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NOTE

From:	Presidency
On:	2 July 2025
To:	Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)
Subject:	Climate related migration and forced displacement on the African continent

Climate change is a cross-cutting issue to be tackled across all four pillars of the EU-AU Joint Vision for 2030 and the importance of migration was reaffirmed at the last ministerial meeting in May 2025¹. In anticipation of the 7th AU-EU summit, expected to take place on 24-25 November 2025 in Luanda, Angola, it is timely to reflect on the theme of climate migration and forced displacement within the African context with a view to deepening and identifying the potential partnership opportunities with affected African states.

In the absence of a legal definition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines climate migration as “*the movement of a person or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an international border*”. Nevertheless, a key point to keep in mind is that various human mobility patterns should be considered in the context of climate change, especially forced displacement, migration, planned relocation and immobility.

¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/q50bjauc/joint-communicupct.C3pct.A9-21052025.pdf>

Over recent years, a growing number of governments, UN agencies, including IOM and UNHCR, multilateral development banks, civil society organisations, think tanks and other actors have grown interested in working on climate mobility. This plurality of actors contributes to address this complex issue through different thematic angles based on their mandate, internal priorities, bureaucratic set-up, available funding, and the political motivations. Climate change is exacerbating disaster impacts, overlapping with conflict impacts, and affecting other drivers of movement. This interaction between climate change and other drivers of migration is leading to different kinds of movement, as well as immobility, depending on context and sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, family status and livelihood². Among those affected by climate-related migration one thus finds e.g. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), labour migrants, asylum seekers, student migrants and victims of trafficking in human beings, making it at times challenging to identify, count and assist the affected populations ³.

Most people impacted by climate change do not move, and some of the most vulnerable groups are indeed ‘trapped’. In 2022, an estimated 110 million people in Africa were directly impacted by weather, climate and water-related hazards⁴. However, only a fraction of them moved. Most do not migrate; either because they lack the resources or they are tied to a location for various reasons, or they do not believe that migrating is a sustainable solution. In the future, as climate change impacts intensify, this phenomenon of involuntary immobility is expected to increase⁵.

² <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/climate-impacts-drivers-migration>

³ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/who-is-a-climate-migrant>

⁴ https://public.wmo.int/news/media-centre/africa-suffers-disproportionately-from-climate-change?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/climate-change-trapped-populations>

The vast majority of people who do move, move within the same country. While it is hard to obtain accurate numbers on voluntary internal migration, the urbanization trend across Africa indicates a high proportion of movement (between 1960 and 2023, the urban population of Sub-Saharan Africa has grown from 15 % to 43 % of the total population)⁶. The role that climate change plays in driving such type of migration is unknown. However, figures are available on internal displacement due to disasters, despite not all disasters being caused by climate change, and not all climate-related internal movement being disaster displacement. According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), in 2024, a record of 7.8 million people were newly internally displaced by disasters in Sub-Saharan Africa, alongside the 5.7 million internally displaced *before* 2024 (58 % of the global number of people already internally displaced). The numbers underline the concern around protracted displacement. By 2050, an estimated 95-113 million people could be on the move across the African continent due to climate change, most often moving towards urban areas⁷.

It is important to recall that whilst data exist on regular migration to the EU as well as data on irregular border crossings into the EU collected by Frontex, it is not known how many people move to the EU, regularly or irregularly, due to climate change. Climate change is indicated as an underlying reason for migrating in the Mixed Migration Centre's "4Mi"⁸ interviews with Africans on mixed migration routes, where around 7 % indicate that they move for climate-related reasons (alongside other reasons)⁹.

⁶ World Bank Databank.

⁷ <https://africa.climate-mobility.org/>; see also <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/09/13/climate-change-could-force-216-million-people-to-migrate-within-their-own-countries-by-2050>. The earlier Groundswell report estimates 85.7 million people moving internally in Sub-Saharan Africa and 19.3 million in North Africa, reaching a total of 105 million. The forecasts for the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative use slightly different models but have similar results, ranging between 95 and 113 million across the whole continent.

⁸ 4Mi is the Mixed Migration Centre's primary data collection system.

