



Nansen Initiative Global Consultation, 12 to 13 October 2015 in Geneva

Swiss action to assist persons displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change

Background

1. **The displacement of populations in the context of disasters and climate change is one of the main humanitarian challenges of the 21st century.** From 2008 to 2014, earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts and floods forced 184 million people worldwide to leave their homes – a figure 23 times Switzerland's population. When typhoon Haiyan – the most powerful ever recorded – hit the Philippines in 2013, four million people were forced to leave their homes.
2. **Most displaced people move within their own country but some are forced to cross borders.** When Haiti was hit by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake in 2010, 1.5 million people lost their homes. The Dominican Republic and other neighboring countries admitted over 200,000 Haitians, while others were admitted by Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, the US and Canada.
3. **When disaster displaced people seek refuge across borders, they are not always recognized as refugees because international provisions do not take account of forced displacement caused by disasters and the effects of climate change.**
4. **In the context of climate change, such displacement of populations is likely to increase in the future.** Some projections indicate that the sea level will rise by at least a meter in the future, which would force 150 million people to leave their homes if no measures are put in place to protect vulnerable regions. National and international responses to this challenge are inadequate.
5. **Aware of this protection gap, the Swiss and Norwegian governments launched the Nansen Initiative in 2012.** This intergovernmental process has sought over a three-year period to better understand the displacement of populations in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change and to identify effective practices and existing experiences in the countries concerned. Its findings were obtained during various consultations with States and the civil society throughout the world.
6. **The Nansen Initiative is co-chaired by Switzerland and Norway, and led by a group of States, including the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Germany, Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines.** UNHCR and IOM are standing invitees to the Steering Group. The Initiative is followed up by Prof. Walter Kaelin, the Envoy of the Chairmanship, providing technical and strategic guidance throughout the process. The Consultative Committee brings together experts from international organizations, think tanks and non-governmental organizations, while the Group of Friends comprises interested States which are not members of the Steering Group. The Nansen Initiative Secretariat is based in Geneva.
7. The results of this consultative process are compiled in the “**Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change**”. It proposes a toolbox of effective practices using legal, humanitarian measures to protect disaster-displaced persons and prevention-related measures to enable families to remain at home when a disaster strikes.

Global consultation, 12 and 13 October 2015 in Geneva

1. **The agenda will be presented and discussed with representatives of governments, regional and international organizations and experts from all over the world** within the framework of the Nansen Initiative Global Consultation which will take place on 12 and 13 October 2015 in Geneva.
2. The event will also provide the opportunity **to outline the key elements of future actions in this field** and to define the institutional follow-up of the Nansen Initiative.
3. **Two months before the Climate Change Conference in Paris**, we also hope to raise awareness amongst all actors on the issue of persons forced to flee due to the consequences of climate change to ensure this issue is reflected in the Climate Conference's final decisions.

Switzerland's commitment

1. At the **UNHCR ministerial meeting in December 2011** in Geneva, Switzerland and Norway pledged to cooperate with other interested countries and relevant organizations, to draw up solutions for the protection of people forced to flee abroad owing to natural disasters. This pledge was supported by various other States and constitutes the basis of the Nansen Initiative, which was launched in October 2012 and is led by Switzerland and Norway.
2. **With the presentation and adoption of the Protection Agenda - the corner stone of the Nansen Initiative - at the Global consultation held on 12-13 October 2015, Switzerland has fulfilled its pledge from December 2011.**
3. **The topic addressed by the Nansen Initiative is transversal and concerns various thematic areas including humanitarian action, human rights, migration, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and development cooperation.** The Nansen Initiative has aimed from the outset to improve cooperation between the various thematic areas concerned in order to promote comprehensive and coherent solutions. **Switzerland supports this overarching approach, for example, by feeding the findings and conclusions from the Nansen Initiative into existing forums and processes.** A good example of this is the Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in March 2015 in Sendai, which provides for aspects concerning displacement due to natural disasters to be taken into account to a greater extent in efforts to reduce disaster risks. The next key step is the climate negotiations in view of the CoP21 in Paris where Switzerland will advocate a new climate regime that both sustainably reduces greenhouse gas emissions and enables adaptation to the effects of climate change.
4. **Switzerland will continue its commitment to the issue of cross-border displacement due to disasters and the effects of climate change after the official conclusion of the Nansen Initiative at the end of 2015. It has in particular a clear interest in the Protection Agenda being implemented in the future.** In this respect, an idea has been put forward to establish a group of States to continue the work on the issue and drive forward the implementation of the Protection Agenda. Switzerland will actively involve itself in the work of such a group of States.