The Bahamas

United Nations Framework on Climate Change

Topic 1: The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

**Background Information**

The ultimate impact of climate change upon the health of the human population can be divided into two broad categories. The first way that global warming affects human health is by strengthening the factors that lead to diseases and other health problems, which in turn increases the health issues that already exist due to global warming. The second way that global warming affects human health is by introducing new health issues that have not existed previously. The increase in greenhouse gas emissions by human activity raises average and extreme temperatures, and this points toward an increase in heat-related deaths and illnesses. The recently instable temperatures also tamper with human body temperature regulation as they have contributed to both warmer and cooler temperatures than those of the past, to which humans are not accustomed. When the human body can no longer maintain its temperature, it is vulnerable to diseases such as hypothermia, frostbite, hyperthermia, heatstroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps. Air quality also suffers from global warming because it changes the levels of outdoor air pollutants and airborne allergens, which infiltrate and contaminate indoor air. Poor air quality damages human cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Allergies and asthma attacks increase due to augmented levels of pollen. Climate change also brings about an increased amount of natural disasters like tsunamis, earthquakes, droughts, etc., and this is likely to cause more injuries and deaths, before, during, and after these extreme events. There exists potential for climate change to impact vector-borne diseases in terms of the pathogens, the host population, change in ecosystems and use of land, human population and behavior, and ultimately the adaptation of all of these factors. Global warming affects water sources as well, and it can affect human health by strengthening the presence of water-related contaminants, therefore bringing about more water-related diseases. The specific factors include hurricanes, storms, runoff, and temperature precipitation. Food security decreases due to climate change, which causes the contamination and spoilage of food, and the interference with food distribution. The rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere may increase plant growth and production, but they will also decrease the presence of protein and minerals in certain food staple crops. Climate change influences mental health in the forms of stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidality as well as the multiple results of the human population’s attempt to cope with climate change.

**United Nations Involvement**

The United Nations has been involved with this topic through various branches and organs. On the 23rd of September, the United Nations Climate Summit 2014 took place. This summit served as a springboard towards the next Conference on Climate Change in 2015. It aimed to promote action toward the reduction of carbon emissions and the recognition of the reality of climate change. From November 30 to December 12, 2016, the United Nations held the 21st Conference of the Parties or the 11th CMP in Paris, France to form an agreement between all countries on the need to reduce carbon emissions to two degrees Celsius or this century. The World Health Organization became involved in tandem with the United Nations Development Programme with their project of Climate Change Action to Protect Human Health. On December 8th, 2015, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Margaret Chan urged participants of a high-level WHO side event to form an agreement on climate change as soon as possible. The World Health Organization established the 2015 Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change to assess the effects of global warming and appropriate ways of responding so that the planet’s population can be protected. The World Health Organization also started the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, or WASH program to form a clear plan for preserving health and mitigating the potential of disease. There are four pilot countries involved, and these countries will attempt to adapt health programming to climate change. Through this, they will evaluate the effects of climate change on the health of developing nations. The DFID plans to dedicate $6,850,000 of the International Climate Fund to WHO over the four years of 2013-2016 to help the four pilot nations of Bangladesh, Nepal, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. The Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) Adaption Programme in Africa was established under the WHO to collect funds for decisions and authorities so that they can tackle the effects of climate change on health in African nations. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the WHO cooperated to form a joint office for climate and health under the authority of the GFCS as a mechanism to help the GFCS achieve its goals. The WHO and the French government collaborated to plan the Second Global Conference on Health and Climate: Building Healthier Societies through the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, and this conference will take place from July 7th to July 8th of 2016 in Paris, France.

