

Country: Portugal

Committee: United Nations - Framework on Climate Change

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Public Health:

Between 1973 and 2002 the reported annual number of floods in Europe has increased, Portugal included. In 2014 the number of floods compared to other natural events in Portugal was at 30%. Most floods could cause the death of at least ten people and affect around 100. It is apparent that the increase in rain and storms that could last for weeks caused a more severe consequence and frequency of floods. Yet, there is not enough proof to indicate that climate change is correlated with the extreme flooding events due to lack of investigation in this area. Despite this, Portugal strives for sustainable development actions that are acceptable and environment-friendly. Some measures that are included but are not limited to are source control of watershed and landscape management, an efficient flood forecast-warning system, awareness raising, and etc. In addition, Portugal acquired an adaptive EU directive on flood risk management to reduce casualties and public health dangers. Unfortunately, floods are not the only concern of the Portuguese people. In the years between 1976 to 2006 the annual temperature in the country increased by around half a degree per decade. In the past 30 years, most recently in 2010, Portugal has experienced many heatwaves that would become more frequent. The mortality rate in 2014 was the highest at extreme temperatures, ranging from around 95% of death compared to all other natural events.

Climate Refugees:

Climate change is not only a profound threat to human health but also the basic human security of rights resulting in large populations of climate refugees. Luckily, Portugal is willing to open its borders to more than 5,000 refugees in addition to the 4,500 that it is accepting already as part of the EU refugee agenda.

Recently there was a migration of the Portuguese people because of the global financial crisis resulting in 12% of employment. In addition, Portugal's birthrate is also declining and if the decline continues, the country could lose 20% of its population by 2060.

Still, the acceptance of refugees must remain controlled due to the many sectors that lack manpower and skills in various fields. Portugal plans to receive 2,000 university students, 800 vocational students, and around 3,000 refugees qualified in agriculture and posterity.

It is important to mention that even though Portugal could face potential consequences of rising sea level in the next 50 years, Portugal still believes that by accepting more refugees now and implementing them into the society, it will serve as a significant benefit. Meaning, a greater population will help reduce unemployment and strengthen the economy. Once the country is stable again, it will be able to successfully proceed to reduce greenhouse gas emission.

Paris Agreement:

Portugal is a small country with low industrialization levels. Portugal's contribution to the global greenhouse gas emissions is low. In 2008, Portugal emitted 0.18 % CO₂ compared to the rest of the world. Portugal was failing at first with complying the targets of the Kyoto protocol and lacked institutional integration of policies regarding climate change. Despite the failure of implementing adequate policies, recently climate change became one of the most significant environmental issues in Portugal. In 2010 Portugal passed the National Strategy of Adaptation to Climate Change. These strategies worked on the improvement of information and knowledge (about forecasts and indicators of scenarios), reduction of vulnerability , promoting public involvement, and developing a cooperation between Portuguese-speaking countries and the EU. Knowledge is definitely one of the most dominant aspects that Portugal seeks to spread to create a more knowledgeable society through strengthening education and access to information on various fields in the environment. In addition, Portugal made significant advances in environmental protection when it became more active in promoting the global protection of marine environments.

When the Paris Agreement was open for signatures on the 22nd of April, 2016, Portugal signed on that same day. Last month Portugal ratified the agreement and entered it into force last week.

Portugal believes that there is a strong and evident correlation between climate change effects on public health and climate refugees and the implementation of the Paris agreement. Countries need to strive to ensure the protection of their people, global peace seekers, and the environment or else the adaptation measures will be meaningless to all. As a delegation, countries need to strive to try and have nations like the United States of America ratify the Paris agreement and work to develop ways of mitigating climate change. Once we achieve these goals, gradually, both the public health and security of climate refugees will be sustained safely.

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