⁹ <https://mixedmigration.org/4mi/4mi-interactive/data-on-mixed-migration>. 4Mi results are indicative: the sampling approach means that they cannot be used to estimate volumes, and further research would be needed to estimate the number of people migrating for climate-related reasons. To generate these figures, data from the MMC 4Mi interactive dashboard was used. Respondents were filtered by region of origin - specifically East, North, Southern, West, and Central Africa—and the analysis focused on responses to the question "Why did you leave?".

However, in a study by MMC from 2022, when asked specifically whether environmental or climate-related factors affected their decision to migrate, a larger proportion of respondents said yes (41 % of West Africans and 50 % of Central Africans), indicating that these are secondary or underlying factors¹⁰.

It is also notable that there is an increasing overlap between climate and conflict impacts. In contexts affected by conflict, climate change acts as a threat multiplier by compounding existing insecurities, degrading coping capacities, and amplifying the risks faced by already vulnerable populations. In some cases, this can lead to increased displacement, including across borders; in others, it may result in people becoming trapped, leading to reduced mobility. Many populations in conflict zones are also experiencing adverse environmental impacts and climate change effects (like, for example, flooding in eastern DRC, droughts in the Sahel, and the impacts of erratic rainfall on the Lake Chad Basin). Over 90 % people fleeing conflict and persecution in Africa come from countries that score less than 40 on the ND-GAIN Index of climate vulnerability, primarily because so many African countries are highly climate-vulnerable¹¹. In the EU, 58.6 % of new asylum applications among Africans in 2024 were from people coming from these climate-vulnerable countries. The largest groups were Guineans, Somalians, Malians, Nigerians and Eritreans¹². In 2050, it is estimated that between 400,000 and 1.2 million people will migrate across borders for climate reasons, between 4 % and 10 % of total cross-border migration¹³. Similar to existing migration patterns, most people are expected to move to neighbouring countries; a very small proportion is expected to try to reach Europe¹⁴.

¹⁰ See for example <https://mixedmigration.org/resource/climate-related-events-and-environmental-stressors-roles-in-driving-migration-in-west-and-north-africa>

¹¹ A total of 37 countries score less than 40 on the ND-GAIN index, 29 of which are in Africa. South Sudan is omitted from these calculations, because it is not included in ND-GAIN. <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings>

¹² Calculations based on data from the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download>

¹³ <https://africa.climate-mobility.org>.

¹⁴ Studies among migrants leaving disaster-stricken areas find that the majority had left family members in climate-affected areas, or that family had migrated internally, and cross-border migration was local. See Mixed Migration Centre (2023) The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Somalia; Mixed Migration Centre (2023) The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Djibouti.

Policy approaches and concrete initiatives among African partners

Given the range of potential mobility and immobility outcomes, the policy response to climate-related migration and forced displacement has to be equally wide-ranging. This approach is demonstrated by a long list of regional and sub-regional legal and policy frameworks in Africa containing provisions of relevance to human mobility in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. A non-exhaustive list of key examples of these regional initiatives include:

- The 2009 **African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa** (also known as the Kampala Convention) addresses internal displacement caused not only by armed conflict, but also by natural and man-made disasters. The Convention aims to promote regional and national measures in order to mitigate root causes of internal displacement in Africa and provide for durable solutions through the establishment of a legal framework¹⁵.
- The AU's **Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2018-2030)** and its Plan of Action, which is the main policy for migration management in Africa, considers climate change in its pillar 9.7 “Migration and Environment” in relation to SDG 13¹⁶.
- In the 2022 **Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change**, supported by 48 AU Member States, which contains commitments to climate resilience and adaptation, cooperation on free movement and labour mobility, financing relief for countries hosting migrants and displaced people, and comprehensive urban planning¹⁷.
- In 2023, the **Africa Climate Mobility Initiative**, co-led by the African Union Commission, adopted an eight-point Agenda for Action, aiming to shape people positive adaptation by preparing people and institutions and investing in resilience¹⁸.

