

30 April 2009

Dear Mr. de Boer,

As Heads of Organizations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), we would like to draw to the attention of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) the humanitarian implications of climate change and to call for these implications to be acknowledged and addressed in the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol to be completed in Copenhagen in December 2009.

In November 2008, the IASC submitted two papers for consideration by the Parties to the UNFCCC in Poznan, namely, "Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Risk Management Practices: Critical Elements for Adaptation to Climate Change", submitted jointly with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system, and "Climate change, migration and displacement: who will be affected". Both documents urged parties to the UNFCCC to recognize humanitarian concerns within the UNFCCC negotiations and the outcome document.

The findings of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued in 2007, and the conclusions of the recent Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions Conference in Copenhagen, raise concerns that climate change may already be adversely affecting human lives and livelihoods and will result in significant population movements. To date, these issues have not received sufficient attention in the climate change negotiations, despite their importance in the context of adaptation.

In our capacity as organizations of the IASC, we are already actively responding to the consequences of climate change. Increased climate variability and greater intensity and frequency of extreme weather events aggravate humanitarian needs in weather-related emergencies. We have seen a doubling of the number of recorded disasters from approximately 200 to over 400 per year over the past two decades. Seven out of every ten disasters recorded are now climate-related. The total number of people affected by disasters has tripled over the past decade with an average of 211 million people directly affected each year, nearly five times the number of people affected by conflict in the same period. Overall economic losses have increased to more than \$83 billion dollars per year.

These trends are set to continue. In addition to those who will suffer the direct humanitarian impacts of disasters, an even greater number of people will be affected by structural and long-term adverse consequences of climate change, including effects on public health, food security, water availability and livelihoods.

Mr. Yvo de Boer  
Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
Bonn

The scale of the potential humanitarian challenge that climate change will present in the future is staggering: Almost two billion people now depend on the fragile ecosystems found in arid and semi-arid areas and which are expected to experience further increases in water stress; some 634 million people, one tenth of the global population, are living in low lying, at-risk coastal areas. If the demographic projections for the countries likely to be hardest hit by climate change are taken into account, the number of people who stand to suffer the consequences is even greater. The most vulnerable people, and in particular children, women and older persons, will be worst affected. Addressing their vulnerabilities must be an integral part of policies and measures in the area of climate change adaptation.

The effects of climate change are also expected to have an impact on the patterns of population movement and settlement. There are no reliable estimates of the magnitude of future population flows but it is believed that between 50 and 200 million people may move by the middle of the century, either within their countries or across borders, on a permanent or temporary basis. Numbers will be higher still if the IPCC's worst-case scenarios materialize. Much of this movement will be to urban areas where local service capacities may be overloaded. While migration may be a form of adaptation for some, the many millions forcibly displaced by sudden and slow-onset disasters will be particularly vulnerable, requiring substantial humanitarian assistance and protection.

The agreement of the 15th Conference of Parties in Copenhagen will shape and guide the international response to climate change over the next decade. It is vital that an agreement is reached and that it duly acknowledges the humanitarian dimension of climate change. Further, the agreement should reinforce existing capacities and mechanisms which can limit and reduce the humanitarian consequences of climate change, including; the systematic management and reduction of disaster risks and strengthening of emergency preparedness, as indicated in the Hyogo Framework for Action; and the reinforcement of response and recovery mechanisms at local, national, regional and global levels.

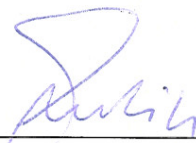
We are convinced that joint action is the only way forward and we will continue to engage with the climate change community and all other relevant stakeholders to identify and implement solutions that address the growing challenge that climate change presents to humanity.

We suggest that you share this communication with Parties to the UNFCCC and we stand ready to advise them on potential solutions for these concerns to be addressed in the Copenhagen agreement. We look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

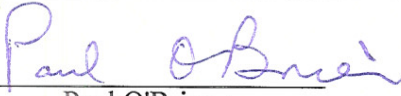
Yours sincerely,

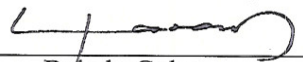


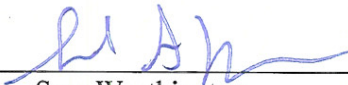
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Deputy Director-General  
FAO

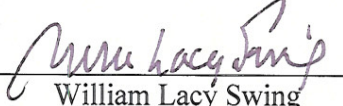


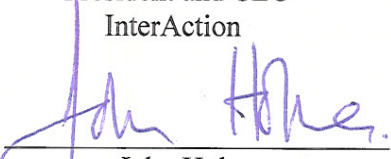
Angelo Gnaedinger  
Director-General  
ICRC

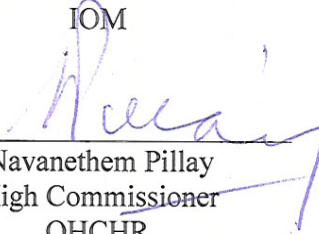
  
Paul O'Brien  
Chair, ICVA Executive Committee  
ICVA

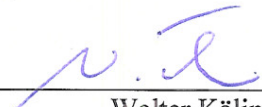
  
for Bekele Geleta  
Secretary General  
IFRC

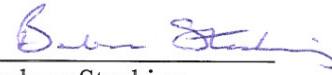
  
Sam Worthington  
President and CEO  
InterAction

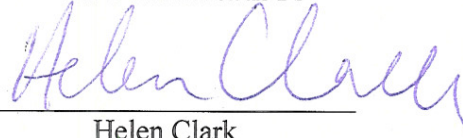
  
William Lacy Swing  
Director-General  
IOM

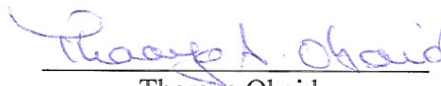
  
John Holmes  
Emergency Relief Coordinator and  
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs  
OCHA


  
Navanethem Pillay  
High Commissioner  
OHCHR

  
Walter Kälin  
Representative of the Secretary-General  
on Human Rights of IDPs  
RSG on HR of IDPs


  
Barbara Stocking  
Director (Representing SCHR)  
SCHR

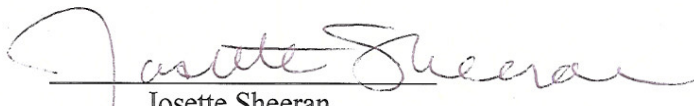
  
Helen Clark  
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UNDP


  
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Josette Sheeran  
Executive Director  
WFP

  
for Margaret Chan  
Director-General  
WHO

  
for Alastair McKechnie  
Director, Operations Policy and Country Services  
Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Group  
World Bank