Forum: General Assembly Second Committee
Issue: The Question of the Effects of Migration on Environment
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Introduction

Growing population and its impact on the environment has always held an important role in society. The link between human society and environmental issues has always been a controversial topic of discussion, due to ongoing environmental crises[1]. In recent years, the conversation has mostly shifted to human migration and the changes it causes in the environment. With the number of migrants being at an all time high, it has become a top priority for countries to manage migration effectively. While it is widely recognized that if properly managed, migration may generate important gains for both host and sending countries, issues such as the effects of migration on environment continue to be a challenge for many nations.

Environmentalists fear that the ongoing flow of migrants is causing an excessive release of carbon dioxide, which is the primary green house gas responsible for global warming. As a result of the population increase, it is estimated that annual emissions in 2033 will be 33 million times higher than what they are at present time.[2] These figures are extremely alarming, seeing as the combustion of fossil fuels used in transportation is the second largest source of CO_2 emissions and migration accounts for the largest percentage of transportation use[3].

 Most of the environmental impacts caused by migration are linked with urbanization. Rural to urban migration within country borders has greatly shaped the world. Although there are many positive effects of rural to urban migration, the majority of its environmental effects are very problematic. The impact of urbanization on the environment has been serious. Effects include reduction of farmland fertility, soil erosion, water shortage and deforestation in numerous nations.[4] Developing countries have had the highest rates of urbanization, which has led to critical environmental effects there. Developing countries in particular may have a lot to gain in terms of growth, investment, and poverty reduction through migration.[5] Therefore it is important to find a way to handle migration in a way that is beneficial to countries with doing as little harm as possible to the environment in the process.

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[1] http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB5045.html
[2] http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/215
[3] http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/gases/co2.html
[4] http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/theme/environment/index.shtml
[5]
http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Symposium_Turin_files/P11_Katseli.pdf

Definition of Key Terms

Infrastructure
The underlying foundation or basic framework, such as transport and power supplies that a country or organization uses in order to work effectively. [6]

Migration - The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people. This includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification. [7]

Receiving country - Country of destination or a third country. In the case of return or repatriation, also the country of origin. A country that has accepted to receive a certain number of refugees and migrants on a yearly basis by presidential, ministerial or parliamentary decision. [8]

Urbanization is the process by which large numbers of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities. Internal rural to urban migration means that people move from rural areas to urban areas in the same country. [9]

Urban governance The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels [10]

Sustainable urbanization: Growing cities and other densely built areas that have combined urban governance with economic, social and environmental concerns in a sustainable manner. [11]

Biodiversity the variety within and between all species of plants, animals and micro-organisms and the ecosystems within which they live and interact. [12]

Air pollution is the introduction of particulates, biological molecules, or other harmful materials into Earth's atmosphere, causing diseases, death to humans, damage to other living organisms such as animals and food crops, or the natural or built environment. [13]

Agglomeration is an extended town area consisting of the built-up area of a central place and any suburbs linked by continuous urban area [14]

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[6] http://www.memidex.com/infrastructure

[7] https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms

[8] https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms

[9] http://water.tkk.fi/wr/tutkimus/glob/publications/Haapala/pdf-files/URBANIZATION.pdf

[10] http://www.gdrc.org/u-gov/governance-define.html

[11]
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/sustainable-urbanisation/

[12] http://www.wwf.org.au/our_work/saving_the_natural_world/what_is_biodiversity/

[13]http://apassionforscience.pbworks.com/w/page/96535428/3E1%202015%20Group%20

[14] http://www.flashcardmachine.com/ap-human-geographyservicesvocabulary.html

Infiltration the process by which precipitation or water soaks into subsurface soils and moves into rocks[15]

Explanation of the Question

Human migration has become an increasingly important topic of discussion in recent research on population and environmental systems. Different environmental studies have shown that contemporary population movement and migration is highly associated with urbanization development.[16] In recent years there has been a rapid urbanization of the world's population and this is quickly changing the infrastructure of nations.

It is estimated that by 2050, 69 per cent of the global population will be living in Urban areas. This accounts for about 6.3 billion people. As of right now, the average annual rate of urban population growth in less developed regions is more than three times that of developed nations.[17]. The rapid increase in the world's population is not only affecting the world's economic and agricultural activities, but this development in urbanization has led to many different environmental crises.