¹⁵ https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-treaty-kampala_convention.pdf

¹⁶ https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/35956-doc-2018_mpfa_english_version.pdf

¹⁷ <https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/kampala-ministerial-declaration-migration-environment-and-climate-change>

¹⁸ <https://africa.climate-mobility.org/agenda-for-action>

- ECOWAS's Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2022) specifically refers to "Human mobility in the context of disaster, climate change and environmental degradation". Other regional climate strategies, such as for IGAD¹⁹ and SADC (2015)²⁰, seek to harmonize regional immigration policies to reduce climate vulnerability; and the EAC²¹ policy framework refers to displacement and migration in the context of disaster risk management and reduction.
- While climate-related initiatives more often appear to cover migration than migration initiatives cover climate change impacts, **IGAD's 2020 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons** is the first such agreement to recognise the role of climate change as a driver of displacement and migration, and Article 16 obliges Member States to grant entry to people seeking protection in another member state "in anticipation of, during or in the aftermath of disaster". In addition, IGAD Member States shall take measures to facilitate the extension of stay or the exercise of other rights by citizens of other Member States who are affected by disaster in accordance with the provisions of this Protocol when return to their state of origin is not possible or reasonable²².

¹⁹ <https://www.icpac.net/publications/igad-regional-climate-change-strategy-and-action-plan-2023-2030>

²⁰ https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2021-11/SADC_Climate_Change_Strategy_and_Action_Plan-English.pdf

²¹ <https://www.eac.int/environment/climate-change/eac-climate-change-policy-framework>

²² Other free movement protocols (not yet ratified) include those of the Africa Economic Community, and the SADC. See the CLIMB database of instruments relating to climate mobility. <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/climb>

- **Other free movement protocols**, while not offering the same specific protections, can and have helped address climate-related migration and forced displacement: e.g. the 1979 ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol has enabled drought- or flooding-affected people to cross borders and find refuge and employment.²³ ECOWAS²⁴ and IGAD²⁵ also each have instruments facilitating cross-border movement of transhumant pastoralists. And Kenya have recently developed Standard Operating Procedures to cover admission and stay in response to disaster displacement with both Ethiopia and Uganda²⁶.
- There are also a number of regional programmes, such as **IGAD’s Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC)**, which provides climate data to inform disaster preparedness and response, as well as adaptation, in support of national and local responses, including migration and displacement.

In addition, existing **EU-Africa migration dialogue processes** are focusing on climate migration and forced displacement. The Khartoum Process organised in cooperation with the Rabat Process a joint thematic meeting on *Exploring the Potential of Mobility in the Context of Climate Change*, held in Berlin in October 2023 and co-hosted by the African Union Commission. In context of the Khartoum Process, a thematic workshop on *Navigating the Nexus: Climate Change and Displacement in conflict-affected Settings* was held in Egypt in November 2024. Looking ahead, the French Chairmanship of the Khartoum Process will be organising a thematic meeting on *Mobility Related to Climate Vulnerabilities: Enhancing Adaptation Strategies and the Role of Cities*, planned for the beginning of March 2026. In addition, the Nigerian chair of the Rabat Process is planning Special Event on “Climate-induced migration” on 28 January 2026 in Abuja, Nigeria.

²³ <https://ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/PROTOCOL-RELATING-TO-FREE-MOVEMENT-OF-PERSONS.pdf>

²⁴ <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11481/files/appeal/documents/ECOWASpct.20Protocolpct.20onpct.20Transhumancepct.20pct.281998pct.29.pdf>

²⁵ <https://icpald.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IGAD-PROTOCOL-ON-TRANSHUMANCE-Final-Endorsed-Version.pdf>

²⁶ <https://disasterdisplacement.org/news-events/simulation-exercise-on-managing-cross-border-disaster-displacement>

The Africa-EU Continent-to-Continent Migration and Mobility Dialogue, touched on climate mobility during its first in-person meeting since 2019, in July 2024, and climate mobility is planned to be discussed in a workshop in the second half of 2025 ²⁷.

Policy approaches and concrete initiatives from the EU

For nearly 20 years, the EU has taken a growing interest in the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and mobility. The issue was first raised at EU level in the Report on the environment, security and foreign policy of the European Parliament of 1999. In 2008, the Joint Communication from the High Representative and the European Commission on “Climate Change and International Security” also refers to this phenomenon. One year later, the Stockholm Programme of 2009 highlighted the necessity to further analyse the link between climate change and migration. During the years 2007-2009, the EU financed the “Environmental Change And Forced Migration Scenarios” (EACH-FOR) programme, the first significant research on this topic. Since then, the topic has been regularly mentioned in EU documents. The 2013 Commission Staff Working document “Climate Change, Environmental Migration Degradation and Migration” is the first dedicated document taking stock of EU efforts and addressing concrete policy solutions.