**Country Policy and Solutions**

Since the Bahamas are located in the Caribbean, they suffer from the stronger presence of the influence of climate change. On top of this The Bahamas becomes more and more prone to extreme events and natural disasters such as tsunamis because eighty percent of the land mass of the Bahamas lies a meter or less from sea level. This also increases the potential impact that climate change will have on human health in the Bahamas because global warming will augment the chances of water-related diseases taking hold in the Bahamas. Since the water level has risen due to global warming and climate change, potable water sources in the Bahamas face an increased possibility of contamination and pollution from infiltrating seawater. Climate change also poses the threat of more cases of vector-borne illnesses, tropical diseases, and respiratory problems in inhabitants of the Bahamas. Specific examples of these cases include dengue fever and malaria. Other important areas related to public health within the Bahamas that are targets of climate change include energy security, food security, and water scarcity. The Bahamas’ policy on the effects of climate change on public health calls for the stronger incorporation of the development of developing countries into the global agreements surrounding this issue. Because the focus is trained more heavily on the developed nations, the attack plan is missing a crucial dimension; the viewpoint of developing nations whose growth still needs facilitation and completion in order to reach their maximum potential of involvement. As a short-term solution, The Bahamas believes that partnerships must be formed between developed nations and developing nations that experience the same situations and threats from climate change. These bonds can be facilitated in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the combination of Goal 13, Climate Action and Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals. These partnerships can be forged at the twenty-second Conference of the Parties, although countries can begin communicating with each other beforehand in order to find the right match. The aim of these partnerships would be twofold. Firstly, the developing nation would teach the developed nation about the ways that it avoids contributing to the ever-increasing amount of carbon emissions in the atmosphere. For example, since the Bahamas contributes a very small percentage of greenhouse gas emissions due to its income generated from tourism, it could teach its methods of attracting tourists to its more developed partner. Secondly, the developed nation partner would assess the needs of the developing nation and report those needs to the convention. It would then do everything in its power to help its developing nation partner. Another short-term solution that The Bahamas proposes is to increase the sharing of information through forums as well as conferences and summits. For the more developed nations, The Bahamas suggests United Nations facilitated technological forums where research can be shared and organized so that countries can face climate change with a well-rounded arsenal of information. For those nations that do not have access to this technology, The Bahamas suggests the addition of the topic of each country’s health concerns due to climate change to the Agenda of the Second Conference on Climate and Health. Thus, all nations can help one another because in helping an individual country, they also help the planet and therefore help themselves.

The Bahamas

United Nations Framework on Climate Change

Topic 2: Climate Refugees

**Background Information**

Refugees are defined by Article 1 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as those who have escaped their country due to persecution of race, religion, nationality, social class, political views, etc. A loose definition for the term “climate refugee” would be a person displaced or forced out of their home due to climate change, usually due to a displacing natural disaster or extreme event caused by climate change. Nearly one person gets displaced by a natural disaster every second since 2009 to contribute to 22.5 million people on average displaced by events caused by global warming since 2008. Once resources thin to the point where they can no longer sustain a large population, the people dependent on those resources must move in order to survive. Attempted adaptation can only do so much. The estimate of the number of people displaced due to climate-related events by the middle of this century ranges from 25 million to one billion. Although the terms “environmental refugee” and “climate refugee” are not yet legal or official terms, the importance of this issue is increasing rapidly. The Norwegian Refugee Council and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) produced the estimate that at least 36 million people were displaced by natural disasters and extreme events and 20 million of these people were displaced by climate-induced extreme events. In 2014 alone, more than 19 million people were displaced from their homes due to natural disasters as reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2015 report. It is often difficult to discern someone’s exact reason for moving away from their home be it natural disaster, lack of resources, etc., which is why “climate refugee” is a loose term used more politically than legally. But specific events that can force one to become a climate refugee include drought, earthquakes, salinization of ground water or soil, rising sea levels, desertification, etc.

**United Nations Involvement**

The United Nations first became firmly involved with the general issue of refugees when it drafted the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The United Nations High Commission on Refugees assembled a meeting in Geneva in December of 2010 to analyze the current methods of protection of displaced persons. This two-day meeting assessed the gaps in protection and assistance of displaced persons. In dealing with stateless persons, the UNHCR has held the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and it has formed the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. However, Antònio Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, has begun to take into account the future potential displacement of people resulting from climate change. Since December 2004, the year of the Indian Ocean tsunami, the UNHCR has tackled around twenty natural disasters through a response force, funding, or the sending of supplies to impact zones. While the UNHCR is more accustomed to aiding refugees who flee persecution and violence, its role is expanding to cover refugees of climate as well, especially in the Emergency Relief Coordinator’s demand to head a protection cluster response forefront toward natural disasters. Although the UNHCR has taken multiple actions in terms of refugees as previously defined, there exists a large lack of acknowledgement of climate refugees, especially in the UNHCR treaty which affords no protection toward climate refugees. Even the recent Climate Change Conference held in Paris, France in November and December of 2015 barely recognizes climate refugees. The document generated at the conference vaguely references displacement due to climate change, but it fails to clearly discuss it because it does not use any more specific terms. There is no United Nations body or committee that heavily deals with the issue of climate refugees since the issue is fairly new and still developing, and the terminology used to describe the issue is not yet legal or official. The only “real” refugees that deserve help are those fleeing from persecution or violence, as set by the 1951 convention. The United Nations realizes that in order to step toward a body or organization for the problem is to come together and accept the reality of the problem of displacement based on climate change. Thus, the UN agency wants to unite the Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility, which also includes the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations International Labor Organization, the United Nations University, and other organizations that are not a part of the United Nations.

