCDA-IX).

The Climate Change and Development in Africa Conference (CCDA) series of conferences are a flagship dialogue space of the ClimDev-Africa initiative, which is composed of a partnership of the Africa Union Commission (AUC), African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA). The Government of Cabo Verde has generously offered to host the event this year.

The overall objectives of the conference are geared towards launching a continent-wide debate on what a just transition for Africa should look like and how the continent can develop appropriate frameworks to prepare for the just transition.

CCDA-IX is expected to bring together a wide range of stakeholders and interested constituencies, including policymakers, technocrats, parliamentarians, the African Group of Negotiators on climate change; researchers, academia, climate think-tanks, civil societies, youth, women groups, and indigenous groups. Other notable stakeholders who will grace the conference include development partners, local government representatives, international organizations, and members of the private sector.

2. Purpose and scope of the event

With increasing global attention on averting, minimising, and addressing the impact of climate change among States in Africa and other regions, in accordance with the UN Secretary General's Six Positive Climate-Positive Actions to Rebuild Economies Better from the COVID-19 Pandemic¹, UNHCR's Strategic Framework for Climate Action² and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), and as preparations for the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) advance, this event takes place at a timely moment. It is also noteworthy, that the GCR which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2018, effectively acknowledges and addresses the reality of increasing displacement in the context of disasters, environmental degradation, and climate change, and provides a basis for measures to tackle the many challenges arising in this area.

¹ [Six Climate-Positive Actions to help rebuild economies from COVID-19 Pandemic | United Nations](#)

² [604a26d84.pdf \(unhcr.org\)](#)

The event intends to take stock of recent key developments in our understanding of how the adverse effects of climate change impact people's lives in Africa and which legal and normative frameworks may be applicable to protect people who are displaced across borders in this context, and to produce key messages on this topic.

This event aims to address the following purposes:

- a. Take stock of climate actions undertaken by African states and civil society actors in the region as they relate to addressing root causes and main challenges,
- b. Identify priorities and opportunities for partnerships and development of synergies on this topic in the region,
- c. How can prevention of root causes and response to conflict induced cyclical displacement in the context of climate change in Africa leveraging: a "*whole of Government and Society approach*" supported by the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECSs) and UN humanitarian and development the private sector be enhanced,
- d. Raise awareness on the relevance of African regional frameworks for the protection of people displaced in the context of climate change and disasters and on advancing the interpretation and application of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), 1969 OAU Convention on Specific Aspect of Refugee Problems in Africa, i.e. how the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters impact public order, and how Africa's human rights framework can be used to protect people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.
- e. Give voice to displaced and host communities affected by the impacts of climate change in Africa

3. Possible guiding questions

The following possible guiding questions are suggested for speakers to address:

- What are the tools and legal and policy frameworks of relevant to protect people on the move in the context of climate change and disasters in Africa? How are these tools being used so far? Where are the gaps or challenges? What could we do to overcome them?
- How to ensure preparedness to address displacement in early warning and early action measures, including emergency evacuation and provisions for ongoing displacement? Experience of member states and other stakeholders in ensuring full and effective participation of affected population in climate related displacement?
- What is the experience among regional organizations including Regional Economic Communities (REC)s in developing policy and normative standards which strengthen resilience in dealing with cross border movement of specific groups such as pastoralist and nomadic communities? Based on the disaster history in the past years in Africa, what can we learn on defining 'events seriously disturbing public order'? How can we use this clause of Article I (2) of the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention to provide refugee protection to individuals in flight from climate change and disaster displacement?
- What measures are in place or being discussed by some States to facilitate the identification of the IDPs due to climate change?

- What is the role of mitigation and adaptation for the protection of people in this context? Which opportunities could we seize for a just climate transition of African countries?
- Stocktaking of implementation and effectiveness of relevant regional and sub-regional policies, platforms, and initiatives: what's been done so far, what works, where should efforts concentrate going forward?

4. Background Information

It is recognized by scientists that climate change is increasing the frequency and scale of disasters which are known to have a multiplier effect on vulnerabilities and increasingly intersect with drivers of refugee movements. Climate induced crises are placing a growing segment of the world's and Africa's population at heightened risk of displacement and migration. It is estimated that by 2050 over 200 million people will be forcibly displaced due to climate change. The IPCC reported in 2018 that Africa will be worse hit by climate change due increase in temperature above the global average within the century. With Africa's population projected to double to 2.5 billion people by 2050, the climate crisis would undermine efforts for peace, prosperity, continental integration and the very way of life in African cities and villages.