Nowadays, the EU's approach in this field is guided by several key relevant strategies, communications and other relevant documents, including:

- The 2016 Commission Communication on “Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance” which highlighted that the combined effects of increased conflict, violence, climate change, environmental and natural disasters will force even more people to flee.
- The 2017 European Consensus on Development ‘Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future’, in which the EU and Member States commit to address the root causes of migration and forced displacement such as environmental degradation and climate change.
- The 2017 Joint Communication “A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s External Action” which underlines that the EU should work to further address root causes of irregular migration, including climate change and environmental degradation.

²⁷ https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-au-workshop-migration-research-collaboration_en

- The 2021 EU Climate Adaptation Strategy, which recognizes the importance of addressing climate mobility in the context of climate change adaptation.
- The 2021 Communication on the European Green Deal which commits the EU to ‘work with all partners to increase climate and environmental resilience to prevent these challenges from becoming sources of conflict, food insecurity, population displacement and forced migration, and support a just transition globally’.
- The 2021 Communication on the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles which acknowledges climate and disasters among the root causes of displacement and brings in important elements on prevention, preparedness and responses.
- The 2024 EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, which highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the roots cause of forced displacement and irregular migration, including climate change.

The EU works towards an integrated approach to address human mobility in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, as presented in the **2022 Commission Staff Working Document “Addressing displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation”**, which is the key current EU document on this matter. This integrated approach involves a broad range of issues and policies: climate change mitigation, resilience and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, urban planning, education, social policy, asylum and migration, development policies and humanitarian and civil protection policies.

The EU's approach to climate mobility is centred on:

1. addressing the **root causes** of forced displacement and irregular migration in the context of climate change and environmental degradation by supporting sustainable initiatives and strategies that promote disaster risk reduction and climate resilience and adaptation;
2. providing **assistance and protection to forcibly displaced and host communities**, seeking durable solutions, as well as, in some instances, helping people to move safely;
3. promoting **global advocacy and action, research, data** collection and analysis as well as the exchange of knowledge.

At operational level, the EU has been at the forefront to understand and support action to tackle this complex issue. Nowadays, mobilising global, regional and bilateral envelopes, the EU supports a significant portfolio of programmes globally and across sectors to prevent climate displacement, assist and protect those already displaced or unable to move, help people to stay or to move safely, as well as focus on building resilience, climate adaptation, and supporting disaster risk reduction and stability (a list of ongoing and upcoming EU-funded programmes in Africa can be found at the end of the Presidency Paper.)

At the last Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the EU joined the climate pledge with a significant envelope of EUR 303 million to enhance climate resilience and disaster preparedness in affected countries. This funding emphasizes four key priorities: risk-based and anticipatory actions, preparedness in conflict and fragile settings, climate and environmental resilience, and urban preparedness. On data and research, the EU pledged EUR 9.8 million during GRF to support global policy and advocacy processes, data collection, analysis, and research related to climate-induced displacement to support evidence base programming.

As mentioned above, most persons displaced by disasters, climate change and environmental degradation remain within the borders of their homeland and are hence considered IDPs. In this context, the EU also supported the Office of the Special Advisor on IDP Solutions (through the funding of Solutions Advisor positions in Colombia and Nigeria).

Discussion questions

The Presidency invites the delegations to consider the following questions for the discussion:

1. What are the lessons learned from the EU's and Member States' cooperation with African states on climate-related migration and forced displacement? Any outstanding gaps or needs?
2. How can we further integrate climate-related migration and forced displacement into our migration and forced displacement programmes/projects, including through a Team Europe approach?
3. In light of the current geopolitical changes, how do you assess the importance and relevance of climate related migration and forced displacement (in Africa) within the overall migration agenda?
4. Do you see specific future opportunities for the EU and Member States to engage with African partners on the topic? If so, please exemplify with whom and in what context (e.g. a region, country, specific organization, international fora or concrete meeting).

ONGOING AND UPCOMING EU-FUNDED PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA

The following ongoing/upcoming EU-funded programmes in Africa can be highlighted as examples, whilst keeping in mind the EU has a much wider relevant portfolio of projects.

