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The Challenges of Climate Change for Migration

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Nowadays, when we want to describe environmental conditions, terms like air, water and soil pollution, melting glaciers, devastating drought, rising sea levels, population problems or the decrease of biodiversity are among the first ones to come up. The environment has always been a driver of migration. The estimation on the total number of environmental migrants due to global factors such as population growth, poverty, governance, human security and conflict, which have a huge impact, is quite challenging. As for the predictions, this amount may range from 25 million to one billion by the year 2050.²

Europe has become one of the most important immigration destinations in recent decades, and migratory pressures are increasing. Furthermore, the continent is affected not only by external exodus, but also by internal migration, as a result of environmental degradation, which can also be observed there, further accelerating the process of internal migration.

The immigration policies of most destination countries are not conducive to receiving large numbers of environmental migrants, unless they enter through already existing admission categories. Thus typically, the purpose of the residence is employment, education and family reunification, but what about the people who had to leave their homes because of the environmental degradation?

During the coronavirus pandemic economic activity slowed down, causing a reduction in carbon emissions, but due to the constant deterioration of the environmental conditions there are a lot of discussions about the term *sustainable development*. The aim of this study is to demonstrate how climate change has a major role to play in the migration tendencies, as it may amplify the existing political, social or economic problems. Discussing this topic, it is inevitable to use the term *environmental refugee*. After an overview of the relevant scientific literature, the author looks for the answer to the question whether there have been any changes in the regulations since the introduction of this concept.

KEYWORDS: Environment protection, migration, European Union, environmental migration

Az éghajlatváltozás kihívásai a migráció szempontjából

Manapság, amikor a környezeti állapotokat akarjuk leírni, olyan kifejezések merülnek fel elsőként, mint a levegő-, víz- és talajszennyezés, a gleccserek olvadása, a pusztító aszály, a tengerszint emelkedése, a népesedési problémák vagy a biológiai sokféleség csökkenése. A környezet mindig is a migráció egyik mozgatórugója volt. A globális tényezők, mint például a népességnövekedés, a szegénység, a kormányzás, az emberi biztonság és a konfliktusok által kiváltott, óriási hatással járó környezeti migránsok teljes számának becslése meglehetősen

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² <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/world/20200624STO81906/exploring-migration-causes-why-people-migrate>

nagy kihívást jelent. Az előrejelzések szerint ez a szám 2050-re 25 millió és egymilliárd között lehet.

Európa az elmúlt évtizedekben az egyik legfontosabb bevándorlási célországgá vált, és a migrációs nyomás egyre nő. Ráadásul a kontinenst nem csak a külső elvándorlás, hanem a belső migráció is érinti, a szintén ott megfigyelhető környezetromlás következtében, ami tovább gyorsítja a belső migráció folyamatát.

A legtöbb célország bevándorlási politikája nem kedvez a környezeti migránsok nagyszámú befogadásának, kivéve, ha azok a már létező befogadási kategóriákon keresztül érkeznek. Így jellemzően a tartózkodás célja a munkavállalás, az oktatás és a családdegysítés, de mi a helyzet azokkal az emberekkel, akiknek a környezetromlás miatt kellett elhagyniuk otthonukat?

A koronavírus-járvány idején a gazdasági tevékenység lelassult, ami a szén-dioxid-kibocsátás csökkenését eredményezte, de a környezeti feltételek folyamatos romlása miatt sok vita folyik a fenntartható fejlődés fogalmáról. A tanulmány célja annak bemutatása, hogy az éghajlatváltozásnak milyen jelentős szerepe van a migrációs tendenciákban, mivel felerősítheti a meglévő politikai, társadalmi vagy gazdasági problémákat. E téma megvitatásakor elkerülhetetlen a környezeti menekült kifejezés használata. A vonatkozó szakirodalom áttekintése után a szerző arra keresi a választ, hogy a fogalom bevezetése óta történt-e változás a szabályozásban.