Addressing the diversity of climate change-related impacts and their consequences on peoples' lives is a collective responsibility requiring action by different actors, recognizing that mitigation and adaptation measures can play a decisive role in preventing displacement from occurring.

As evidenced by the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Climate Change and Land, multiple adverse impacts are acutely being felt by Africa's peoples who depend on the use of land for agricultural production and pastoral subsistence who are displaced or hosting communities.

"Climate change has already affected food security due to warming, changing precipitation patterns, and greater frequency of some extreme events (high confidence). In many lower-latitude regions, yields of some crops (e.g., maize and wheat) have declined, while in many higher-latitude regions, yields of some crops (e.g., maize, wheat and sugar beets) have increased over recent decades (high confidence). Climate change has resulted in lower animal growth rates and productivity in pastoral systems in Africa (high confidence). There is robust evidence that agricultural pests and diseases have already responded to climate change resulting in both increases and decreases of infestations (high confidence). Based on indigenous and local knowledge, climate change is affecting food security in drylands, particularly those in Africa, and high mountain regions of Asia and South America"³. The report also establishes that food supply is projected to decrease as the magnitude and frequency of extreme weather events disrupt food chains increases.

Recognizing the urgency of the need for climate action, and the displacement and protection needs that climate change and disasters may trigger, UNHCR has developed a comprehensive [Strategic Framework on Climate Action](#). In addition to an operational component on mitigation, resilience and adaptation, this Strategic Framework addresses legal and normative aspects of protection for people when displacement occurs in the context of climate change and disasters. As part of this work, and pursuant to its function of providing guidance on the

³ [4.-SPM Approved Microsite FINAL.pdf \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

interpretation and application of international refugee law instruments, UNHCR in October 2020 released [Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters.](#)

The Legal Considerations highlight that there are circumstances where international refugee and human rights law may be relevant to the determination of international protection needs of people displaced in the context of disaster and the adverse effects of climate change. Based on interpretation of the refugee definition under the 1951 Convention, as well as regional instruments most notably the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, it examines situations where people displaced across borders in the context of climate change or disasters may have a well-founded fear of persecution, including where disaster and climate change interact with conflict or violence; or in situations where persecution or serious human rights violations may occur, where the State is unable or unwilling to provide protection. The Legal Considerations paper also refers to the potential relevance of human rights law and complementary forms of protection, as well as temporary protection mechanisms.

Moreover, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) endorsed by 193 member states of the United Nations General Assembly which aims to strengthen the functioning of the refugee regime, noted that “[w]hile not in themselves causes of refugee movements, climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters increasingly interact with the drivers of refugee movements. Recognizing that “in certain situations, external forced displacement may result from sudden-onset natural disasters and environmental degradation”, within a narrative that appreciated the “composite character” of human movements, the GCR acknowledged the complex challenges for affected States.⁴

UNHCR and African regional institutions have a long-standing partnership on refugee and displacement related matters including in the context of climate change and disasters given the particular relevance of the OAU Convention for the protection of people displaced in the context of climate change and disasters as highlighted in UNHCR’s Legal Considerations.

UNHCR worked closely with the African Union in 2019 in a series of events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1969 OAU Convention, a flagship instrument which has guided the protection of refugees on the continent. In that year, UNHCR and African partners worked together to organise a side event on “*Climate change and disaster displacement in Africa and beyond*” on the margins of UNHCR’s Executive Committee in 2019 with representation from the African Commission on Human & People’s Rights. Discussion focussed on an evolutionary interpretation of the refugee definition criteria of “events seriously disturbing public order” to provide protection for people fleeing in the context of climate change and disasters.

Between April and June 2021, UNHCR co-organised a workshop series on developing a research and policy agenda for addressing displacement and migration in the context of disasters and climate change in Africa together with the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, and University of Nairobi, where more than 170 researchers, policy

⁴ [Microsoft Word - 20191216 Refugee Law in Time of Climate Change Disaster and Conflict - REVISED \(refworld.org\)](#)

experts and practitioners working across Africa and beyond came together to discuss law and policy responses to displacement and migration in the context of disasters and climate change.

The workshop series focused on sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, on the three focal Regional Economic Communities, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Subsequently, a research and policy agenda for Addressing Displacement and Migration in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in Africa is being developed, highlighting existing knowledge gaps to be addressed to maximize the use of African regional normative frameworks and making specific recommendations for future, collaborative research efforts to address these knowledge gaps and support further law and policy development to address displacement and migration in the context of disasters and climate change.

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Registration Link for the pre-event:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJckdOmrqTkuGtRQKlr5Scsky0HeeLig01Z7>

Latest update 31 August 2021