

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

**Thailand: Position Paper**

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**Introduction**

In the 22ndsession of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, three main issues are being discussed. The first issue, “The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health”, is extremely pressing due to the increasing evidence of the negative affects changes in climate systems have on human health. The adverse impacts of climate change include warming temperatures, changes in precipitation, increase in the frequency or intensity of some extreme weather events, and rising sea levels. The severity of the resulting health risks depend on the ability of a country’s public health and safety systems to address the threats posed. The second topic, “Climate Refugees”, refers to the subgroup of environmental migrants who are forced to relocate “due to sudden or gradual alteration in the natural environment related to at least one of three impacts of climate change: sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity,” (Global Governance Project, 2012). The increasingly irregular nature of climate change has affected global migration trends, resulting in a more problematic future for environmental migration. The final topic of “Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions” addresses the process that must take place in order for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) to be a binding agreement.

**Topic 001. The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health**

With a population of 67 million, the majority of whom live in rural, agricultural areas, Thailand produced 272,000 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide in 2014, less than 0.008% of the world’s total CO2 emissions in that year. Thailand is also the second largest exporter of rice, exporting $4.5 billion USD in 2015, and it is clear that climate change has extremely adverse affects on the country’s agriculture. However, water shortages induced by climate change do not affect only Thailand’s agricultural sector, but also pose various health risks. As droughts increase in both frequency and length, many industries and sectors will begin to face water management challenges, increasing competition for water between agriculture, industry, and consumers.

Climate change is expected to multiply many health-related risks in Thailand, particularly heat stress, injuries, and waterborne diseases. Under a high emissions scenario, heat related deaths in those 65 years or older are anticipated to increase to about 58 deaths per 100,000 people by 2080. In addition, by 2070, approximately 71 million people are projected to beat risk of malaria, again assuming a high emissions scenario. However, a rapid reduction in emissions could keep heat-related deaths to just under 11 people per 100,000 by 2080, and 66 million people at risk for malaria by 2070. Another major effect of climate change is flooding due to sea level rise, and an average of 2.4 million people are predicted to be affected by it under a high emissions scenario and without large investments in adaptation. In addition to sea level rising caused flooding, Thailand also faces inland river flood risks due to climate change, with a projected 244,100 additional people by 2030 to to be at risk of river floods annually. An obvious negative health impact of flooding is death by drowning, however, flooding also causes many major indirect health effects, including impacts on food production, water provision, ecosystem destruction, infection disease outbreak, and vector distribution.

**Topic 002. Climate Refugees**

Thailand’s generosity and hospitality for refugees and asylum-seekers has lasted several decades, leading to new lives for hundreds of thousands of people who have sought temporary protection. In 2013, roughly 92,000 registered refugees from Myanmar along with an estimated 54,000 unregistered asylum seekers were in Thailand, in nine camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border. However, Thailand has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, and regards refugees of all nationalities living outside of designated refugee camps for Burmese as being in the country illegally. In recent years, Thailand has seen an exponential rise in the number of asylum seekers with the number of those seeking refugee status increasing from 1,120 in 2013 to 7,082 at the end of 2015. The major challenge is finding a durable and sustainable solution for the refugee population in Thailand, with the European Commission having been providing humanitarian aid to refugees from Myanmar in Thailand since 1995.

The effects of climate change, including but not limited to higher surface temperatures, floods, droughts, severe storms, and sea level rise, threaten to submerge Thailand’s capital and most populous city, Bangkok, within 50 years. In a future filled with floods, there will be people being displaced, who many ultimately end up as “climate refugees”. However, there is no such thing as a climate change refugee, as the requirements for those seeking refugee status or asylum do not include climate change migrants.

**Topic 003. Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

At the 2015 United Nations Conference on Climate Change, Thailand submitted its new climate action plan. Thailand’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution was an unconditional 20% reduction in emission by 2030, compared to business-as-usual levels. The level of contribution could increase up to 25%, “subject to adequate and enhanced access to technology, development and transfer, financial resources and capacity building support through a balanced and ambitious global agreement under UNFCCC.” In April of 2016, “Thailand government officials discussed plans for advancing Thailand’s climate policy through membership in the World Bank Group’s Partnership for Market Readiness, a global alliance of more than 30 nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in developing countries.” Thailand was provided with a grant of US$3 million in February of 2016, in order to fund government policy activities in support of meeting the country’s climate targets. Prasertsuk Chamornmarn, executive director of Thailand’s Greenhouse Gas Management Organization, stated that “The World Bank Group’s support is critical to starting the process of introducing carbon pricing and other innovative instruments in Thailand.”

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