

Key Messages

COMMON NARRATIVE ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Results Group 3 on Collective Advocacy

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(OPAG)

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Common Narrative on the Climate Emergency and Humanitarian Action

Purpose of this document: Develop a common narrative and talking points on the humanitarian impacts of the climate emergency and action needed that members of the IASC can use in their advocacy and media engagements. To this end, the common narrative includes an introduction framing the common narrative; key facts and figures; key messages, including sector-specific messaging; and a terminology cheat sheet.

1. Introduction

Climate change is a humanitarian emergency

We are all facing a climate crisis.

Change in seasonal temperatures and rainfall patterns (climate variability), sea-level rises, glacier and arctic ice melting, desertification, and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, such as floods, violent storms and heatwaves, are causing loss of lives and livelihoods as well as injuries and displacement. Climate- and weather-related disasters also undermine food and water security, access to essential services and people's resilience to shocks, and impact the enjoyment of human rights.

Climate change also drives stresses which undermine people's livelihoods and make them more vulnerable so that even smaller shocks can turn into humanitarian emergencies. These climate stresses include more irregular rainfall and changes in agricultural seasons; rising trends of soil erosion and salinity; shifting patterns of biodiversity, pests and diseases; greater risks of wildfires and growing heat stress in humans, crops and animals. In the absence of strong governance and inclusive institutions, climate change can also amplify existing tensions and grievances around access to climate-sensitive natural resources, and may, in a complex interplay, ultimately fuel conflict.

In 2019, natural hazards triggered 308 disasters, 77 per cent of which were climate and weather related.¹ This is six times more than in the 1970s. In the past ten years, climate and weather-related disasters have claimed more than 400,000 lives, affected 1.7 billion people and displaced an average of 25 million people each year.

Unless action is taken, these numbers will continue to rise.

The women, men and children most exposed are those who do not have the resources to protect themselves and who, more often than not, live in areas where climate impacts such as droughts, floods and storms hit the hardest. (See below for different types of impacts on different people and communities.)²

The unfolding climate emergency is adding an additional layer of stress to a humanitarian system that is already overstretched, as it addresses the consequences of conflicts, food insecurity, displacement, the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme weather events, among other crises.

Without ambitious actions to mitigate climate change and help countries and communities adapt to it, the humanitarian toll will increase exponentially. Humanitarian assistance can help address the impacts of climate-related emergencies, but a massive increase in global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change and reduce the risk of disasters is critical to contain the suffering.

Action is needed now

We must act now to save lives and livelihoods. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres pointed out in September 2020, “the climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win.”³

Communities need to understand the range of climate threats that could affect them, so they can anticipate, absorb, adapt and transform⁴ to them.

Local communities, local organizations, governments and aid agencies all have crucial roles to play.

Key Facts and Figures:

People affected by extreme climate- and weather-related events:

- About 300 extreme weather events triggered by natural hazards were recorded in 2019, about six times more than in the 1970s.⁵
- The proportion of disasters attributable to climate and extreme weather events also increased significantly during this time. Even when the total number of disasters flattened in the last two decades, the proportion attributable to climate and extreme weather events, such as floods, storms and heatwaves, continued to rise, from 76 per cent of all disasters during the 2000s to 83 per cent in the 2010s.⁶
- Overall, extreme climate- and weather-related events are more common and severe, and they occur in places they haven't before.⁷
- In 2019, nearly 98 million people were affected by 308 disasters triggered by natural hazards. More than 24,000 people died. A high majority – 77 per cent – of these deadly disasters were climate and weather related.⁸
- An estimated 108 million people needed life-saving assistance in 2018 due to climate- and weather-related disasters alone. That number could double by 2050 if no action is taken.⁹
- The number of people at risk has grown steadily every decade. The average number of climate- and weather-related disasters per decade has increased by nearly 35 per cent since the 1990s. In the past decade alone, 83 per cent of all disasters were caused by extreme weather events, such as floods, storms and heatwaves. More than 410,000 people have died. The total number of people affected by these events is a staggering 1.7 billion.¹⁰

How were people affected?

- 34 million people were acutely food insecure due to climate extremes in 25 countries in 2019, compared with 29 million people in 2018.¹¹
- Between 2008 and 2018, weather-related events accounted for more than 87 per cent of the total 265 million new displacements associated with disasters globally.¹² During this period, the vast majority (more than 80 per cent) of all new disaster-related displacements occurred in the Asia-Pacific region, owing to mega disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines in 2013,¹³ and the 2017 monsoon season that affected 42 million people in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.¹⁴
- In 2019, disasters triggered nearly three quarters of the new displacements recorded worldwide, accounting for 24.9 million displacements. More than 95 per cent of these displacements were the result of climate- and weather-related hazards, such as storms and floods.¹⁵ Further, the majority of refugees and IDPs originate from and live in climate hotspots, and are exposed to severe floods, heatwaves and droughts.¹⁶
- Desertification threatens the livelihoods of more than 1.5 billion people in 167 countries. That's nearly 20 per cent of the world's population. Every year, about 12 million hectares worldwide (i.e. equivalent to the size of Benin) are lost to land degradation, and the rate is increasing.¹⁷

Compounding shocks

- Each of the world's eight worst food crises in 2018 experienced the double impact of conflict and climate shocks, which led to significant increases in the severity of acute food insecurity.¹⁸
- The number of people facing crisis levels of food insecurity or worse and who are also affected by climate extremes is 95 million (76 per cent of total).¹⁹

- Of the 20 countries considered the most vulnerable to climate change by the ND-Gain Index, 12 are in conflict (e.g. Yemen, Mali, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic).²⁰

How is climate change affecting extreme events?