KULCSSZAVAK: környezetvédelem, migráció, Európai Unió, környezeti migráció

1. Introduction

Environmental pollution, being one of the most threatening and most urgent problems, has become evident by recent times.³ The rising of sea levels, the increasing frequency of extreme weather conditions, water scarcity and desertification are only a couple of the dangers concerning the environment.

Climate change is an ongoing process that will be worse, even if the global efforts to decrease greenhouse gases proves to be successful. The effects, however, will be less serious if the global average temperature increase can be limited to less than 2 degrees Celsius due to the efforts to decrease emissions, as required by the Paris Treaty.⁴ Any scenario with higher increase would lead to a significantly greater climate change.

Extreme weather and climate dangers such as heat waves, floods, droughts will, in many regions, be more frequent and more intensive. This will damage the ecosystems, the economical branches as well as human well-being and health. Thus, besides the measures targeting the decrease of greenhouse gases, specific measures need to be taken, focusing on the adaptation to the effects of climate change, in order to minimize the risks of global warming. Adaptation should conform with the particular circumstances of the given regions and cities.

³ Gellérthegeyi 2011.

⁴ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HU/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019\(01\)&from=HU](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HU/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A1019(01)&from=HU) (2020. 02. 08.)

Since the last environmental status report of the EEA, the general environmental tendencies have not improved. The report notes that while the objectives set to 2020, especially those concerning biodiversity, will not be met, there is still a chance to reach the longer term goals set to 2030 and 2050.⁵

Between 2015 and 2050 the number of births is expected to exceed the number of deaths by 20 million in high income countries, whilst the estimated net population growth is 91 million. This means that according to the medium variant of the prediction, migration is expected to give 82 % of population growth in high income countries.⁶

2. Environment Protection and the European Union

Due to the fast-paced environmental degradation more emphasis is put on law making. The EU legislation from the beginning: The European Economic Community was founded on March 25, 1957. In the Treaty of Rome, no specific environmental measures were included, only references were made, because globally, at that time, it was not considered as important as it is today. When the need arose for environmental regulation during community practice, they had to reach back to the Treaty's articles concerning general authorization. Naturally, it would have been impossible without the consensus of the member states. In accordance with Articles 100 and 235, the Community has adopted numerous laws - until 1986 more than 150 – on environment protection, most of them relate to products.⁷ According to Article No.100 guidelines legally binding the Member States can be issued, and according to Article 235 the Community may adopt acts for its goals to be achieved. (Article 11 and 191 to 193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) The EU has jurisdiction in all fields of Environment protection: air and water pollution, waste management and climate change. The scope of its measures is restricted by the principle of subsidiarity and the requirement that the Council has to decide unanimously on the fields of taxation, spatial planning, land-use, quantitative water resource management, the choice of energy sources and the structure of energy supply.⁸

Due to the failure to stop this fast-paced environmental degradation, an increase in the significance of environmental regulation can be seen in international and especially in EU legislation. The deficiencies of achieving the stated goals in preserving the state of our environment and the shortcomings in implementing environmental policies provide an increasing role to environmentally aware citizens and the environment protecting civil society organizations in particular.

⁵ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/hu/highlights/europa-kornyezeti-allapota-2020-ban> (2020. 02. 08.)

⁶ Vajda 2017.

⁷ Simon 1994, 197.

⁸ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/hu/sheet/71/kornyezetpolitika-altalanos-elvek-es-alapveto-keretek> (2020. 03. 08.)