Urban populations consume more food, energy and durable goods than rural populations. This increased consumption of energy is a function of urban labor markets, wages, and household structure. The energy consumption, produced for electricity, transportation and heating in urban areas also strongly affect the health of the people as well as the world's ecosystems. Combustion of fossil fuels and biomass are one of the main sources of the rising atmospheric temperature caused by greenhouse gases.[18] This is why urbanized areas have higher air temperatures than rural areas, which has led to a phenomenon known as the urban heat island (UHI) effect. These heat islands are considered to be one of the most significant challenges the human race is facing this century, due to the severe environmental impacts they have. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), heat islands highly increase air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, heat-related illness and mortality.[19]

Rural to Urban migration has also been known to affect broader regional environments. Areas that are located downwind from large industrial complexes have seen distinct differences in weather over the last few decades. These regions have experienced increases in precipitation, air pollution and frequency of thunderstorms. In addition to the increased rainfall, urban areas reduce the infiltration of water, increasing the amount of floods and water pollution.[20]

Due to the many environmental issues urbanization has caused and continues to cause, it is essential that governments implement policies that ensure urban growth and migration is

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[15] http://www.eschooltoday.com/water-cycle/what-is-infiltration.html

[16] http://2014.newclimateeconomy.report/cities/
[17] http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/highlights/wup2014-highlights.pdf
[18] http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2007/623Urbanization.aspx
[19] http://www2.epa.gov/heat-islands

[20] http://samples.sainsburysebooks.co.uk/9781118577622_sample_413911.pdf

monitored and maintained sustainably. Since 1988, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations have been issuing updated estimates and projections of the urban and rural populations of all countries in the world and of their major urban agglomerations approximately every two years.[21]

According to these projections, almost half of the world's urban population lives in relatively small communities of less than 500,000 inhabitants, while only around one in eight live in the 28 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants. Several decades ago most of the world's largest urban areas were found in the more developed regions, but today's large cities are concentrated in the Southern Hemisphere. Currently, the fastest growing urban agglomerations are medium-sized cities and cities with less than 1 million inhabitants located in Asia and Africa. As the world continues to urbanize, environmental challenges will be increasingly concentrated in cities, particularly in the lower-middle- income countries where the pace of urbanization is fastest[22].

Integrated policies to improve the lives of both urban and rural dwellers are therefore needed. While the high-income countries have been highly urbanized for several decades, it is the upper-middle-income countries that have experienced the fastest pace of urbanization since 1950. In the lower-middle-income countries the pace of urbanization has been slower. Still, this group of countries is expected to experience faster urbanization than others in the coming decades. According to the United Nations Population division, during the years 2005-2010 Africa had the world's highest rate of urban population growth. In 2014, the proportion of the population living in urban areas was 39 per cent in lower-middle-income countries and 30 per cent in low-income countries.

Since 2002, The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has hosted The World Urban Forum (WUF), which is a non-legislative technical forum hosted in a different city every two years. Their aim is to examine the most pressing issues facing the world today in the area of human settlements, including rapid urbanization and its impact on cities, communities, economies, climate change and policies.[23] At the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, governments, NGO's, world leaders and other groups came together to discuss how environmental protection could be ensured on planet Earth. There it was recognized that in order for migration to be managed effectively, it is extremely important that nations expand the necessary infrastructure for water and sanitation, energy, transportation, information and communications; ensure equal access to services; reduce the number of people living in slums; and preserve the natural assets within the city and surrounding areas.[24]

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[21] http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/
[22] http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/FinalReport/WUP2014-Report.pdf

[23] http://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-opens-call-for-wuf9-host-city/
[24] http://www.iisd.ca/vol27/enb2751e.html

Key Member States and NGOs Involved

United States of America

The United States of America is one of the most urbanized regions in the world. Each year, there are more than a million immigrants that achieve permanent resident status from which, 700 000 become American citizens. The non-profit Pew Research Center has previously reported that 82 percent of U.S. population growth is because of immigration.[25] Due to its large number, America's population is estimated to do more damage to the world's ecosystem than any other country. Advocates for U.S. population stabilization, including some environmental organizations and leaders, are worried that the increasing amount of new arrivals is causing the nation to exceed its "carrying capacity". This is harmful because it stresses an already overburdened physical infrastructure. David Durhnam, a representative of the Population-Environment Balance has said that Americans who care about the environment should insist on reducing immigration, to recognize "ecological realities such as limited potable water, topsoil and infrastructure."[26]

China

China provides an important case for migration and environment research. Over the past three decades, China has experienced a significant increase in urbanization. Although this type of migration has significantly improved the countrys economic situation due to advances in technology and commerce, urbanization has had deleterious environmental effects. In urban areas of China, energy consumption is more than three times the amount of rural areas.[27] This has led to water shortage, soil erosion and a significant increase in air pollution. It has therefore been significant for policymakers to guide rural migrants toward less population-dense urban areas to avoid increased consumption of fossil fuels. The Chinese government has already been encouraging population migration away from the mega-cities on the east coast of China, such as Shanghai and Beijing, and into urban areas in the middle-western portions of the country.[28]