- The average global temperature in 2020 is set to be about 1.2°C above the pre-industrial (1850-1900) level. There is at least a one in five chance of it temporarily exceeding 1.5°C by 2024.²¹
- According to WMO, every 1°C increase in tropical sea-surface temperature will likely result in a 3-5 per cent increase in cyclone wind-speed.²²

Funding problems and solutions

- UNSG: Until now, adaptation represents only 20 per cent of climate finance, reaching only US\$30 billion on average in 2017 and 2018. This hinders our essential work for disaster risk reduction (DRR).²³
- In 2017, 66 per cent of climate finance went to climate mitigation and only 25 per cent to adaptation.²⁴ In that same year, the 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change received less than 15 per cent of climate adaptation finance. Of those vulnerable countries, 13 had an inter-agency humanitarian appeal.
- IFRC's 'World Disasters Report 2020' combined the ND-GAIN index²⁵ and the INFORM index²⁶ to come up with a list of those countries that are highly and very-highly vulnerable to climate change. The report found that 38 high-vulnerability countries (out of 60) and 5 very high-vulnerability countries (out of 8) received less than \$1 per person in climate adaptation funding. Somalia, the most vulnerable, ranked only seventy-first for per-person climate change adaptation funding disbursements, while Afghanistan ranked eighty-second.²⁷
- A \$6 billion investment for DRR (DRR being an essential component for climate change adaptation) over the next 15 years would provide a \$360 billion return on investment in avoided losses.²⁸

Projections

- Climate change poses unprecedented risk of exposure and vulnerability to floods, heatwaves, water scarcity, sea-level rises and storm surges in urban areas.²⁹
- Without concrete, deliberate action, 75 per cent of the global population may be exposed to deadly heat by the end of the century. However, little action is being taken to reduce vulnerability and exposure to this hazard. Heat-related annual mortality of older persons could rise by over 90,000 deaths in 2030 and over 250,000 by 2050, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia.³⁰
- By 2050, there could be more than 143 million internal climate migrants across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America.³¹
- 48,000 additional deaths in children under age 15 from diarrheal disease are projected for 2030,³² as well as 60,000 additional deaths from malaria.³³
- In addition to disasters, climate change-related stressors contribute to degrading land, forests, fish stocks and other renewable natural resources, causing declining productivity and biodiversity. It is adding pressure to already fragile agricultural livelihoods and food and ecological systems, and it is expected to have a significant impact on the frequency and intensity of local and high-impact transboundary animal and plant pest-and-disease outbreaks and food-safety events (i.e. locusts, fall army worm, avian flu, including zoonosis, such as COVID-19). This will put our food systems at risk even more.³⁴

2. Key Messages

The Key Messages section is regularly updated with emerging statistics [here](#).

1. Climate change is here and is already having major humanitarian consequences

Climate change is an existential threat to humanity. Every day we witness its impact on the world's most vulnerable people.

Increasingly extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, droughts and floods, affect people across the globe, threatening their lives, livelihoods, health and well-being. They often accentuate inequality and societal fragility and undermine the enjoyment of human rights. Many of these events result in displacement and economic, social and material loss and damage, potentially triggering development reversals that can threaten achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Climate change is also contributing to mass environmental degradation and biodiversity destruction. The exposure and vulnerability of communities to climate risks is compounded by other factors including armed conflict, unplanned urbanization, weak governance, poverty, a lack of infrastructure and services, social marginalization, discrimination, disability, age and gender. The people in the most vulnerable situations have limited capacity to prevent, anticipate, cope with, recover from and adapt to changing weather and climate patterns and increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather events.

What does it mean?

- We need to understand, analyse and monitor the short- and longer-term impact of climate change on the most vulnerable populations and locations, such as people in Small Island Developing States, people already displaced and in countries already in crisis or conflict.
- We need to scale up climate risk management and adaptation action now in order to prevent, anticipate, prepare for and respond to the growing humanitarian consequences of climate change and build climate resilience at all levels of society. Examples include the development of community-based early warning systems, protection of coastlines, restoration of ecosystems, development of climate-resilient agricultural practices and contingency planning for floods.
- Our contingency planning must address quick- and slow-onset extreme climate and weather events. We must also anticipate and address the human rights implications of increasing disaster risks.

2. Climate action must be inclusive and prioritize people in vulnerable situations

Global and national efforts to strengthen climate resilience and promote sustainable development must prioritize the needs and capacities of the people most vulnerable to climate change.

Too often, communities in vulnerable and marginalized situations are left out of global action and investment in adaptation, risk reduction and preparedness. Investing in increasing communities' resilience to enable the most vulnerable people to manage the risks they face is essential.

What does it mean?

- Leave no one behind: Those in vulnerable and marginalized situations must be prioritized in inclusive and participatory climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and emergency preparedness and response.
- Climate action must reflect and address the rights, the needs and the priorities of all, including women, children and youth, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, refugees, migrants, returnees, older people, stateless people and the displaced.

