

Committee: UNFCCC Conference of the Parties: 22nd Session

Country: Croatia (Delegate Anthony Tazbaz)

Topics: The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health; Climate Refugees; and Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions

The Paris Agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016. The Agreement's aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels ¹. Croatia commits to supporting the goals of the Agreement by implementing measures within the framework of its European Union obligations. The upcoming meeting of the UNFCCC COP22 in Morocco ² this month will give all parties an opportunity to discuss ways of ensuring speedy operationalization of the Paris Agreement through domestic legislative and policy action in three major areas: Impact of Climate Change to Human Health; Climate Refugees; and Steps to Enforce Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions.

When Croatia joined the European Union on July 1, 2013 it became the European Environment Agency's (EEA) 33rd full member country. Although Croatia is considered a relatively small contributor to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it is especially vulnerable to climate change and its attendant rise in sea levels due to its extensive Adriatic coastline. The report *A Climate for Change* ³ states that a total of over 100 million square metres of land would be submerged with a sea-level rise of 50 cm and over 112 million square metres with a sea-level rise of 88 cm. Flood damage in Croatia in 2014 was estimated to total 297.6 million EUR ⁴. Climate models suggest that if emissions continue to increase, the period between 2040-2070 will be between 3 °C and 3.5 °C warmer throughout Croatia during the summer months ⁵. It is widely believed that rising temperatures across the globe will have significant impacts on human health, food safety and availability and life on earth in general. In addition, Croatia recognizes that global warming and rising sea levels increase the likelihood of creating hundreds of millions of

¹ <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

² <http://www.cop22.ma/>

³ A Climate for Change: Climate change and its impact on society and economy in Croatia (UNDP, 2009) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/climate-change>

⁴ Climate Change Policy and Low-carbon Development Strategy in Croatia, Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection(2 October 2015) http://www.mzoip.hr/doc/marija_sculac_domac_climate_change_policy.pdf

⁵ United Nations Development Programme www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/

environmental refugees worldwide which will increase migratory pressure not only on Croatia but worldwide.

Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

Croatia recognizes that climate change will have significant negative impacts on human health such as increase in deaths, spread of vector-borne diseases, increased air pollution, lack of safe food and drinking water. To adapt to climate change impacts on human health, Croatia is participating in the European alert system *Meteoalarm* ⁶, a web-based weather service providing dangerous weather warnings, and has created a heat health action plan to increase monitoring of infectious and cardiovascular diseases. Croatia is also a member of the European Network for Diagnostics of Imported Viral Diseases (ENIVD). Croatia positions itself as a promoter and leader in sustainable development in the EU by striving to achieve sustainable development goals utilising natural and cultural wealth as well as human resources ⁷. Efforts should be made by all Parties, especially developed countries, to work with WHO, CCAC and other NGOs to reduce air pollution and encourage sustainable development through education, project-partnering and financial investments. Increased international aid could be allocated to developing countries to support women's and maternal health as studies have shown that improved health outcomes for this group results in overall health improvement to society.

Climate Refugees

Croatia recognizes that climate change may lead to the forced migration of millions of people by 2050. As a party to the EU Schengen Agreement ⁸, Croatia recognizes that it will be expected to fulfill its refugee migration responsibilities and recognizes that gaps exist in international law with regard to the movement of peoples across international borders due to weather-related disasters and the effects of climate change. Calls to review the definition of what constitutes a refugee within the context of the Refugee Convention ⁹ must be supported with the view to including, under the definition of refugee, those persons displaced due to climate change. To this end, Croatia has also been a keen supporter of

⁶ <http://meteoalarm.eu/>

⁷ <http://www.mzoip.hr/en/ministry/vision-and-mission.html>

⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3Al33020>

⁹ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) 1951

<http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>

the Nansen Initiative ¹⁰ and subsequent Platform on Disaster Displacement ¹¹ agenda which has produced a protection agenda seeking to address the protection and assistance needs of people displaced across borders. Today, Croatia calls upon developed Parties to develop or expand their existing humanitarian immigration programs.

Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions

To mitigate climate change, every effort must be made to commit to reduce global GHG emissions even further than the Paris Agreement calls for. Through the EU climate framework, Croatia has already committed to reducing emissions by 20 percent by 2020. All Parties must look at innovative ways to reduce GHG emissions by promoting green technology and renewable energy sources. In accordance with the *Air Protection Law*, Croatia has committed to developing a Low-carbon Development Strategy as part of the obligations of EU and UNFCCC. In conformity with Article 44 of the *Environmental Protection Act*, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Development at its session on 20 February 2009 ¹². With the Paris Agreement in effect and the signing on of big GHG emitters such as China and India, it is now vital to keep the momentum going. Delegates of COP22 must encourage the new American administration to continue their commitment to the Paris Agreement.

Croatia recognizes that economic and geographic differences between Parties necessitates that developing countries receive financial resources to deal with mitigation and adaptation requirements. Consequently, Croatia fully supports the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals including number 13 which urges action to combat climate change and its impacts. Specifically, Croatia is wholeheartedly in agreement with the EU position to establish and manage the US\$100 billion Green Climate Fund ¹³ designed to respond to climate change by investing into low-emission and climate-resilient development. However, Croatia proposes that the Fund continue to solicit contributions on an on-going basis as needs will only continue to grow as the effects of climate change increase. There should also be a greater focus on investing in adaption and supporting developing countries. The Oxfam Climate Finance Shadow Report 2016 ¹⁴ states "international climate finance is vital in the global effort to

¹⁰ <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/>

¹¹ <http://disasterdisplacement.org/about-us/our-response/>

¹² UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org

¹³ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/home>

¹⁴ Climate Finance Shadow Report 2016 (Oxfam International November 2016), www.oxfam.org

combat climate change. It offers a lifeline to the world's poorest to cope with a changing climate, and provides crucial support to help them develop in a low carbon way".

In 2009, the President of Croatia Stjepan Mesić hosted the launch of the new UNDP Human Development Report for Croatia.

In the conditions of economic crisis which seems to be spreading uncontrollably, there is a special danger that there will be attempts to avoid measures directed towards mitigation of the climate change threat – and particularly towards the prevention of further climate change. The excuse will be that we should wait for 'better times' for these efforts. Let us not fool ourselves: these better times will not come. Now is the time, now is the moment, now is the task and now is the challenge we have to, and I repeat –we have to- face ¹⁵.

At the UNFCCC COP22, let us recommit to the importance of having all Parties ratify the Paris Agreement without delay. Let us look towards pushing for an amendment to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to include climate refugees. Let us act now.

¹⁵ Climate change in Croatia: New Human Development Report launched (UNDP 16 February 2009)
<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2009/02/16/climate-change-in-croatia-new-human-development-report-launched/>