



EUROPE REGIONAL MEETING ON CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT


The Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement Within States - the Peninsula Principles - were adopted by a group of international experts and legal scholars in 2013. This standard, grounded deeply in existing human rights law, is the world's first policy framework designed to assist governments worldwide to secure the rights of people displaced internally by climate change. These principles provide a comprehensive normative framework to guide governments to better address the human impacts of climate change and related displacement.

Last year marked the 10th anniversary of the Peninsula Principles.

They remain more relevant than ever for climate displaced persons everywhere.

KEY POINTS

- » Although precise data is notoriously difficult to access and many working within the climate displacement field are reluctant to refer to estimates of how many people will be affected by this crisis, it is estimated that displacement generated by the effects of climate change could affect anywhere between **200 million to 3.3 billion people** before the end of this century.
- » Many advancements have occurred at the international level in addressing climate displacement themes over the past decade, yet the work has really only just begun.
- » Climate change does not discriminate based on wealth: Using the coastline of Port Phillip Bay in Victoria, Australia as an example, damages from rising sea levels are projected to **exceed \$550 billion** by the century's end.
- » The world's average temperature is currently **within 0.02°C of the critical threshold** of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- » The average land surface temperature in December reached **1.8°C above pre-industrial levels**.
- » Caribbean water temperatures have reached a record high, accelerating the timeline towards the potential **extinction of coral reefs** - a critical blow to marine biodiversity.
- » Many of the Sustainable Development Goals **have not been met** despite the 2030 deadline approaching.



In honouring the continued importance and relevance of the Peninsula Principles as a tool to protect the rights of climate displaced persons, Displacement Solutions has convened a series of webinars with leading local, national, regional and international voices on the question of climate displacement to seek out innovative ideas and perspectives on how to expand attention and action at all levels in support of climate displaced persons.

This brief report provides an overview of some of the key points made in the Europe Regional Webinar. These webinars, reports and films are designed to give insights to everyone wishing to improve the prospects of climate displaced persons. We encourage you to feel free to use and distribute the many ideas contained within our Climate Displacement Webinar Series.

Scott Leckie (Director and Founder of Displacement Solutions) opened the webinar by outlining the history of the Peninsula Principles and providing an overview of the institutional responses and state responsibility for climate displacement. He emphasised the need for creativity and innovation in our collective responses to this growing global crisis. This new form of displacement requires new forms of response. He provided insights into the scale of the problem, which he described as one of the biggest problems facing the world today, and concluded that we are woefully unprepared for it, with far too little planning or innovative preparation.


He reiterated the rallying cry in support of the rights of those forced to leave their homes - New land for lost land, new homes for lost homes. He recalled the results of many years of research by DS on land solutions for climate displacement, which revealed that a mere 0.14% of the world's land surface is all that is needed to rehouse *every* climate displaced person across the world. Access to land is the problem, not the lack of supply. He urged countries everywhere to establish climate land banks, which could hold public land in trust for the eventual use by climate displaced persons, ensuring that it remains outside of the commercial sector. He also urged states everywhere to create climate displacement ministries to deal with this international crisis.

He then outlined some of the new options being explored across the world to prevent climate displacement before it occurs, including floating neighbourhoods, floating off-shore platforms, raising the level of the land. He concluded with a reminder that very few governments have successfully housed their people even in the best of times, so everything must be done to ensure that every climate displaced person can be protected now.

Earth at a Tipping Point

As the first participant to speak, **Gaia Vince** (author of *Nomad Century* and many other great books!) acknowledged that the Earth is at a climate tipping point and emphasized the urgent need for collective awareness and action. She introduced tipping points to explain how incremental changes in the environment can suddenly lead to irreversible and drastic shifts in Earth's systems.

"In the United Kingdom, we have had one major storm after another, causing terrible damage. Floods, violent winds, which is to be expected for two reasons, partly because we have an El Nino phenomenon going on at the moment, but also because greenhouse gases, what they do is they trap heat in the atmosphere, and that extra energy gives storms much more violence and much more power. It affects wind speeds. The hotter air is able to hold a lot more moisture, resulting in deluges." – Gaia Vince



She warned of the potential for these tipping points to drastically alter the conditions necessary for human survival, emphasizing the urgency of understanding and addressing these risks. The metaphor of the straw that breaks the camel's back was used to illustrate how a seemingly minor addition to the system (like a slight increase in temperature) can lead to a catastrophic state change, underscoring the precarious balance of Earth's climate system. She emphasized the increase in global mean temperature – 1.48°C above pre-industrial average, and as an incredibly worrying sign, the average land temperature is now 1.8°C above historical average. For a period of time recently, the Caribbean Sea was as warm as bath water, for instance, with huge social and economic consequences. Extreme weather conditions are everywhere and happening now. We are heading towards a catastrophic increase of 4°C by the end of the century.