3. *Early and anticipatory action saves lives and livelihoods*

Prevent extreme weather events from becoming humanitarian disasters through more effective DRR and management, including early warning, anticipatory action and early action.

Advances in science and technology and stronger coordination mean we have time to act by applying anticipatory approaches to risk before a disaster impacts vulnerable people. Over half of all humanitarian crises are at least somewhat predictable and 20 per cent are very predictable, yet less than 1 per cent of humanitarian appeals funding is channeled to anticipatory action.³⁵ Anticipatory action is important because it saves lives and livelihoods, prevents suffering, protects development gains and cuts costs. It also leads to a more dignified, faster response.

What does it mean?

- Governments need to ensure that ‘actionable’ early warning information reaches communities in time for them to act on it. This means not only investing in forecasting, but also investments to ensure action in ‘last-mile’ communities (e.g. through training volunteers, establishing evacuation routes/centers, developing early action plans/protocols).
- Governments develop policy frameworks where anticipatory action can become part of national disaster management systems.
- Humanitarian agencies, donors and other partners will scale up collective anticipatory action to reach more people ahead of predictable shocks.
- Humanitarian agencies integrate data-driven decision-making into all humanitarian action. This includes, for instance, integrating data on risk in humanitarian planning, coordination and financing decisions. Realizing that crises cascade through every aspect of society through different pathways and timelines, humanitarian organizations should develop a dynamic understanding of the different aspects of a shock across all sectors to identify the ‘tipping points’ to trigger action.
- Donors scale up their contributions to anticipatory action and provide sufficient, predictable and flexible financing, e.g. through unearmarked funding to agencies or pooled funds that can most effectively take swift action.
- Humanitarian agencies will continue to focus on saving lives, but we need to join up better with development and scientific institutions so that they more effectively address the root causes of vulnerability and risk.
- Humanitarian organizations need to work more closely together with development and climate institutions to analyze long-term risk informed by climate science, seasonal climate outlooks, weather forecasts and other hydrometeorological services.
- National and local governments need to develop forecast-based action and financing mechanisms and multi-year operational plans for emergency preparedness and response.

4. Legal and policy frameworks need to promote effective climate action

National laws, policies and plans should be aligned with international law, as well as the key global policy frameworks – the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework and the SDGs – and address the humanitarian impacts of climate change.

Laws, policies and plans should be designed to address climate risk in the short term (weather forecasts), medium term (seasonal forecasts) and long term (climate change). They also need to connect to carbon-neutral measures and reduce as much as possible the emission of greenhouse gas for climate change mitigation.

What does it mean?

- Relevant branches of international law must be applied for the protection of affected people and people at risk.
- Stakeholders must pursue policies, plans and investments that reflect an integrated approach to risk management. This means harnessing the synergies between DRR, climate change adaptation and nature-based solutions in order to realize better growth and development for all, protect nature, reduce inequalities, and create more resilient, prosperous communities.
- Humanitarian organizations should seek to support national authorities in drafting National Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions, and other relevant policy documents.

5. Ambitious mitigation measures are urgent

More robust and urgent political efforts to mitigate climate change are critical to avert the most disastrous consequences on people and their environment.

Humanitarian organizations are already unable to address all existing humanitarian needs. If the climate crisis continues on its current trajectory, we will not be able to keep up with the growing demand on our services. Keeping a global temperature rise to below 1.5°C is not only a planetary imperative but also a humanitarian one. Meeting this goal requires much more ambitious commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change mitigation is the best way of protecting people, including by reducing the risks.

What does it mean?

- All Governments need to significantly scale up their climate-mitigation ambition while supporting scaled-up climate adaptation and resilience action to also limit the humanitarian consequences of climate change.
- Humanitarian and other organizations need to factor in climate-mitigation measures in their wider response to vulnerable people in crisis.

6. Increased investment in resilience and adaptation is essential

In line with the High-Level Climate Champions' Climate Resilience Pathways, a suite of climate risk management measures is needed across and within sectors. These include:

- Climate risk and vulnerability assessments, disclosure and monitoring
- Early warning systems and early action
- Preparedness/contingency plans and emergency response

- Climate risk governance and capacity-building
- Nature-based solutions used to reduce risks across sectors
- Climate-proofing infrastructure and services
- Risk transfer: insurance and social protection
- Sharing knowledge and best practice on climate risk management
- Volume, quality and access of public and private finance

7. Humanitarian actors need to adapt to and contribute to mitigating climate change

Humanitarian organizations need to develop climate-resilient approaches to their own operations, mitigating their climate footprint and reducing their environmental impact.

Humanitarian organizations need to urgently focus on greening their own humanitarian action to mitigate its climate and environmental impact, with the support of donors. Our climate risk management measures need to be anchored in the specific realities of each local context.

What does it mean?