Summary of past trends, outlooks and prospects of meeting policy objectives/targets⁹

Theme	Past trends and outlook		Prospects of meeting policy objectives/targets		
	Past trends (10-15 years)	Outlook to 2030	2020	2030	2050
Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital					
Terrestrial protected areas					
Marine protected areas					
EU protected species and habitats					
Common species (birds and butterflies)					
Ecosystem condition and services					
Water ecosystems and wetlands					
Hydromorphological pressures					
State of marine ecosystems and biodiversity					
Pressures and impacts on marine ecosystems					
Urbanisation and land use by agriculture and forestry					
Soil condition					
Air pollution and impacts on ecosystems					
Chemical pollution and impacts on ecosystems					
Climate change and impacts on ecosystems					
Resource-efficient, circular and low-carbon economy					
Material resource efficiency					
Circular use of materials					
Waste generation					
Waste management					
Greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation efforts					
Energy efficiency					
Renewable energy sources					
Emissions of air pollutants					
Pollutant emissions from industry					
Clean industrial technologies and processes					
Emissions of chemicals					
Water abstraction and its pressures on surface and groundwater					
Sustainable use of the seas					
Safeguarding from environmental risks to health and well-being					
Concentrations of air pollutants					
Air pollution impacts on human health and well-being					
Population exposure to environmental noise and impacts on human health					
Preservation of quiet areas					
Pollution pressures on water and links to human health					
Chemical pollution and risks to human health and well-being					
Climate change risks to society					
Climate change adaptation strategies and plans					
Indicative assessment of past trends (10-15 years) and outlook to 2030			Indicative assessment of prospects of meeting selected policy objectives/targets		
	Improving trends/developments dominate		Year	Largely on track	
	Trends/developments show a mixed picture		Year	Partially on track	
	Deteriorating trends/developments dominate		Year	Largely not on track	
Note: The year for the objectives/targets does not indicate the exact target year but the time frame of the objectives/targets.					

2.1. The EU and Environment Protection Today

The environmental standards are the highest in the European Union. Despite the legislation being rather extensive, it cannot protect us from the negative effects of the global environmental degradation that is spreading across borders worldwide.

Our everyday challenges are rather interrelated, and in this regard, sustainable development must be achieved in environmental, social and economic areas. Climate change, the decrease of biodiversity and biological security, deforestation, air and water pollution and

⁹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/hu/highlights/europa-kornyezeti-allapota-2020-ban> (2020. 02. 16.)

the mismanagement of chemicals are only a few of the fields that require genuine commitment and efficient collaboration on international levels for us to be able to face the challenges.

The aim of the environmental policy and the EU regulation is to ensure the citizens of the Union to live in health without depleting the planet. In the focus, there is an innovative and circular economy that protects biodiversity as a value to be restored and that minimizes environment-related health risks, thus increasing the resilience of society and decouples growth from the use of resources.

2.2. The Foundations of the EU's Policy on Environment

Articles 11 and 191 to 193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The EU enjoys jurisdiction in all areas of the environment policy including air and water pollution, waste management as well as climate change. The scope of its measures is restricted by the principle of subsidiarity and the requirement that the Council has to decide unanimously on the fields of taxation, spatial planning, land-use, quantitative water resource management, the choice of energy sources and the structure of energy supply. The environment policy of the EU is based on the precautionary principle, the preventive principle, the principle that environmental damage should, as a priority, be rectified at source and the polluter-pays principle.

2.2.1. The Precautionary Principle

The precautionary principle is a risk management tool that is primarily used in cases when science is unable to clearly determine the suspected risks on human health or the environment. The limit of such measures is that they must be proportionate and free from discrimination and must also be revised as soon as more scientific information is available.

2.2.2. The “Polluter-Pays” Principle

The principle is implemented by the Environmental Liability Directive, and it can guarantee the responsibility of the environment user at any time – from authorization to the ceasing of the activity followed by the rectification of the damage caused by the user. The Environmental Liability Directive, as a main tool of this, envisages the Member States to encourage the economic operators to take out liability insurances or financial guarantees.

Furthermore, the incorporation of environment protection into other fields of EU policy gets a great emphasis. In recent years, the integration of environment protection has made significant progress, for instance in the field of energy policy, and it is reflected in the fact that the Climate Change Package and the Energy Package was parallelly developed, or in the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050.¹⁰

The EU is acknowledged as a leading advocate of the action concerning environment protection, and it is committed to promoting sustainable development.