Bangladesh

Environmental effects of migration have been a major concern in Bangladesh. It is known as the most vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change in the world. The unique geographical location of Bangladesh in addition to the distinctive development challenges that it faces, has made it especially vulnerable to climate change. Bangladesh is currently undergoing the growing phenomenon of environmental migration, with rural-urban migration increasing rapidly in city centres such as Dhaka. The unmanaged urbanization that currently takes place in the country has resulted in poor migrants settling on land that is prone to natural disasters including earthquakes

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[25] http://www.pewhispanic.org/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/

[26] http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/immigrations-effect-on-evironment/

[27]

https://www.google.com.hk/search?q=environment+urbanisation+china&oq=environment+urbanisation+china&gs_l=serp.3...7920.12729.0.12845.30.24.0.6.6.0.107.1480.20j2.22.0....0...1c.1.64.serp..5.25.1239.JODesleIFr0#

[28]

http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1851496/chinese-megacities-shanghai-need-look-beyond-outdated

and flooding. Another environmental problem is that internally displaced person (IDP), refugee camps and temporary shelters have produced strains on fields and forests. [29]

Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the fastest urbanizing nations in the world. The United Nations estimates that between the years 2014 and 2050, Nigeria will add on 212 million urban dwellers to the world. Urbanization has already created severe negative environmental impacts, such as pollution, deforestation and wetland destruction, erosion and flooding, urban sprawl, slum and squatter settlement. These environmental effects have already had drastic consequences on both human and other living organisms. This is why it has been a priority for the Nigerian government to manage and control rural to urban migration effectively, without exceeding the carrying capacity of the environment. Policy makers have made an effort to reduce rural to urban migration, by developing rural development strategies. In addition, other anthropogenic activities, which have negative impact on the environment, are thought to be effectively and efficiently managed.[30]

England

England is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe, and its population is rapidly increasing. Under the ONS 'Principal Projection' for population, it was estimated that the UK's population would increase by around 7 million by 2033 as a direct and indirect consequence of migration. Government officials have been concerned about the greenhouse gas emissions resulted from migration. Between the years 1991 to 2009, as a direct result of migration, gas emissions from the UK increased by almost 190 million tonnes of CO2. Policy makers Concern about global warming resulted in signing the Kyoto 'Protocol' on climate change which the EU ratified in 2002. [31]

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1955	Europe and North America became the most urbanized regions in the world. Urban growth was fastest in Latin America and Africa.
1965 1975 1985	World urban population exceeded 1 billion. Asia now had more urban dwellers than Europe
1992	World urban population exceeded 2 biillion The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro brought 150 nations together to set global standards for protecting the Earth against global warming
1997	38 industrialized nations signed the Kyoto Protocol, agreeing to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by about 5% over 15 years.

[29] http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/environment_climate_change_bangladesh.pdf

[30] http://www.hindawi.com/journals/ijpr/2013/610193/

[31] http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/215

	The US, agrees to reduce emissions by 7%. A larger percentage of people lived in cities in Latin America than in Europe
2002	President Bush refused to sign Kyoto Protocol, which was ratified by nations in Latin America, the South Pacific, the Caribbean and the European Union
2005	Landmark Kyoto Protocol officially went into effect with a total of 141 nations that ratified the Protocol.
2008	Intergovernal panel on climate change reports that China has exceeded greenhouse gas emission estimates. This may nullify efforts made by the Kyoto Protocol.
2015	African urban growth fastest and Asia growth biggest. More than a 100 countries gather in Paris to finalize the INDC, a UN climate agreement [32][33]

UN Involvement, Treaties and Events

- https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit United Nations conference on sustainable development (Rio+22)
- http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf Kyoto Protocol
- https://www.iom.int/un-documents Resolutions on migration
- https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/UN_Documents/69th_Session/CPD47_Resolution_2014_1.pdf Resolution on human rights and environment
- http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Decisions-and-resolution-GC-24th-session.pdf Resolution on urbanization and sustainable urban development
- http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=type&docid=3b00f54e4&skip=0&type=RESOLUTION&querysi=environment&searchin=title&sort=date Resolution on environment and human settlements
- http://www.refworld.org/topic,50ffbce4132,50ffbce413e,561f670a4,0,,,.html Resolution on climate change and environmental migrants
- http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/pdf/41/CPD41_Res2008-1.pdf Resolution about population development
- http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=47c3f3ccd&skip=0&query=urban Revolution on Urban vulnerability in Afganistan

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[32] http://www.infoplease.com/spot/earthdaytimeline.html

[33] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/world/06/urbanisation/html/urbanisation.stm

- http://www.carbonbrief.org/paris-2015-tracking-country-climate-pledges Paris summit 2015
- http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/other/10/index.shtml World population prospect 2015 revision
- http://www.refworld.org/topic,50ffbce4132,50ffbce413e,5154014e2,0,,,.html

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http://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-opens-call-for-wuf9-host-city/

http://www.iisd.ca/vol27/enb2751e.html

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