- We must urgently address climate change by better understanding climate risks, and by integrating climate risk management measures into the design, implementation and monitoring of our humanitarian programmes and responses.
- We must limit our own environmental and climate footprint to ensure that we do not further contribute to the deterioration of people’s environment and the creation of additional risks.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC MESSAGING

Agriculture and food security

- Climate change can negatively impact agriculture, livestock, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, and it worsens food insecurity. Extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, storms and tidal surges, can destroy crops and kill livestock, potentially causing food shortages and loss of livelihoods that can exacerbate malnutrition, political insecurity and the risk of famine. The agriculture sectors absorb 22 per cent of all damages and losses caused by medium- or large-scale climate-related disasters, and more than 80 per cent for droughts.³⁶ In the long term, the cultivation of traditional crops in some areas may become untenable, e.g. if a region becomes more prone to droughts, floods, storms and hurricanes, or the soil becomes salty due to rising seas. This is particularly critical, as up to 80 per cent of people currently experiencing or at risk of high levels of acute food insecurity rely on some form of agricultural production for their survival.³⁷
- Climate variability (rainfall and seasonality) and extremes (droughts, floods, storms and heatwaves) are key drivers behind the recent rises in global hunger and a leading cause of severe food crises. We must take urgent action now so that agriculture and food systems transform from being one main risk driver to the engine for climate and environmental solutions.
- Agriculture contributes around 24 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.³⁸ At the same time, it is an essential climate solution because the agriculture sector (soils, forests and oceans) offers large

	<p>emissions-efficiency gains, absolute reductions and carbon sinks, while supporting resilient and socioeconomic development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate shocks and conflict have contributed to acute hunger levels in each of the world's eight worst food crises: Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.³⁹ - More frequent and intense extreme weather events increase food insecurity and malnutrition by destroying land, livestock, crops and food supplies. In a 2°C warmer world, 189 million people more than today could become food insecure.⁴⁰ - Smallholders (more than 2.5 billion people with agriculture livelihoods) produce more than 80 per cent of the food supply in developing countries. As they are also the custodians of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity – and paradoxically, they are often among the world's poorest and most food insecure, and threatened by climate change – they must be massively supported to fight hunger, and to combat climate change, land degradation, desertification and ocean collapse with convergent and coherent investments at scale in disaster and climate risk management (including nature-based solutions and humanitarian action).⁴¹ - In 2019, 34 million people were acutely food insecure due to climate extremes in 25 countries, compared with 29 million people in 2018.⁴²
<p>Human rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate change has significant impacts on a wide range of human rights, including but not limited to the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation, adequate housing, and culture. Rights-holders most affected by climate impacts are often those least responsible, and those who are already at risk of being in vulnerable or marginalized situations.⁴³ - Human rights obligations, such as the rights to life and to a healthy environment, require urgent action to mitigate emissions and support adaptation and resilience across and within sectors in order to address all short-, medium- and long-term climate risks. - The slow and sudden onset effects of climate change, and the humanitarian crises they can create, carry particular human rights risks for internally displaced persons and cross-border migrants.⁴⁴ - Human rights obligations also require that populations and groups affected by climate change, as well as CSOs working on these issues, are able to meaningfully participate in climate governance decision-making processes in an enabling environment.⁴⁵ Public participation and public access to information are critical elements in promoting climate-resilient sustainable development.

Localization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure global commitments translate into support for local organisations’ leadership, participation, programme delivery and capacity. - Increased decision-making and funding need to be directed to the local level, empowering communities to manage changing risks, including through increased engagement with and support to empowered local actors, including capacity development.
Anticipatory approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anticipatory approach has five pillars: 1) insurance, 2) contingency financing, 3) risk sharing with the private sector, 4) better join-up of humanitarian and development finance, and 5) a more efficient humanitarian system, including through anticipatory action.
Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of climate-related disasters has more than doubled since the early 1990s. Yet most humanitarian responses continue to be launched only after extreme weather events have already resulted in critical losses and damages for the most vulnerable people. - In an environment in which climate change acts as a risk multiplier, not only do we need more humanitarian aid, we need smarter humanitarian aid. Our programmes need to integrate more strategic investments in disaster risk reduction, early warning, anticipatory action and safety nets for the most vulnerable people. This requires a shift from reactive and repetitive crisis response to more forward-looking and anticipatory risk management. - Climate solutions should focus on supporting Governments and vulnerable communities with restoring natural buffer zones and infrastructure to reduce the impacts of climate shocks on people; protecting vulnerable people from catastrophic losses; and anticipating climate shocks to allow vulnerable communities to act before climate related disasters materialize.
Essential Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate and extreme weather events can undermine access to services, such as health care (including for mental health and psychosocial support), housing, education, electricity, water and sanitation, and transport services, as well as access to human rights services. For example, disasters can result in the destruction of schools. In times of need, education becomes a second-level priority. This disproportionately affects women and girls, who are more likely to miss school as their help is needed at home.⁴⁶ In general, people already in the most disadvantaged position are often affected by climate change the most, and “social inequality” is deepened.⁴⁷
Protection⁴⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevention and protection are two sides of the same coin. If we do not do more to preserve the environment, reduce multiple risks and prepare for the inevitable impacts of climate change, we will have no choice but to try to provide greater protection to all affected, including those displaced by climate impacts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For people who are driven to cross an international border in the context of climate change and disasters, States maintain an obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of, all migrants and displaced people, regardless of status. The global legal framework for international refugee protection may be applicable in some specific circumstances and may serve to effectively extend international protection.⁴⁹ - The Platform on Disaster Displacement¹ agenda ‘supports an approach that focuses on the integration of effective practices by States and (sub-) regional organizations into their own normative frameworks in accordance with their specific situations and challenges.’⁵⁰ - ‘Its ‘Protection Agenda is situated in the context of increased international and regional recognition of the challenges of human mobility in the context of disasters and climate change, such as the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030, the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Compacts for Refugees and on Migration, and the World Humanitarian Summit. Thus, the Protection Agenda aims to further complement and support, rather than duplicate, these international and regional frameworks, processes and action areas by providing relevant evidence and examples of effective practices to address disaster displacement and its causes.’ - Where people may not be eligible for refugee status, complementary or temporary forms of protection should be available to provide protection for those in need.
<p>Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate-related emergencies and disasters significantly impact people’s mental health and psychosocial well-being. These impacts can threaten peace, human rights, development and engagement in adaptation and mitigation. - Addressing these impacts requires layered systems of complementary supports that cuts-across sectors of humanitarian action. Programmes need to intentionally consider and integrate MHPSS⁵¹ to support the resilience of people and communities and to promote engagement in risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation.
<p><i>Groups in Vulnerable Situations</i></p>	
<p>Women and girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women and girls often experience situations of vulnerability. Girls, for instance, are at higher risk of being pulled out of school, being married early, or experiencing early pregnancy or exploitative labour in climate shock-affected communities. Women and girls often lack access to resources and assets to cope with disasters.⁵²