She reiterated that most climate displacement now is internal, but emphasised that this will change quickly as climate conditions worsen, particularly once climate events occur more and more frequently, often one right after another.


Four Horseman of the Anthropocene: Climate Change as a Threat Multiplier

“The four horsemen of the Anthropocene that force people to move are fire, flood, heat, and drought.” – Gaia Vince.

Gaia emphasised the compounding effects of climate change on the environment, and consequently, on displacement. She identified fire, flood, heat, and drought as the primary forces driving climate-induced displacement, painting a vivid picture of their destructive capabilities. She provided examples from around the world about how these elements have rendered areas uninhabitable: outdoor labour becomes impossible due to extreme heat, floods destroy infrastructure and crops, droughts decimate water sources and agricultural productivity, and fires obliterate towns and displace populations.

Vince's description of these forces illustrated the multifaceted nature of climate threats and the need for comprehensive strategies to mitigate their impacts. She emphasised that an area of unliveability in the tropics will occur and people will be forced to move north and south away from the equator. This will occur across the planet.

She reiterated the lack of understanding among those involved in the displacement field regarding the actual impacts of climate change within the context of their work supporting displaced persons. Old ways of managing and repairing displacement need revisiting and revision in the age of climate change. Reflecting on the pace of historical change, Gaia encouraged a broader perspective on what the future could hold. She drew a parallel between the current era and the world in 1924, noting the profound transformations that have occurred over the last century. Gaia further emphasized the plight of these individuals who are increasingly unable to move even if they desire to do so. This is a particular challenge in depopulating areas where economic decline and environmental risks converge, leaving residents in a state of involuntary stasis.



Vince argued that just as the world adapted and evolved through the tumultuous events of the 20th century, so too can it navigate the challenges posed by climate change. She advocated for leveraging the wealth of knowledge and technology available today to proactively shape a future that addresses the imminent challenges of climate change, emphasizing the need for visionary leadership and collective action to steer the global community towards a sustainable and equitable path.

In his comments following Gaia's presentation, Scott noted that "we find ourselves at a 1648 moment or a 1945 moment" and we need to collectively attempt to transform the negative impacts of climate change into a force that is managed in such a way that positive outcomes are possible, a cosmopolitan world in which a new vision of a unified human race can emerge. "We need to get out of normal mind frames. This is an existential question", he reiterated.

Rethinking the Definition of Climate Migrants

Gaia also provocatively questioned the conventional distinctions between economic migrants and climate refugees, suggesting that environmental degradation often underlies migration traditionally attributed to economic factors. This perspective was supported by Ricardo Safra de Campos, who highlighted the complexity of migration drivers, where environmental stressors subtly influence decisions to move, even if individuals don't explicitly identify as climate migrants. This collective insight calls for a broader understanding of climate-induced displacement that transcends legalistic definitions, advocating for policies that recognize the multifaceted nature of migration in the context of climate change. Overall, there was a strong emphasis on the need to re-think human mobility whereby we focus on removing barriers, not creating new ones. Migration should be made easier and safer, and it should be seen as a normal part of society, rather than being portrayed in the xenophobic and racist manner sought by many politicians.

Recognising Opportunity in Crisis: Harnessing Migration as a Proactive Force for Positive Change

Ricardo Safra de Campos (Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Exeter) then introduced the critical concept of immobility, shedding light on the populations that are essentially trapped and unable to migrate due to various socio-economic barriers. This point expands the narrative beyond those who move to include those who are left behind, vulnerable and exposed to the escalating impacts of climate change. Together, they underscore the need for planned relocation strategies and supportive interventions to aid those who cannot move voluntarily.

Ricardo then presented data showing the steady increase in global migration, with around 280 million international migrants worldwide, accounting for approximately 3.6% of the global population. He highlighted the difficulty in estimating the scale of internal migration due to varying recording practices, but noted the overall upward trend. Ricardo then shifted the conversation to consider how migration, often driven by environmental hazards and changes, could serve as a transformative pathway towards sustainability. He suggested that both economic opportunities for migrants and destination countries, and the potential for cross-generational mobility and social remittances, could contribute to this transformation. This perspective challenges traditional views of migration as merely reactive to crises, proposing instead that it can be a proactive force for positive change.