¹⁰ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/hu/sheet/71/kornyezetpolitika-altalanos-elvek-es-alapveto-keretek>

Sustainable development is one of the most important aims of the EU, as it is stated in its Treaties. As an active participant of multilateral environmental agreements and of the development of other environmental negotiations and procedures, in particular within the United Nations (the High-Level Political Forum, the General Assembly of the UN on Environment) the constructive standpoint of the EU has proven to be crucial in order to ensure progress.¹¹

3. The Relationship between Environment and Migration

Climate change is often thought of as the great equalizer, in the sense that everybody suffers the same consequences for what happens in the biosphere. However, this statement, in this form, is untrue. People who live on the margins and already suffer, will be affected by climate change to a greater extent, in relation to their limited resources, and they will be the first to painfully feel the changes.

Nations across the equatorial band of the planet in the global south are already dealing with rather dramatic impacts today, which are to get much more serious in the decades ahead, and the countries which will be affected by these impacts in the most gruesome way, will be the ones that have had the least role in the development of this situation.

In recent years, two of the most debated topics of our times have been environment protection and migration. These issues are seemingly unrelated, but they have proven to be intertwined. News coverages of boats full of African refugees heading to Europe have become commonplace. Most of the time many passengers died due to the lack of food and water during the tossing at sea for over two weeks. The vessels drifting without fuel were shared by the living and the dead.¹²

The migration due to environmental factors is a real problem as Ákos Treszkai points out in his study “According to UN estimates, some 2 900 000 refugees have left the region for neighbouring countries, with some continuing to the Gulf countries and others to Europe.”¹³

Seeing these situations, the question arises why these people have decided to set off on their journey leaving their former lives behind, endangering their families. The reasons can be of political or economical nature - considering how great the differences between qualities of life can be in different parts of the world - but more frequently, the environmental problems are in the background.

Overpopulation is the most propulsive factor to migration and together with gradual environmental degradation, extreme natural phenomena, natural disasters, large-scale investments, increasing environmental pressure and environmental conflicts as well as environmental disasters of natural or human origin often stimulate migration.¹⁴

Regarding the extent of the phenomenon, it is a widely debated topic, but both in the media and in public discourse we often see interchangeable uses of the terms ‘refugee’ and

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/index_en.htm (2020. 01. 30.)

¹² For example: Bódi, Szuhai 2125.

¹³ Treszkai 2019, 71.

¹⁴ Bende, Muhoray 2014.

‘migrant’. The two concepts are, however, very clearly defined, and have very different meanings, the confusion of which causes problems for both groups of people.

Refugees are people fleeing from armed conflicts or persecution. At the end of the year 2004 there were 19 million refugees. Their situation is often so dangerous and unbearable that they look for safety in nearby countries by crossing borders. From this point, they are considered internationally recognized “refugees” who are entitled to assistance from the parts of the states, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other organizations. For refugees, returning home is too dangerous, this is why they need a refuge elsewhere. Denying these people asylum may result in their deaths.

To protect the refugees of today, landmarks shall be anticipated. The legal principles included in the conventions have influenced numerous other international, regional, national laws and practices. The 1951 Asylum Convention defines who shall be considered as a *refugee* and outlines the rights that states must grant for them. In public international law, one of the most fundamental of such principles is that a refugee should not be expelled or returned to circumstances where his or her life or liberty is in danger. Under Article 1 of the Geneva Convention:

“A. For the purposes of this Convention, the term "refugee" shall apply to any person who:

(1) has been recognized as a refugee under the Agreements of 12 May 1926 and 30 June 1928 or the Conventions of 28 October 1933 and 10 February 1938, in accordance with the Protocol of 14 September 1939 or under the Statute of the International Asylum Organization;

A decision taken during the existence of the International Refugee Organization which does not recognize this right shall not preclude the granting of refugee status to persons who fulfill the conditions set out in paragraph 2 of this Part.