¹ <https://disasterdisplacement.org/portfolio-item/nipa-vol2>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Men and women have different roles in agricultural livelihoods and are impacted differently by climate extremes. Women play a double role in food production and in family food security and nutrition. - Often, women, children, older persons and people with disabilities experience multiple deprivations that prevent them from managing climate risk and related shocks.⁵³ - Women human rights defenders, especially those from indigenous communities and working on land rights/environment/climate change face particular challenges and risks while carrying out their work. - Heat worsens maternal and neonatal health outcomes, with research suggesting that an increase of 1 degree Celsius in the week before delivery corresponds with a 6 percent greater likelihood of stillbirth.⁵⁴ - Four million girls in low - and lower-middle income countries will be prevented from completing their education because of climate-related events according to a Malala Fund Report 2021.⁵⁵ - Entrenched discrimination intensifies the impacts of climate change on women and girls – particularly when they are living in poverty, or are members of communities marginalised because of indigenous status, perceived caste status, or as minorities.⁵⁶
<p>Conflict-affected communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People enduring conflict are particularly vulnerable to climate change because of their limited capacity to cope with shocks and adapt to changes. Conflicts often harm the very assets that make people resilient, from their security to their homes and livelihoods, and their access to food, water and essential services. Conflicts can also cause long-term damage to the environment, harming people’s livelihoods and resilience for decades. The convergence of conflict and climate related risks can further worsen food and economic insecurity, health disparities and other vulnerabilities and limit access to services, while the capacity of institutions and Governments to provide emergency or longer-term support, manage resources and mediate tensions is diminished. Impacts are even more acute when insecurity limits the capacity of humanitarian and development organizations to respond to emergencies and support climate adaptation. Climate change may not directly cause armed conflict, but in addition to exacerbating the vulnerability of people coping with conflicts, it can indirectly contribute to the risk of conflict by exacerbating factors that can, in a complex interplay, ultimately reach a tipping point and lead to conflict. - More than half of the 20 countries most at risk of climate change also ran inter-agency humanitarian appeals for the past seven consecutive years, almost all responding to a mix of conflict and climate events. - Of the 20 countries considered the most vulnerable to climate change by the ND-Gain Index, 12 are in conflict (e.g. Yemen, Mali, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic).⁵⁷ - Many disasters, crises and conflicts are colliding, as witnessed with the compounding effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-related disasters, conflicts and protracted crises, and other transboundary pests, such as the locust swarms in the Horn of Africa.⁵⁸