Frameworks for Planned Relocation

Throughout the webinar, the issue of planned relocation was often discussed. Scott critically examined the concept of planned relocation, highlighting its inherent challenges and the potential for misuse by those in power. By recounting the experiences of the Carteret Islanders in Papua New Guinea and their failed relocation efforts for various reasons, Scott underscored the immense difficulties in executing relocation plans successfully. This narrative resonates with the broader discourse on immobility and the necessity for equitable, well-thought-out strategies to support vulnerable populations, as emphasized by Ricardo and Gaia.

He offered three key recommendations for policymakers, institutions, and international donors:


1. **Make Cities Safe:** He urges cities to prepare for an influx of migrants by incorporating migration considerations into urban planning, especially as people move in response to climate change.
2. **Plan for Relocation:** He emphasizes the importance of safe and consultative planned relocation processes, particularly in areas where climate change necessitates the movement of communities.
3. **Facilitate International Migration:** He advocates for policies that enable international migration as a viable response to climate change, such as offering humanitarian visas to individuals displaced by environmental factors.

Ricardo's presentation shed light on the complex interplay between migration, displacement, and sustainable development, offering a fresh perspective on how migration can be leveraged to achieve more sustainable and equitable outcomes for all.

In his comments on Ricardo's presentation, Scott listed some of the key flaws in the recent migration agreement between Tuvalu and Australia and the potentially negative impacts that increased migration outflows can have on small nations such as Tuvalu, despite the agreement being designed to benefit this heavily climate-threatened country. He also emphasised the positive impacts of immigration and migration and what a positive force such movements have always been in building stronger and wealthier societies. He discussed DS's work in promoting "climate displacement havens" as a means of providing safe land for climate displaced persons in communities seeking to increase their population levels.

A Global Retreat of Governance

Andrew Harper (Special Advisor on Climate Action, UNHCR) then discussed the political impacts of a series of concomitant environmental crises, detailing how they challenge traditional governance systems. What he observes is a global retreat of governance from state peripheries to capitals where climate displacement is occurring, signalling a weakening of state capacity to provide for its populations. He outlined the many negative environmental impacts for which humans are responsible, whereby planetary boundaries are being exceeded, leading to a series of impacts, including de-population of areas, serious threats to livelihoods, hunger, and eventual displacement. He emphasised that the abilities of communities to resist these simultaneous crises are minimal, reiterating that growing numbers of people don't have a chance or a choice, and that these individuals are being displaced. He stressed that people need access to safer areas and concrete support from regional entities. Solutions must be simple and clear.



He noted that addressing climate displacement remains very much of an uphill battle, indicating that out of 49 NAPAs, only 2 mentioned climate displacement. He questioned where the funds for addressing climate displacement would come from, noting that the Green Climate Fund has yet to prove it is capable of doing so. He noted that fossil fuel companies are earning USD 4 trillion a year, but that governments, particularly the most vulnerable, do not have enough money to solve displacement. He noted that the 30 most vulnerable states to climate change have been identified but not a single one of them was in the top 30 list of receiving climate financing. He urged that international banks should be encouraged to loosen up lending policies to provide funds for better protecting climate displaced persons.

Challenges of Siloed Humanitarian Efforts - Holistic Methods Required

Jim Robinson (Global Coordinator for the Housing Land and Property (HLP) Area of Responsibility (AoR), part of the Global Protection Cluster) then reiterated the necessity of holistic, interconnected discussions across different sectors to address the compound challenges of climate change, displacement, and HLP rights effectively. He highlighted the disproportionate impact of climate-related hazards on women, underscoring the importance of prioritizing their experiences and vulnerabilities in humanitarian response strategies.

He stressed the need for coordinated responses to the HLP dimensions of climate displacement, and explained the meaning and nature of HLP rights, indicating that they are the golden thread that flows through appropriate humanitarian policy and response. He added that HLP rights are intrinsically local, as they are essentially about where and in which conditions people live. He noted that climate change can prevent the exercise of the right to return, drawing attention to a range of long lasting impacts – water, rubble, land disappearance, erosion, drought, desertification, rising sea levels –which facilitate displacement. He reiterated that conflict, climate change and disasters are coming together and undermining the ability of people to be resilient. In other words, attention to HLP issues is fundamental to human survival.

After noting that aid flows are unsustainable, he rhetorically asked: Are we asking the right questions in the field? How do we respond? How do we integrate HLP in the loss and damage debate? How do we look at access to natural resources? How can we record HLP rights before disaster occurs? How does the HLP community get better at conflict resolution in the event of HLP disputes? He concluded that we need to work with local and national actors much more and prioritise women's HLP rights issues.