(2) A person who, as a result of events which occurred before 1 January 1951, is outside the country of his or her nationality due to his or her legitimate fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality or membership of a particular social group or political opinion and cannot or does not wish to seek the protection of that country for fear of persecution; or who, being stateless and without his former habitual residence, is unable or unwilling to return as a result of such events as a result of such events.”¹⁵

3.1. Environmental Migration

The climate crisis has triggered what may be the largest migration of humans in our planet’s history and a new term has been added to dictionaries, that is climate refugees. Quite often, citizens are moving not just within the country, but across international boundaries and that creates situations that really have to be focused on by governments because they can really get out of control.

The definition of environmental migration is hotly debated in scientific life. If we examine the elements of the concept of a refugee, we can see that someone who is being

¹⁵ Legislative Decree No 15 of 1989 promulgating the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted on 28 July 1951, and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted on 31 January 1967.

chased from their home by some environmental problem is not covered by the Geneva definition of a refugee. No one can be granted asylum on the grounds of environmental problems. However, based on an analysis of recent examples, notably the crises of the Syrian Civil War and the Middle East, many authors (e.g. Polk 2013, Tálás 2015, Biedermann et al. 2015) warn that with the increasing pressure caused by environmental factors and climate change and with the resulting conflicts, the number of ‘traditional’, political and war refugees could also rise sharply. This has been fully confirmed by recent events.¹⁶

“The term ‘environmental refugee’ first appears in Essam El-Hinnawi’s 1985 book under the United Nations Environment Program. It is defined as “a person who has had to leave his or her habitat temporarily or permanently due to a potential environmental hazard or disruption of life-sustaining ecosystems”. El-Hinnawi divides these into three categories:

(1) relocates temporarily due to an environmental stress such as an earthquake or cyclone;

(2) relocates permanently as a result of permanent habitat change, such as construction of a new dam; and

(3) relocates permanently as a result of their original habitat no longer providing for their basic needs.”¹⁷

The first person to be considered an “environmental refugee” is a man from Kiribati who applied for asylum in 2013 from a New Zealand court because of rising sea levels threatening his home.

It later became necessary to clarify the concept. In the 2011, the second edition of the Migration Glossary, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) further clarified the definition by separating the following two categories:

- Environmental migrant: “any person or group of persons who are forced (or decided) to leave their homes (temporarily or permanently) as a result of the sudden or gradual change of their environment which influences their lives or life conditions and are determined to migrate across national borders” (IOM 2011, 33).

- Environmentally displaced person: “all persons who have been forced to leave their normal place of residence, move within the country or cross an international border and for whom environmental degradation or destruction has been the main, although not necessarily the sole reason. We use this term instead of the terms “environmental refugee” and “climate refugee”, which has no legal basis in international law, for the category of migrants whose movement is undoubtedly due to compelling reasons” (IOM 2011, 34).¹⁸

There have been many publications on the definition of an environmental refugee¹⁹, but why is it important to define the concept precisely?

The creation of a definition has serious consequences (primarily concerning asylum rights), therefore, all actors in the process have given the issue a serious consideration. Finally, both the members of the international community and the United Nations High

¹⁶ Vajda 2017.

¹⁷ Vág 2010.

¹⁸ Vajda 2017.

¹⁹ For example: Lee Shin-wha, Norman Myers, Lonergan, Künçek.