<p>Migrants and displaced people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impacts of climate change are unevenly weighted against those in the most vulnerable situations. Among those people, displaced and stateless people are in particular need of protection. - Climate risks may aggravate threats to the human rights of migrants and displaced people and hinder safe, dignified and sustainable solutions to displacement, including return. - Where people are forced to flee across borders in the context of climate change and disasters, existing international and regional protection frameworks, including international human rights law, should be applied for the protection of people displaced in the context of climate change and disasters. - Every year, millions of people are displaced by the effects of climate change and disasters or are relocating to survive. In 2019, nearly 2,000 natural hazard events triggered 24 million new displacements across 140 countries and territories.⁵⁹ Legal channels for migration with dignity should be established as means to prevent displacement, as well as durable legal status for people displaced across borders. - Preparedness measures and efforts formulated with the participation and leadership of those most affected are essential in climate change-related disaster displacement in order to achieve a better protection response and address the affected population's needs. - Every year, 20-25 million people are displaced within their country due to extreme weather events, often linked to climate change.⁶⁰ The World Bank estimates there could be more than 143 million internal climate migrants across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America.⁶¹ - Climate-related displacement threatens a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, adequate housing, adequate food, water and sanitation, culture and development. - Poorer population groups or families affected by climate-related disasters will likely reduce their food consumption when hit by a climate shock, sometimes with no other alternative than to migrate to urban areas.
<p>People living with HIV</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The scope and intensity of climate disasters are increasingly affecting vulnerable populations, including people living with life-threatening illnesses. Evidence shows that 1 in 14 people living with HIV was in a humanitarian emergency in 2016, and that 1.43 million people living with HIV in humanitarian contexts did not access treatment. Of the 2.6 million people living with HIV in humanitarian contexts, many faced service disruptions and restrictive policies that impacted their ability to access services, move freely and live in dignity.⁶²
<p>Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The climate and environmental crisis is a grave threat to all children's survival, development, education, protection and other rights guaranteed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are already disadvantaged by poverty, discrimination, gender inequality and social marginalization, harmed first and worst. Children make up nearly half of those affected by disasters.⁶³ Yet their distinct needs, rights and voices are often neglected in climate policymaking processes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The World Bank estimates that climate change impacts could push an additional 100 million people into poverty by 2030,⁶⁴ which threatens millions of children with a myriad of harmful consequences. Despite this, only 20 per cent of Nationally Determined Contributions mention children.⁶⁵ Children and their best interests need to be at the centre of climate crisis mitigation and adaptation commitments and policies, ensuring children obtain real opportunities to influence policies based on their own demands and solutions. - Infant young and adolescent girls are more vulnerable to climate extremes due to reduced mobility and care (including food intake), and more susceptible to diseases and social isolation. Malnutrition early in life can irreversibly affect their growth and development, which can aggravate existing inequalities and limit opportunities for their future.⁶⁶
<p>Older persons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Older persons (aged over 70) represented 8.26 per cent of disaster-related deaths from 2000 to 2017 (about 4,700 per year).⁶⁷ These individuals tend to be disproportionately affected by disasters, particularly by extreme temperatures. As a percentage of the total population, they have the highest death rate of any age group.⁶⁸ - The vulnerability of older persons to disasters can come from age or age-related impairments combined with other factors, such as gender, ethnicity and social exclusion. Reduced mobility is likely one of the major factors rendering older persons disproportionately impacted by disasters, as is the breakdown of family and other support structures. Evacuation centres often do not provide the care needed, including medical services and adequate food and nutrition, and COVID-19-related fears might discourage residents from leaving their nursing homes. - Older persons are also often not included in the decision-making processes relating to issues affecting them.
<p>Persons with disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By 2018, there was an estimated 1 billion people with disabilities in the world— around 15 per cent of the global population.⁶⁹ The proportion of persons with disabilities is higher in environmentally vulnerable countries, adding up to 177 million people, and is considerably higher for the poorest 20 per cent of a given country’s population.⁷⁰ - People with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities often face multiple forms of discrimination and barriers to health care, support, education and inclusion.⁷¹ - Persons with disabilities are commonly excluded from decision-making processes related to climate adaptation and mitigation and disaster resilience including the design of disaster management and recovery plan. As a result, the barriers they face and the measures and support they require are left unidentified and persons with disabilities continue to be left out of risk reduction and adaptation measures.⁷² - It is essential to engage disabled persons and disabled persons’ organizations in the design and monitoring of relevant strategies and

	<p>programmes and to make information available widely including in accessible formats, in order to reduce the impact of disasters on persons with disabilities.⁷³</p>
<p>People living with mental health conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is estimated that nearly 1 billion people in the world are living with a mental health condition, representing 13% of the population. In conflict settings, these rates are as high as 1 in 5 people (22%).⁷⁴ - People living with mental health conditions may disproportionately be affected by climate-related emergencies. Those with pre-existing conditions may experience exacerbated symptoms or disruptions in access to necessary care or supports as a result of climatic shocks. - People with severe mental health conditions, such as those living in institutions, are particularly vulnerable as a result of climate change. In conflict or natural disaster settings, they are at high risk of abuse, abandonment and neglect.
<p>Indigenous peoples</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indigenous peoples are among the most affected by climate disasters, thus increasing their vulnerability and impacting their effective enjoyment of human rights. They often live in remote areas, which results in limited access to services and assistance.⁷⁵ - Nearly 15 per cent of the world's poor are indigenous people, even though indigenous peoples constitute only an estimated 5 per cent of the world's population. At the same time, up to 80 per cent of over 370 million indigenous people worldwide are spread across Asia and the Pacific — a region particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. - Some indigenous peoples depend on renewable natural resources that are most at risk to climate variability and extremes. Around 70 million indigenous people depend on forests to meet their livelihood needs. Although they account for 5 per cent of the world's population, they care for and protect 22 per cent of the Earth's surface and 80 per cent of the planet's biodiversity,⁷⁶ therefore playing a critical role in life-support ecosystems, which are key for our food systems. - The right of indigenous people to participate in decisions affecting them (free, prior, informed consent) is applicable to disaster management and prevention plans, and to climate governance in general.
<p>Small-scale farmers, herders, fishers, tree-dependent communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Smallholders (more than 2.5 billion people with agriculture-based livelihoods) produce more than 80 per cent of the food supply in developing countries.⁷⁷ As they are also the custodians of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity – and paradoxically, they are often among the world's poorest and most food insecure and threatened by climate change – they must be massively supported to fight hunger, and to combat climate change, land degradation, desertification and ocean collapse with convergent and coherent investments at scale in disaster and climate risk management (including nature-based solutions and humanitarian action).

