

## **NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT**

### **Open letter from humanitarian NGOs and associations regarding climate change and humanitarian crises**

Around the world, natural hazard related disasters and man-made disasters are increasing in frequency and impact. We as NGOs or associations, operating in these environments are concerned by the grave threat that climate change and its effects further pose on populations. We call on world leaders not to see the impacts of climate change as exceptional, unpreventable incidents on the way to development, but as a long-term danger to the sustainability of development itself.

Climate change is an aggravating factor of humanitarian crises and represents challenges for governments and non-governmental humanitarian actors alike. Climate change has dramatic and multiple effects which not only impact our ecosystem, but directly or indirectly kill people, impact livelihoods, generate social tensions and cause economic losses.

In 2014, 87%<sup>1</sup> of recorded disasters were related to climate. Climate-related displacement affected about 22.4 million people in 2013 and could potentially impact 250 million<sup>2</sup> people by 2050. Climate change will also worsen health and sanitary conditions, making people more vulnerable to disasters. Warmer climate fosters vector-borne diseases spread like malaria, expected to cause 60 000<sup>3</sup> additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050. Among the affected populations, the most vulnerable groups (women, children, persons with disabilities, elderly and indigenous) have the least capacity to cope with such crises and will be the hardest hit. Indeed, climate change will continue to aggravate chronic crises such as food and water insecurity, placing up to 600 million<sup>4</sup> more people at risk of hunger by 2080, and exposing 40%<sup>5</sup> of the world population to water shortages by 2050.

In fragile states or in countries prone to conflict, climate change hits the poorest hardest and heightens the risks of conflicts. It contributes to social tensions due to mass displacements and fuels conflicts over resources.

What was once a technical concern is now also a political one. As world leaders gather to commit to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to a better humanitarian response at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, we are concerned that sustainable development will be unobtainable unless the impacts of climate change can be reduced. This is why we ask all parties committed to the SDGs to encourage COP 21 negotiators to work towards an ambitious agreement which highlights the link between climate change and humanitarian crises and limit global warming to 1.5°C. Indeed, humanitarian actors, already overstretched by the sheer number of simultaneous and acute crises, will strive to cope with more crises in a world experiencing temperature increases of 1.5°C and will be unable to respond to the cumulative effects of temperature increases of 3°C.

Given this reality, states must seize the opportunity of COP 21 to tackle the simultaneous challenges of climate change, increasing humanitarian crises, and threats to sustainable development, and take ambitious decisions to be included in these agreements.

**An ambitious agreement that would help prevent humanitarian crises and save lives in line with the new SDGs will commit to:**

**I. Prevent humanitarian crises by addressing the causes of climate change**

- Cut down green gas emissions towards the zero-emission target by 2050 to keep global warming below 1.5°C. This should include transferring the money currently spent on fossil fuel subsidies to invest in renewable energies and energy efficiency.
- Define national goals for preserving forests, mangroves and corals, and for developing agroforestry and other agro-ecological practices to stimulate reforestation and better land use.

**II. Reduce the impacts of humanitarian crises by addressing communities' vulnerabilities**

- Ensure that all climate-change actions (mitigation and adaptation) take food and nutrition security implications into consideration, as food crises represent an important part of humanitarian crises and should be considered in all adaptation policies. An agricultural model such as agro-ecology, that apply environmental criteria, including being low carbon, respectful of equity principles, and resilient, should be promoted as the solution to fight both food and nutrition insecurity, and climate change.
- Increase inclusion of water, sanitation and hygiene measures in adaptation plans, crisis responses and emergency funding, as health and access to basic needs are a core issue in climate change's adaptation and resilience strategies.
- UNDP, UNISDR and UNFCCC must work together to establish a joint monitoring framework for measuring progress in achieving the resilience outcomes across all post-2015 frameworks, which should disaggregate data by vulnerable group.
- National governments should create or strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms for DRR and/or Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) in order to improve cross-disciplinary communication and accountability at all levels. They should be tasked with developing ambitious national targets and sub-national indicators that measure resilience across all post-2015 frameworks and be linked with National Adaptation Plans and DRR Plans.

**III. Plan now for the current and future consequences of climate-induced humanitarian crises**

- Include planning for the consequences of climate change, including climate-induced displacement and migrations, in all relevant policy making, at regional and global level, to ensure each affected country share equitably the consequences of populations' displacements. This comprises the inclusion of loss and damages in the agreement in a comprehensive, integrated and coherent manner.

**IV. Commit to the effective and appropriate implementation of all of the above**

- For adaptation strategies to have a comprehensive and durable impact on populations, they need to consider states' fragility and be context sensitive.
- In order to achieve sustainable positive change, climate policy frameworks should incorporate existing human rights norms which uphold human rights for all, including gender equality and equity. Furthermore, policy frameworks should lead to the empowerment of the most vulnerable communities (women, children, elderly, disabled people and indigenous people).
- All necessary steps towards reducing the impact of climate change induced humanitarian crises need to be sufficiently funded. National governments must allocate 5% of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for specific Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities and increase the share of community-led DRR projects, localized strategies and capacity building through an allocated budget of 50% of the whole States' DRR budgets<sup>6</sup>.
- Donors must incorporate long term resilience building as a requirement for providing any ODA through the introduction of resilience markers in funding applications.

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<sup>1</sup> UNISDR, 'The Economic and Human Impact of Disasters in the last 10 years', EM-DAT database 2014, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Munich Re.

This percentage represents a sharp increase from two decades ago when climate-related catastrophes accounted for 75% of disasters.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 [http://www.unisdr.org/files/42862\\_economichumanimpact20052014unisdr.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/files/42862_economichumanimpact20052014unisdr.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> IDMC-NRC, 'At a glance: Global Estimates 2014: people displaced by disasters'.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Media/201409-globalEstimates-2014/At-a-glance-global-estimates-2014-17Sept2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> WHO, 'Climate change and health, Fact sheet N°266', Media Center, Reviewed August 2014.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs266/en/>

<sup>4</sup> UNDP, 'Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a divided world', Human Development Report 2007/2008.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/268/hdr\\_20072008\\_en\\_complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/268/hdr_20072008_en_complete.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> OECD, 'The Consequences of Inaction', Environmental Outlook to 2050, OECD Publishing, 2012.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 <http://www.oecd.org/fr/env/indicateurs-modelisation-perspectives/49848948.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Joint Civil Society Organizations Statement, 'Ensuring Sustainable Development: The need to invest in disaster risk reduction', June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

[https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Joint\\_CS0\\_statement\\_on\\_DRR\\_in\\_FFD\\_FINAL\\_120615.pdf](https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Joint_CS0_statement_on_DRR_in_FFD_FINAL_120615.pdf)

Global Humanitarian Assistance, 'Disaster Risk Reduction - spending where it should count', 2012.

Accessed August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/report/disaster-risk-reduction-spending-where-it-should-count>