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have refused to recognize those affected by environmental or climate migration as refugees.²⁰

“From the 1980s onwards, a new category of refugee, ecological refugees, emerged. They typically came mainly from Africa and South America. As a result of the overload of the Earth and the exploitation of economically utilizable areas, the environment and, indirectly, the lives of millions of people are in danger. In parallel, one of the most significant phenomena is the demographic explosion and overpopulation in third world countries, which is accompanied by a number of accompanying phenomena. Ethnic conflicts, wars, civil wars, armed hostilities, serious, lasting violations of human rights, persecution can also be causes of emigration, as can natural disasters and epidemics.”²¹

When it comes to refugees, the first one among international legal documents that we need to look at is the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. According to Article 1A (2) of the Convention, these are grounds based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

The interpretation of these reasons has developed in the practice of UNHCR, and further guidance is provided both in the day-to-day application and in the International Protection Guidelines issued by the High Commission, as well as in the so-called “Handbook”. Environmental refugees do not fall into any of the above five categories.

We can rely on a few international legal documents regarding this phenomenon, thus we can state that the area is characterized by a lack of legal regulation.

Some of the few soft international legal instruments available name certain reasons that may underlie environmental flight, but in addition to their lack of legal force, they do not provide guidance on the events the occurrence of which would theoretically justify protection to the persons concerned. They do not list the reasons that the international community considers to be so serious that in their event the international protection of individuals and groups forced to flee could be justified.

We can not ignore a major study on the Bundeswehr website, which deals with the issue of environmental migration and environmental refugees, and notes that there is no agreed definition of these terms. It emphasizes that climate change has security implications.²²

Although there is growing attention on environmental migration, apart from a few case studies of developing countries and a conclusion drawn from historical contexts, there is still a lack of comparative research in our world today, which is hampered by the fact that neither the countries of origin nor the countries of destination carry out statistical data collection of this type, therefore, the proportion of environmental migrants within all migrations is unknown.

²⁰ Brown 2011.

²¹ Bende, Muhoray 2014.

²² Teilstudie 2, Klimafolgen im Kontext Implikationen von Sicherheit und Stabilität im Nahen Osten und Afrika, Streitkräfte, Fähigkeiten und Technologien im 21. Jahrhundert Umweltdimensionen von Sicherheit. <https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/140552/823d868570c72b0b76b28440c4e293f1/klimafolgen-data.pdf> Planungsamt der Bundeswehr, Dezernat Zukunftsanalyse. 2012. 135. 17.

Not only are the statistics unknown in the topic, but the motivations for environmental migration decisions have not been revealed yet. We can assume that a deteriorating environment will only trigger migration when it has striking, spectacular consequences.

The UN projects that there will be up to one billion migrants by the year 2050²³. It is no coincidence that a parallel wave of nationalism is sweeping across the globe as countries who had a good start to close their doors and tighten their borders.

We have to address this uncomfortable history, make amends and commit to creating a fairer future for both people and the planet. This is called climate justice.²⁴ We have to realize that the people who are hardest hit are the people who have been the least responsible.

The environment and migration are therefore interlinked problems, which are also connected to the issue of international security and thus both raise security and defense issues. Thomas Homer Dixon, a renowned expert on environmental issues, points this out in his book *Environmental Scarcity and Violence*.²⁵

Governments have to think about this in advance. The answer is not to prevent people from migrating. The answer is to make it easier for people to stay where they live, because they refuse to move. The key to that is to reduce climate change enough so that the risk of moving into different places at the same time is reduced significantly.

4. Steps Taken to Protect the Environment

Migratory pressures on Europe are increasing, due to the fact that it has become one of the most popular immigration destinations. And since the continent has not been devoid of environmental degradation, internal migration tendencies stemming from climatic changes can also be observed, beside the increasing external migration.

As we have seen, climate change has a significant effect on migratory trends, and while concentrating on preserving the condition of the environment, we also need to examine some recently adopted documents in order to assess how much focus is given to the impact of environmental issues on migration.

4.1. United Nations

One of these documents is the Sustainable Development Framework 2030 - Agenda 2030. In 2000, based on a decision by world leaders, setting a 2015 deadline, a number of time-bound targets were set, which became known as the MDGs. Thanks to the efforts of millions of people and the global cooperation, real progress has been made. The number of people living in poverty has fallen to less than half of the 1990's level, and 2 billion more have access to better quality of drinking water.