Low-lying atoll nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entire countries are under threat of disappearing due to the rising sea levels. This would forcibly displace the entire population and threatens to render them stateless.
Urban poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty is a key cause of vulnerability. The World Bank’s report ‘Unbreakable’ states: “When poor people are affected, the share of their wealth lost is two to three times that of the nonpoor, largely because of the nature and vulnerability of their assets and livelihoods.”⁷⁸ - Urban poor people, especially people living in slums and informal settlements, face marginalization, insecure accommodation, limited access to life-sustaining services, higher proportionate costs of living, food insecurity and greater health risks. Without concerted effort to mitigate or eliminate its impacts, climate change will exacerbate all these challenges. - Informal settlements are often more exposed to either floods or landslides because of their location. These communities are at greater risk of natural hazards due to the often weak structure of the housing, the lack of sufficient drainage in the communities and the challenges accessing basic services, among other socioeconomic conditions. - As the world becomes warmer, the risk of extreme heat is also on the rise. Heatwaves are most acutely felt in cities; construction materials retain heat, causing ambient temperatures to be significantly higher than surrounding rural areas. Extreme heat is even more acutely felt in slums and informal settlements, where microheat islands often exist and indoor air temperatures have been documented higher still. Older residents and people with pre-existing medical conditions will be more vulnerable to the threat that a temperature increase poses to their health. They may also face barriers to emergency health care due to cost, proximity or stigma. - Many of these risks are already experienced today, but climate change coupled with rapid unplanned urbanization will exacerbate the scale and scope of their impacts. Equitable, forward-looking actions to reduce risk must be invested in today.

3. Terminology Cheat Sheet

This glossary defines some specific terms related to climate change as authors intend them to be interpreted in the context of Common Narrative on Climate Change and Humanitarian Action.

Adaptation finance	Initiatives and measures to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects. ⁷⁹ The Rio Marker, created to track OECD DAC-reported climate finance, defines adaptation as where a project “intends to reduce the vulnerability of human or natural systems to the current and expected impacts of climate change, including climate variability, by maintaining or increasing resilience, through increased ability to adapt to, or absorb, climate change stresses, shocks and variability and/or by helping reduce exposure to them.” ⁸⁰
Anticipatory action	An activity that takes place prior to an extreme weather event and is based on a forecast trigger, in order to mitigate the anticipated impact on food security, lives and livelihoods. ⁸¹ Anticipatory actions should not be a substitute for longer-term investment in risk reduction, and they should aim to strengthen people’s capacity to manage risks. ⁸²
Anticipatory finance	Pre-positioned funding, either bilateral or pooled, which is triggered once evidence of an imminent crisis meets certain criteria. Anticipatory financing requires four elements to be in place: predictive information, triggers and decision protocols; early action planning; financing mechanisms; and delivery channels. ⁸³
Carbon footprint	The total amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activities. This is usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO ₂), which is the major greenhouse gas. For example, when we burn fossil fuels to run our vehicles or heat our homes, we release CO ₂ . The food we buy reaches the grocery store by motor vehicle and possibly train or plane, which emit CO ₂ . Our carbon footprint is the sum of the CO ₂ emissions caused by our activities, usually calculated over a year. ⁸⁴
Climate	An area’s climate is its local weather conditions, such as temperature, precipitation (rainfall, snow, etc.), humidity, sunshine, cloudiness, wind, and air pressure. It is the weather averaged over a long period of time, taking account of the average conditions as well as their variability. Some people say that climate is what you expect, and weather is what you get.
Climate change	A significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). Climate change can result from natural changes (such as changes in the sun’s intensity or oceanic circulation) and human activities that alter the gaseous composition of the atmosphere (such as fossil fuel burning or deforestation).

Climate change adaptation	What we do to adjust to the changing climate – that is the actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may aid adjustment to expected climate change and its effects. ⁸⁵ Adaptation is not only about measures to deal with longer-term changes such as increased temperatures and sea-level rise, but also includes disaster risk reduction in the face of weather- and climate-related events.
Climate change mitigation	Action that reduces the rate of climate change. Climate change mitigation is achieved by limiting or preventing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing activities that remove these gases from the atmosphere. ⁸⁶ An increase in these gases has the effect of wrapping a thick blanket around the Earth, raising the average temperature of its atmosphere. CO ₂ is one of the main greenhouse gases, which is released when burning fossil fuels.
Disasters	Incidents where more than 10 people were killed or more than 100 people affected. ⁸⁷
Disaster displacement	‘Situations where people are forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of a disaster or in order to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. [...] Disaster displacement may take the form of spontaneous flight, an evacuation ordered or enforced by authorities or an involuntary planned relocation process. Such displacement can occur within a country (internal displacement), or across international borders (cross-border disaster displacement).’ ⁸⁸
Disaster risk management	The application of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk, reduce existing disaster risk and manage residual risk, contributing to the strengthening of resilience and reduction of disaster losses. Disaster risk management actions can be prospective, corrective or compensatory; the latter is also called residual risk management. ⁸⁹
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	Action focused on preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and, therefore, to achieving sustainable development. ⁹⁰
Early warning system	An integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication, and preparedness activities, systems and processes that enable individuals, communities, Governments, businesses and others to take timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events. ⁹¹
Extreme climatological events	Events that are rare for the place where they occur and appear in the top or bottom of the range (in terms of temperature, wind speed, volume of rain, etc.) observed for that location. Not all extreme events will lead to a disaster, as this will depend on a variety of factors including location, levels of exposure, vulnerability of the people in the