**Country Policy and Solutions**

Due to Hurricane Joaquin, which lasted from September 27th to October 7th in 2015, part of the population of The Bahamas is accustomed to the status of “climate refugee”. Specifically the inhabitants of the Long Cay and the Crooked Island were forced to migrate to Nassau in the wake of the hurricane’s destruction. The Bahamas is one of the nations that is more prone to the negative effects of climate change because it is a developing nation and it is also an island nation. The potential rise in sea level is a very real threat to the Bahamas, and if it occurs, the rise in sea level will be a main catalyst of the population of Bahamian climate refugees. And this looks to be almost certain in the future as The Bahamas is predicted to lose 80 % of its landmass to climate change at the end of the century. The Bahamas believes that the first step toward solving this issue is acknowledging it as a real problem and therefore developing an appropriate response to it. At the 22nd Conference of the Parties, the terminology of the clause recognizing displacement due to climate change must be strengthened and changed to include more specific terms. The Bahamas demands a clear and concise definition for the categories of “climate refugee” and “environmental migrant” so that they can become legal and official titles instead of mere loose political terms. Each country can brainstorm its own definition and develop its views on what criteria are needed to become a “climate refugee” or an “environmental migrant”, however these definitions must then be combined into a cohesive clause for all countries to follow. In creating a universal definition for these terms, all countries are forced to acknowledge the problem as well as work together to create a clear understanding of the identification of climate refugees. The universal definition will also make it easier in situations where it needs to be applied because in the transfer of refugees from one nation to another, the two nations will come to terms using the universal definition. The universal definition must then contribute to the basis of each country’s Natural Disaster Emergency Response Plan (NDERP). The Bahamas’ NDERP will focus heavily on water related natural disasters such as tropical storms, hurricanes, and tsunamis since the rising sea level poses the biggest threat to The Bahamas. The first step of the Bahamas’ NDERP would be to assess the damage and determine any potential aftershock. If it is determined that there may be a possible aftershock, The Bahamas will ask its emergency task forces to stand by until the result is more certain in order to save lives that can be saved. Following the occurrence of an aftershock, the emergency task forces will be deployed to areas with a higher population density. The medical teams will follow in the wake of the emergency task forces. After moving to areas of lower population density, The Bahamas will send out a distress call to other countries who may or may not choose to send aid.

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Topic 3: Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions

**Background Information**

From November 30 to December 11 of 2015, the 21st Conference of the Parties took place in Paris, France under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The topics addressed at this conference included the greenhouse effect also known as climate change, the international response to the problem of global warming, the 2 degree target that all countries must undertake to reduce emissions, the issues that plague negotiations, the problem of collective action, the different responsibilities of each country that unite toward a common goal, the Kyoto Protocol, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The Paris Agreement expands the Convention, and forms a common cause toward which all countries can work in unity. The common goal for all countries involved in the Paris Agreement is to maintain the rise in temperature for this century to under 2 degrees Celsius. It is even more sought after to keep the temperature around 1.5 degrees Celsius. In order to achieve this goal, the Paris Agreement demands the help of a capacity-building plan, financial management and innovative technology. While assigning one common goal to all countries, the Paris Agreement also calls upon the participating nations to outline their own individual goals and plans unique to their situations. This takes shape in the NDCs as each unique NDC will contribute to the overall plan of reducing emissions and maintaining a stable global temperature. The parties to the Paris Agreement will evaluate these efforts in 2018 to ensure they remain on track. Assessments of the group effort toward fulfillment of the main goal will take place every five years in order to keep it on track as well as streamline efforts from the individual countries. Ninety-two of the one hundred ninety-seven parties to the convention have ratified the convention. With the ability to enter into force established on October 5th , 2016, the agreement entered into force on November 4th, 2016. Marrakech, Morocco will host the first session of the Conference of the Parties, or the first Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA1) with the 22nd COP and the 12th CMP.