²³ United Nations site: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/migration> (2020. 02. 08.)

²⁴ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/climate-justice/> (2020. 02. 08.)

Climate justice definition: a human-centered approach to tackling climate change whilst addressing the many intersecting social issues that created it.

²⁵ Homer-Dixon 2008.

Despite its success, 1.2 billion people still live in deep poverty. Which means every 4 seconds a child dies from preventable causes and more than 800 million, mostly women and young people, suffer from chronic hunger. Meanwhile, the world's population is projected to grow to 9.5 billion by 2050 and the food system is already in a critical condition.

The current situation is further exacerbated by climate change, which threatens to destroy the lives of millions more and nullify the progress made so far. Inequality is growing everywhere and human rights are being undermined in the world's most fragile and conflict-affected countries, while the world economy continues to stumble.

Considering the difficulties mentioned above, a debate was necessary on what must follow the MDGs after they expire in 2015.²⁶

“World leaders pledged at a historic UN summit in New York in September 2015 to end poverty, fight climate change and fight injustice. The 2030 Sustainable Development Framework offers a better future for our planet as a whole and for billions of people worldwide. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted unanimously by 193 countries, set a new universal benchmark for development by ensuring that no one is left behind. The package of proposals included 17 objectives and 169 sub-objectives. The objectives and indicators behind the SDGs provide a benchmark against which to measure the success of progress.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Framework is universal and indivisible, and calls on both developing and developed countries to take action, as well as on people, to end poverty, tackle inequalities and tackle climate change by 2030.”²⁷

Monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Framework will be brought together by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) established at the 2012 UN Conference in Rio.²⁸

The framework reconciles the intention to harmonize development and sustainable development activities to date. The framework takes a more comprehensive approach to sustainable development programs, breaking with past practices and it not only includes tasks for less developed countries, but also sets sustainable development goals and targets for all countries and regions.

As for the number of participating countries, the framework has expanded since its adoption, and it has also grown in the sense that it has assigned very specific, significant targets and has supported instruments to many more areas, underlining the situations of particularly vulnerable societies and groups.

Reading the text of the Framework, we can see that although it mentions migration, it does not draw a parallel between preserving the state of the possible environment and reducing migration trends.

²⁶ http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/hu/topics/sustainable_development_goals_background.html (2020. 05. 08.)

²⁷ http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/hu/topics/sustainable_development_goals.html (2020. 07. 08.)

²⁸ <https://ensz.kormany.hu/a-2030-fenntarthato-fejlodesi-keretrendszer-agenda-2030> (2020. 01. 25.)

4.2. *The European Union*

The same can be said for the wording of the Paris Agreement, which entered into force 04 November 2016.

The Paris Agreement is the first multilateral agreement on climate change to cover almost all the world's emissions. It is a success for the world and will strengthen the Union on the road to a low-carbon economy. The Union's negotiating strategy was crucial to reaching an agreement. The EU has made ambitious efforts, building on its experience of effective climate policy, negotiating traditions and international cooperation based on regulation.

The Paris Agreement outlines a global action plan that traces the right trajectory for the world to avoid dangerous levels of climate change, recognizing the need to peak global greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and to achieve climate neutrality in the second half of this century.

The Paris Agreement addresses migration in one case: “Recognizing that climate change is a common concern of humankind, in their response to climate change, Parties shall respect, promote and take into account their respective obligations to respect human rights, the right to health, indigenous peoples, local communities, the rights of migrants, children, people with disabilities and vulnerable persons, the right to development and the strengthening of the principles of gender equality, the role of women and intergenerational equity.”²⁹

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the two documents do not point to the link between environmental degradation and migration.