- At COP 29 in November 2024, the EU announced the new flagship programme “**Regional Responses to Climate Displacement (RE2CLID)**” (2025-2029), a EUR 100 million regional initiative funded by the EU to address climate mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa²⁸. The programme will aim to support regional responses to climate mobility, with a focus on enhancing the resilience of affected communities and promoting adaptation and durable solutions. The activities at country level will mainly focus on durable solutions for affected communities, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and early warnings, natural resource management, and inclusive and gender-responsive governance, so that affected communities can better prepare for, mitigate the effects of, and recover from disasters.
- In 2024, the EU also launched a EUR 8 million global project with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), entitled “**Enhancing prevention, risk reduction and response to disaster and climate-related displacement worldwide**” which aims to enhance prevention, risk reduction and response to disaster and climate-related displacement worldwide. The project focuses on selected countries, including Kenya and Nigeria. End of June 2025, the EU will sign a contract with IFAD for an EU-IFAD Global programme “**ResilientRemit: Maximizing the impact of remittances and diaspora investments for enhancing climate resilience and adaptation**” (EUR 4.26 million). The action will promote the use of migrants’ remittances and diaspora investment for climate resilience in target countries. It will also contribute to increase international commitment on remittances and diaspora investment for climate resilience. The project will focus on selected countries, including Senegal.

²⁸ The programme has 2 two sub-regional clusters (EUR 50M per cluster): Cluster 1: Lake Tanganyika Basin (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania), lead EU Delegation Burundi; Cluster 2: Southern African/ South-West Indian Ocean (Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros), lead EU Delegation Malawi.

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- Three Horizon-Europe projects covering climate mobility in Africa are ongoing: i) **ALBATROSS** (EUR 5M): focuses on migration, nature-based solutions for climate resilience in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, and South Africa. The project aims to support the development of effective governance and institutions, and to promote climate resilience and adaptation in the region. ii) **SAFE4ALL** (EUR 5M): Addresses climate change, food security, and migration dynamics in Kenya, Ghana, and Zimbabwe. The project aims to support the development of climate-resilient agriculture and water management practices, and to promote the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups. iii) **ACACIA** (EUR 3M): Focuses on floods in the Greater Horn of Africa and Madagascar, and co-produces national and regional operational early warning systems. The project aims to support the development of effective governance and institutions, and to promote climate resilience and adaptation in the region.
- **Regional Climate Resilience Programme for Eastern and Southern Africa** (EUR 10M): Enhances the management of water-related climate impacts through investments in infrastructure, risk management, climate financing, and adaptive services in Madagascar, Mozambique, Comoros, and regional entities. The project aims to support the development of effective governance and institutions, and to promote climate resilience and adaptation in the region.
- **Strengthening Urban and Coastal Resilience** (EUR 5M): Ongoing project in Madagascar. The project aims to support the development of effective governance and institutions, and to promote climate resilience and adaptation in the region.
- **MIONJO PROJECT** (EUR 3M): Supports resilience in southern Madagascar. The project aims to support the development of climate-resilient agriculture and water management practices, and to promote the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups.
- Improved livelihoods and access to basic services for **vulnerable and displaced communities affected by conflict and climate-change in Chad, South Sudan and Central African Republic** (EUR 25M): Besides providing access to basic services to those affected by the Sudan crisis, this project focusses on community resilience and conflict prevention through sustainable resource management, supporting climate-adapted income generating (agricultural) activities, and the implementation of the Great Green Wall initiative in the respective countries.

- **Regional Programme in Livestock and Pastoralism for Climate Change Adaptation in Eastern/Horn of Africa** under the EU Alliance in support of the Horn of Africa Initiative (EUR 47M): Contributing to the development of sustainable climate resilient pastoral systems in Eastern/Horn of Africa, through improving management of pastoral ecosystems, creating income generating opportunities, and strengthening advocacy and policy implementation for pro-pastoral development.

DARIS WACAN under the EU Alliance in support of the Horn of Africa Initiative (EUR 11M): Building climate change resilience and integrated water resource management in border communities in the Horn of Africa, through improved water infrastructure, rainwater harvesting, better natural resource management, and accessibility to market and trade routes.