**United Nations Involvement**

The main United Nations branch that facilitates all action surrounding this topic is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC). The Conference of the Parties (COP) serves as the leading organ of the UNFCC, and it has met twenty-one times in various discussions about climate change and its effects on the environment. The Conference of the Parties also serves as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which has met eleven times to discuss and monitor the progress of the Kyoto Protocol. Another heavily involved climate change organ is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and it monitors the level of emissions in the atmosphere and issues many reports that analyze the factors and interpret the effects to communicate the latest status of global warming. The IPCC has formulated three Working Group Reports, the most recent being the Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change report. The IPCC also submitted a Synthesis Report in 2014, and this Synthesis Report combines with the Third Working Group Report to create the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report on climate change. The Climate Initiative Platform (CIP) is a database website that gathers, projects, and monitors information about the International Climate Initiatives (ICIs). Specifically, the Climate Initiative Platform focuses on the plans of reducing emissions and it communicates effective plans of mitigation that could possibly help maintain climate change. The United Nations Environmental Programme has pooled research and valuable resources about climate change on its website. It also promotes the change from fossil fuels to sustainable energy as a main way to mitigate climate change. It also addresses adaptation, carbon, finance, tourism, and raising awareness of climate change and the problems that it causes. The United Nations Sustainable Knowledge Platform created the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and the 13th goal deals specifically with climate action. The 13th goal of Climate Action acknowledges that climate change is a real issue and that it causes many problems. It recognizes that international teamwork as well as adaptation and sustainable energy are key solutions to the threats that global warming poses. Therefore, it works toward the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions alongside the Paris Agreement.

**Country Policy and Solutions**

As soon as the Paris Agreement opened to signature on April 22, 2016, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas signed it. The Bahamas ratified the Paris Agreement on August 22, 2016. The Bahamas was the 180th signatory to the Paris Agreement, and The Bahamas made the 23rd ratification of the Paris Agreement. The Bahamas submitted its Internationally Determined Contribution before the 21st Conference of the Parties on November 17, 2015. The Bahamas outlines its planning process in the INDC document, and focuses on the aid it has received from multi-stakeholders and consultant processes that cross sectors in the creation of the Bahamas Initial and Second National Communications to the UNFCCC, its National Energy Policy, and its mitigation assessment. In terms of the reduction of carbon emissions, The Bahamas has decided to utilize the Long Range Energy Alternatives Planning (LEAP) model. In terms of Adaptation, The Bahamas has agreed to protect 20% of its oceanic environment near its shores by the year 2020. This commitment, which arose from the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, was made in 2008, and The Bahamas accomplished half of its goal in the year 2015. In order to remain transparent to other nations, The Bahamas specifically mentions that its INDC encompasses the gases of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide as well as the sectors of energy and forestry. The timeframe for the implementation of the INDC of The Bahamas is from 2010-2030. Past and current efforts of The Bahamas in reducing climate change have been sourced in natural resources, however The Bahamas has realized that it needs help in order to strengthen its climate change response system and INDC. The Bahamas calls for any and all monetary support, technological aid, and transfer and capacity-building in order to tap into the potential that it possesses. As The Bahamas is in the process of calculating all of the finances that its INDC will demand, it is certain that the cost of implementation of its INDC will amount to around $900 million for solely the reduction goals. The Bahamas plans to derive these finances from various sources. The Bahamas welcomes any suggestions for market mechanisms as well since these could help organize the finances of action toward emission reduction. The Bahamas believes that the first step toward enforcing the Paris Agreement is to persuade all 197 parties to the Convention to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement. The next step would be to persuade all nations to submit their INDCs. The Bahamas believes that for developing nations like itself, the incentive to do this would be monetary support in their efforts to carry out their plans outlined in their INDCs. For developed nations, the incentive would be a carbon tax fund that would both encourage them to begin the transition to sustainable energy as well as contribute to the incentives for the developing nations. The Bahamas believes that every country can take advantage of its tourism sector and use them to an advantage in raising awareness and promoting support of the efforts to tackle climate change. In dedicating a portion of funds gained from tourism toward climate change efforts, each nation can then develop its own plan of conservation of resources and the implementation of forms of sustainable energy. Lastly, the Bahamas strongly urges all countries to unite in the usage of the LEAP system which would serve as the foundation to their INDCs. In doing this, transparency, cooperation, and uniqueness in terms of climate action will be fostered.

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