4.3. *NATO*

Extreme climate conditions are a global challenge, they affect NATO's core tasks in many ways. Crisis management for example, which is a major task of NATO will have to happen under perhaps even more difficult circumstances in terms of weather or terrain. NATO can be prepared to use its military capabilities to lend a hand, because often the military with their logistics, their transport aircraft, are able to reach the affected places earlier than authorities. NATO forces are also striving to reduce their carbon footprint by means of developing logistics to decrease the consumption of diesel fuel or by using renewable energy sources. The use of modern computer technology provides the means of optimal distribution of power within a camp so that the overall ecological footprint is much lower. An alliance like NATO and also other militaries around the world have very important roles to play since they are premier planning organizations and one of the best ways we may combat climate change is to make our societies in all their dimensions more resilient to those effects.

Since the 1970's NATO has had an environmental policy for military operations. NATO follows very strict environmental standards, because the military should not be seen as a polluter. NATO is not in the business of conducting climate policies. However, the very fact

²⁹ https://www.un.org/depts/los/biodiversity/prepcom_files/BowlingPiersonandRatte_Common_Concern.pdf (2020. 05. 20.)

that they have been looking at this issue for quite a long time and from various dimensions shows that NATO is prepared to defend its allies under whatever conditions.³⁰

„The joint NATO doctrine for environmental protection was elaborated by the EPWG as a result of more than four years of work. The complex nature of a general environmental protection policy applicable for military operations and exercises caused continuous conceptual changes during the elaboration process. The process had three phases. In the first phase the very detailed environmental demands were collected and formulated. In the second phase, these detailed environmental demands were “softened” and made generally applicable. This contradictory situation had been resolved in the third phase by the implementation of the modern approach of environmental management systems into the doctrine.”³¹

5. Summary

Despite the fact that environmental degradation - and now let us ignore the principal causes thereof - is undeniably at the heart of the problem of migration, no statistical data is collected from either the countries of origin or the host states. However, environmental degradation is not the only factor that causes millions of people to leave their homeland, many people from the various crisis regions set off because of wars, armed conflicts, economic oppression, political, religious persecution or showdown, often forced and persecuted by militias.³²

Those people who have already suffered from the consequences of climate change may not have a future. They are the victims of poverty in their land. People like them are climate refugees, environmental migrants, disaster displaced persons. How we frame the issue is important for legal and policy issues and it is important because we are talking about large numbers of people.

The growing number of environmental refugees and the fact that neither the refugee category has been expanded nor the environmental documents mention a group of people of this size reflect the fact that we are not currently in harmony with our Earth. The influx of environmental refugees indicates that we need to think about migration in a more complex way.

The lack of a solid empirical foundation for the causal link between climate change and migration might explain why environmentally displaced people are not recognized under international law, and are therefore invisible.

In the future, we must also pay greater attention to its environmental aspects, working together worldwide. We are faced with an existential global emergency that requires societal shifts on an unimaginable scale. We need to phase out fossil fuels, protect nature and transform our economy. It is not enough to merely focus on the protection of the environment, it is also necessary to explore the motivation of environmental refugees in more detail in order to jointly formulate recommendations to alleviate possible political, religious or economic reasons.

³⁰ NATO official site: <https://natolibguides.info/Environment/NATO-Documents>

³¹ Jaczó, Vincze: NATO Environmental Doctrine from Hungarian Point of View. In Defense and the Environment: Effective Scientific Communication. 43–50.

³² Bende, Muhoray 2014.

After defining the concept of climate migrants along clear standards, policy initiatives will need to begin to focus on the development of sound climate migrant governance mechanisms.³³

This task is extremely difficult and complex, regarding the fact that the reasons for fleeing, the intensity of the events and the diversity of the areas involved are so diverse that it is a huge challenge to create an international instrument that combines all this diversity to provide the right response and uniform protection for all groups of environmental refugees.

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³³ Douglas, Hugo 2010.

http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/hu/topics/sustainable_development_goals.html (2020. 07. 08.)

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