	affected area, and whether it occurs simultaneously with other shocks or hazards. ⁹²
Greenhouse gas (GHG)	Naturally occurring and human-made gases that trap infrared radiation as it is reflected from the Earth's surface, trapping heat and keeping the Earth warm. The six main GHGs with human-caused emissions are carbon dioxide (CO ₂), methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulphur hexafluoride (SF ₆). ⁹³
Human mobility	An overarching umbrella term that refers to three forms of population movement: i) displacement – the primarily forced movement of persons, ii) migration – the primarily voluntary movement of persons, iii) planned relocation – the process of settling persons or communities to a new location (UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16 Cancun Climate Change Adaptation Framework, paragraph 14f). ⁹⁴ It should be noted that most movement is neither entirely forced nor entirely voluntary.
Mainstreaming	In the context of climate change, mainstreaming implies that awareness of climate impacts and associated measures to address these impacts are integrated into the existing and future policies and plans of developing countries, multilateral institutions, donor agencies and NGOs. ⁹⁵
National adaptation plan (NAP)	Under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, a process was established to enable least-developed countries to formulate and implement NAPs. This process will build upon their experience in preparing and implementing national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs), as a means of identifying medium- and long-term adaptation needs and developing and implementing strategies and programmes to address those needs.
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)	These are the objectives that States have set for themselves in terms of GHG emissions and climate adaptation in the context of the Paris Agreement. Following the ratification of the Paris Agreement, NDCs are legally binding.
Paris Agreement (also called the Paris Climate Accord or the Paris Climate Agreement)	This is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that began implementation in 2020. It aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement requires all parties to put forward their best efforts through NDCs and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead. This includes requirements that all parties report regularly on their emissions and implementation efforts. ⁹⁶
Resilience	The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through preserving and restoring its essential basic structures and functions through risk management. ⁹⁷

Risk	The combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences. ⁹⁸
Vulnerability	The propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt (IPCC). UNDRR defines vulnerability as the “conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards.” ⁹⁹
Weather	The set of meteorological conditions (wind, rain, snow, sunshine, temperature, etc.) at a particular time and place.

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² IFRC, *The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Humanitarian Price of Climate Change and How it can be avoided*, 2019, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019-IFRC-CODN-EN%20%281%29.pdf>, [accessed 26 November 2020]

³ António Guterres, *Remarks at 2019 Climate Action Summit*, 23 September 2019, available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2019-09-23/remarks-2019-climate-action-summit>, [accessed 1 December 2020]

⁴ United Nations, *The UN Common Guidance on Resilience* (in press), 2020, available at: <https://www.sparkblue.org/basic-page/un-common-guidance-helping-build-resilient-societies>, [accessed 11 December 2020]

⁵ IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2020, "Come heat or high water. Tackling the Humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis together."*, 2020, ISBN 978-2-9701289-5-3, available at: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/world-disaster-report-2020>, [accessed 26 November 2020]

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ IFRC, *The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Humanitarian Price of Climate Change and How it can be avoided*, 2019, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019-IFRC-CODN-EN%20%281%29.pdf>, [accessed 26 November 2020]

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¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Flooding affects millions in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Relentless rainfall, monsoon floods and landslides claim lives, destroy homes and ruin food stocks*, 21 August 2017, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/flooding-affects-millions-bangladesh-india-and-nepal>, [accessed 1 December 2020]

¹⁵ IDMC, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019*, May 2019, available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>, [accessed 11 December 2020].

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- ¹⁶ IFRC, *The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Humanitarian Price of Climate Change and How it can be avoided*, 2019, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019-IFRC-CODN-EN%20%281%29.pdf>, [accessed 26 November 2020]
- ¹⁷ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, *Quick Facts on Drylands, Deserts, Desertification and Land Degradation 2010-2020*, n/a, available at: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/united-nations-decade-deserts-2010-2020-and-fight-against-desertification>, [accessed 27 November 2020]
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- ²⁵ The ND GAIN index quantifies national vulnerability to climate disruptions. Vulnerability is calculated as a combination of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity, and the index also looks at readiness to adapt based on economic, governance and social components. This is the index most commonly used in the climate world.
- ²⁶ The INFORM index quantifies national disaster risk based on historical exposure to hazards, vulnerability and coping capacity. This is most commonly used by those working on DRR and humanitarian issues, and focuses more on shorter-term risks. This was filtered for only climate- and weather-related risk.
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³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The Impact of Natural hazards and Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security and Nutrition*, A call for action to build resilient livelihoods, May 2015, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4434e.pdf>, [accessed on 11 December 2020]

³⁷ FAO, *Global Humanitarian Response Plan Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding livelihoods in food crisis contexts*, 2020, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0285en/cb0285en.pdf>, [accessed 11 December 2020]

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⁴³ OHCHR, Key messages on human rights and climate change, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/materials/KMClimateChange.pdf>

⁴⁴ OHCHR/Platform on Disaster Displacement, *The slow onset effects of climate change and human rights protection for cross-border migrants (2018)*: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/OHCHR_slow_onset_of_Climate_Change_EN.pdf and [2020 report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/OHCHR_slow_onset_of_Climate_Change_EN.pdf), [accessed 20 April 2021].

⁴⁵ See among others, relevant human rights obligations contained in UNFCCC (see OHCHR 2021 [Frequently Asked Questions on Climate Change and Human Rights](#)), the [1992 Rio Declaration](#), the [1998 Aarhus Convention](#), the [Escazu Agreement](#), [ILO Convention No 169](#), [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), [2018 Guidelines for States on the Effective Implementation of the Right to Participate in Public Affairs](#).

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