Growing Momentum in Addressing Climate Displacement

Zeke Simperingham (Global Lead on Migration and Displacement, International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent (IFRC)) acknowledged the significant developments in the field of climate change and displacement over the past decade, including the establishment of task forces, the inclusion of climate and displacement issues in global compacts, and increased attention at COP meetings. He raised the question of whether a specific or integrated approach is more effective in addressing these issues, considering the potential for mainstreaming to either highlight or dilute the focus on climate-induced displacement.

As one of the drafters of the Peninsula Principles in 2013, Zeke noted the 10th anniversary of the Principles and how prescient they were in so many ways. He described the inclusive manner by which the Peninsula Principles were developed, drawing attention to how the emphasis on internal displacement was very forward-looking at the time. The Principles were ahead of their time, and much has occurred since their adoption. There is now considerable momentum on the issue of climate displacement, as it has become increasingly clear that the impacts of climate change are outpacing the modelling. He noted that much more needs to be done, and that within the context of IFRC, what to do about climate displacement is one of the hardest issues the organisation has to deal with today. IFRC local staff often don't know precisely what to do to address and prevent climate displacement.

He noted a growing momentum and urgency among new generations regarding climate action, and sensed a demand for more radical and swift solutions than current policies and frameworks offer. He reflected on the need to evaluate the impact of various initiatives on affected communities and innovative approaches to meet the escalating challenges. Zeke brought attention to the increasing strain on the humanitarian system, as was also emphasized by Andrew and Jim, due to the continuous cycle of disasters, complex emergencies, and overlapping crises. He pointed out that communities are overwhelmed by consecutive crises without respite, echoing the sentiments of colleagues from various global hotspots and acknowledging the challenges faced by donors in keeping pace.

Advancing the Agenda on Disaster Displacement – The Persisting Role of the Peninsula Principles

Atle Solberg, (Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)), highlighted the organization's role in continuing the work of the Nansen Initiative, focusing on the protection of cross-border displaced persons due to disaster and climate change. The PDD is state-led with 18 member states, currently headed by Kenya. Drawing inspiration from the Peninsula Principles, the PDD emphasizes the intertwined nature of internal and cross-border displacement, advocating for comprehensive approaches to manage risk and mitigate the impact of disasters.

Reflecting on the journey since the Nansen Initiative's inception in 2013, Atle noted the reciprocal learning and inspiration shared with Scott and colleagues, underscoring the importance of addressing both the cross-border and internal dimensions of displacement. This holistic perspective is crucial for effectively managing risk prevention and mitigating the impact of disasters and climate change.



The PDD's strategy 2024-2030 outlines three strategic priorities: protecting cross-border disaster-displaced persons, managing disaster displacement risk in climate action, and supporting policies on planned relocation and internally displaced persons. Atle elaborated on the first priority, detailing efforts to enhance the availability of regular migration pathways, promote the use of humanitarian visas and temporary protection schemes, uphold refugee and human rights law, and develop regional human mobility frameworks. He concluded by reminding everyone that: "We are facing a world for which we are not prepared."

This spirited meeting brought together some of the leading minds on climate change who engaged in a dialogue spanning a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from the urgent need to transcend conventional approaches to climate adaptation, to the specific challenges faced by States that are navigating treaty complexities and mitigating the effects of brain drain. A significant emphasis was placed on the imperative for funding mechanisms to not only be ample but also inclusive, ensuring that adaptation efforts are equitable and reach those most in need.

The conversations further highlighted a strong call for decisive action and accountability in the allocation of resources, underscoring the necessity for the international community to step up its commitment. Moreover, there was a collective push for systemic reform and innovative solutions that can more effectively address the multifaceted challenges of climate change. Central to these discussions was the recognition of the profound connection Indigenous peoples have with their lands, and the need to advocate for policies and strategies that honour and protect these vital relationships. Moreover, there was a resounding reiteration from all the participants regarding the pivotal role of secure access to land and property as central to survival and long-term solutions for displacement caused by these deleterious environmental effects. At the very least, every government must diagnose the scale and location of the domestic climate displacement threat and the time for this is now.

Please check out www.displacementsolutions.org for all of the latest information on this project and all other activities by DS and its partners and associates.

Participant Biographies



Andrew Harper

Andrew Harper is the Special Advisor on Climate Action to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva. He is responsible for providing strategic guidance, oversight and expertise to shape UNHCR's response to the climate emergency. Prior to his current tasks, he was the Director of the Division of Programme Support & Management (DPSM), overseeing programme policy, planning, and management, as well as technical support to field operations.

