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## Presentation: Environmental Migration

Climate change, along with other environmental problems, represents a serious threat to natural systems and exerts strong pressure on population groups that see their livelihoods and their environment erode. Migratory mobility manifests itself as one of the consequences, direct or indirect, of this environmental degradation. The first assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), published in 1990, recognized population displacement as one of the most serious effects of climate change. Three decades later, the IPCC warns of the widespread impact that the climate crisis is having in all regions of the world and attributes responsibility for the increase in many extreme weather and climate events to the actions of human beings.

Today, the scale of changes in the climate system has taken on unprecedented importance. Consequently, and indisputably, it is observed how climatic and environmental changes cause widespread adverse impacts on natural and human systems, some of the effects being irreversible. However, despite manifesting itself as a global phenomenon, environmental degradation differs substantially between and within regions. Current patterns of unsustainable development disproportionately affect ecosystems and the most vulnerable populations –especially those lo-

cated in the countries of the global South–, with the impact of climate change also multiplying social, economic and environmental problems.

Population displacements are seen in many cases as an adaptive response to climate change and environmental degradation. However, as migratory studies have shown, human mobility processes require analyzes that take into account the interaction of multiple factors –structural, relational, family and personal– that affect mobility dynamics. In this sense, the phenomenon of migrations associated with environmental changes cannot be explained in isolation –as the only triggering factor of mobility–, nor dissociated from the economic and socio-historical contexts of the affected populations. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the intervention capacity of the States of the affected territories in systems and infrastructures to protect the population and prevent displacement. In addition, it must be recognized how the contextual conditions in which people are rooted can place them in different degrees of vulnerability when defining the action, proposing the adjustments within their reach and examining their consequences.

The study of population movements linked to environmental degradation and sudden events caused by climate change demands the recogni-

tion of the different forms that human mobility acquires depending on the direction of the action (from internal displacements to inter and extra-regional mobility) and its temporality (indefinite, seasonal or circular). Regarding the times in which mobility is framed, these will be subject, in part, to the type of environmental impact in the territories and in the ways of life, being imperative to attend to the “massive loss of habitat” that we are witnessing today –in Saskia Sassen’s terms–, where habitable spaces are reduced by the destruction of the territories and, consequently, the options of returning are diluted.

At the same time, we call for a reexamination of the dominant narrative that refers to “mass migration” when it comes to environmental degradation, and that pays little attention to the populations that remain – voluntarily or involuntarily – in the affected territories. To understand migratory mobility motivated by environmental factors in all its complexity, we must recognize its mixed nature and the different degrees of voluntariness that surround the migratory phenomenon. While voluntary immobility can respond to different options to face the risks and to different individual and collective preferences; the material and/or immaterial incapacity of some subjects stops their desire to migrate due to the deterioration of their livelihoods and the space they inhabit. This also leads us to take into consideration the identities and positions that shape migratory mobility processes (such as gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, health status, location or educational level, etc.). among others), not as simple variables to be measured, but as a set of social relations that organize the patterns of migratory (im)mobility. In this way, recognizing the agency and the (im)possibility of migrating that population groups face allows us to visualize the hierarchies and unequal capacities of action of the subjects; as well as demanding local and international policies and plans that take into account the adaptation needs of people who decide to stay in place and those who choose (or are forced to) migrate.

In recent years, a growing number of academics, from different disciplines, are focusing their research on the field of studies of migration

linked to environmental events and, together with some non-governmental organizations and part of civil society, are working for placing the issue on the international agenda. Despite the advances, debates persist regarding the magnitude and scope of the phenomenon, on the correct conceptualization, and on the appropriate protection policies and legal frameworks that address the displacements that take place, directly or indirectly, for environmental reasons. .

With these reflections as a starting point, within the framework of CER-Migracions, with the support of IOM-Spain, we organized the Thematic Week of Environmental Migrations between May 31 and June 4, 2021. The event, of International character and held virtually, has had the participation of academics from different disciplines, as well as professionals from non-governmental organizations and international organizations. These days have had the objective of creating a space for exchange and reflection on the processes of migratory mobility linked, directly or indirectly, with factors of an environmental nature. During the event we set out to answer various questions: What characterizes migration induced by environmental events and how does it differ from other types of human mobility? What are your local, regional and global trends? How is it related to the intersections of inequalities based on the social position of the subjects? What aspects should an effective legal protection aimed at environmental migrants contemplate? How are international organizations addressing the problem and what are their experiences and challenges?

As a result of these conferences, we present this bilingual monograph that collects part of the contributions made by the experts who have participated in the event. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the Thematic Week environmental migrations has been organized in five sessions. The first day has focused on analyzing, in a general way, socio-historical and environmental mechanisms that shape migratory movements in the different continents. Focusing on the existing link between climate change, environmental degradation and internal and international displacement, the presentations have focused on

the different impacts and challenges faced by the different territories and the populations that are affected by common processes. In this regard, the text by Etienne Piguet provides a general description of the link between migratory mobility and events of climate variability and environmental degradation.

Throughout the second session, the interrelation between social inequalities and environmental deterioration seen through the lens of human (im)mobility has been addressed. The communications presented have delved into how environmental degradation and climate change generate or increase inequalities according to certain social categories (gender, age, social class, race/ethnicity, health status, means of subsistence, location). The texts presented by Jesús Gamero, Jesús Castillo and Úrsula Oswald address this issue. The third session featured specialists from the legal and philosophical fields who discussed the way in which environmental migration is treated from different legal systems and what are the necessary political and legal responses to protect environmental migrants. The texts by Beatriz Felipe, Susana Borràs and Raúl Campusano shed light on the subject.

The fourth day has been focused on the exchange of experiences and challenges faced by non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations when addressing the issue of environmental migration. The session was attended by Dina Ionesco, head of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division (MECC) of the United Nations Agency for Migration (IOM); Juan C. Méndez, regional advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD); and Amali Tower, founder and executive director of the organization Climate Refugees. During the fifth and last session of the event, forms of adaptation and social transformation required to be able to adequately respond to the challenges faced by migratory mobility linked to environmental alterations have been proposed, and possible theoretical and methodological frameworks have been discussed that allow understanding and intervene in this multidimensional phenomenon. The texts by Søren Tinning and Miguel Pajares address this issue. With these conferences, summarized in this publication, we hope to be able to contribute to the generation of critical knowledge on the subject.