Andrew has led the Innovation Service in UNHCR and was responsible for leading and coordinating the international response to the Syrian Crisis in Jordan. Andrew also served as the Head of Desk for UNHCR, covering the Iraq Situation, as well as the Emergency Focal Point for the Middle East and North Africa region for the Libyan Crisis. He has previously worked in various field locations with UNHCR, OCHA and the Australian Embassy, including Central and Southeast Asia, the Western Balkans, Islamic Republic of Iran and Ukraine.



Scott Leckie

Scott Leckie is the founder and Executive Director of Displacement Solutions. He is an international human rights lawyer, academic, author, social entrepreneur, environmentalist and recognized as one of the world's leading global housing, land and property (HLP) rights experts. He has worked in more than 80 countries on various human rights matters. He is the world's most widely published author on HLP themes, having written more than 200 books, articles and substantive reports on these issues.



Dr Jim Robinson

Jim joined NRC in 2020 as the Global Coordinator for the Housing Land and Property (HLP) Area of Responsibility (AoR), part of the Global Protection Cluster. The HLP AoR works across sectors to facilitate a more predictable, accountable and effective HLP response in humanitarian responses. Prior to this, Jim has spent over 10 years working with NGOs, research institutions and international organisations on the connections between HLP rights, conflict, peacebuilding, corruption, shelter and land. This has included work with a range of protection actors on the integration of HLP across humanitarian, transitional and development responses, as well as corruption risks within UN Peacekeeping. Jim is a mediator practitioner/trainer and remains committed to the possibilities of dialogue to create outcomes acceptable to all affected communities. Jim's PhD (Law and Sociology) examined mediation processes in response to HLP disputes in eastern D.R. Congo, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.



Dr. Ricardo Safra de Campos

Dr. Ricardo Safra de Campos is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Exeter working on population movements in the context of climate change, with a research focus on migration, sustainability and wellbeing. His work has been published in interdisciplinary journals including Nature Climate Change, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), Global Environmental Change, Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, and discipline-specific such as Population, Space and Place. He is a contributing author on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate. Ricardo gave expert oral evidence on migration and climate change to EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee of the UK's House of Lords in 2020. He serves on the advisory board of international research and policy initiatives on climate-related displacement in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Additionally, he is a member of the editorial board for the journals Climatic Change; PLOSClimate; and Climate Mobilities, Frontiers in Climate.



Ezekiel Simperingham

Ezekiel Simperingham is the Global Lead on Migration and Displacement for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Ezekiel leads the global work of the IFRC on migration and displacement, including strategy, emergencies and operations, community programmes, advocacy and diplomacy, accountability and knowledge sharing across the network of 192 National Societies. Ezekiel is an international lawyer with more than 19 years of experience providing legal and policy advice on human rights, rule of law, migration, forced displacement (refugee and IDP) and housing, land and property (HLP) rights. Ezekiel has extensive experience working in conflict and disaster affected countries across the globe. He previously worked for the IFRC as Asia Pacific Migration and Displacement Coordinator; IFRC Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Advisor in the Typhoon Haiyan Response in the Philippines; Displacement Solutions in Bangkok and London; the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) in Bangkok; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Sri Lanka; the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) in New York; the Refugee Status Appeals Authority (RSAA) in New Zealand and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Australia.



Atle Solberg

Atle Solberg is a political scientist from Norway and he is currently the Head of the Secretariat of the Platform on Disaster Displacement. He was the Head of the Nansen Initiative Secretariat, the predecessor to the Platform on Disaster Displacement, from 2012 to 2015. His background is primarily from international humanitarian work and from working in the context of displacement (both in conflict and natural hazard situations). He has worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN OCHA in Switzerland, the Balkans and in Central America, as well as for the Norwegian Refugee Council in the Balkans, Indonesia and Colombia. He has research and teaching experience from the University of Bergen on humanitarian issues as well as on the protection of unaccompanied minors. He has undertaken evaluation of humanitarian aid and worked as a consultant both with focus on Norway as well as on post-conflict recovery situation in the Balkans and Central America.



Gaia Vince

Gaia Vince is a science writer and broadcaster exploring the interplay between human systems and the planetary environment. She is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Anthropocene Institute at UCL and a host of BBC Inside Science. Her first book, *Adventures In The Anthropocene* won the Royal Society Science Book of the Year Prize. Her latest book, *Nomad Century: How To Survive The Climate Upheaval*, explores global migration and planetary restoration in a radical call to arms.