Jimmy Waltman

Delegation of Mexico for the UNFCCC

The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

The population of Mexico faces several human health threats, which are tied directly to global climate change. The issue of climate change is among the most serious and prevalent dangers to the health of the Mexican people. The country of Mexico is a top producer of crops and relies heavily on agriculture, and the production of crops is negatively affected by changes to the natural climate. Rising ocean levels and extreme hydrologic patterns due to an overall global increase in temperature also pose a significant threat to Mexico, due to its coastal location and tropical climate. Furthermore, Mexico is quite urbanized and densely populated, which make it susceptible to both vector borne, and water and air borne infectious diseases. These issues are exacerbated by anthropogenic climate change. Because of these threats, the delegation of Mexico calls to draw further attention to the issue of climate change.

As one of the world’s leaders in crop production, agriculture is a critically important industry for Mexico. If the global climate continues to change, then farmland and crop production will be threatened by an increase of droughts and floods, as well as an offsetting of natural growing and breeding cycles. One species simply breeding one week sooner than normally could have catastrophic effects on the ecosystem and thus the success of crops. Despite the fact that only 3.6% of Mexico’s GDP comes from agriculture, it employs 13.4% of the population[[1]](#footnote-1). Consequently, damage to agriculture in Mexico would be devastating to the economy and quality of life for the population of Mexico.

Geographically and climatically, Mexico and its population is vulnerable to health risks caused by climate change. Mexico is surrounded by oceans. For this reason, the melting of ice caps and rising of sea levels threatens the coastal populations of Mexico. It has been projected by scientists that ocean levels could rise by nearly two meters by 2100[[2]](#footnote-2). This threatens the large coastal population and coastal economy of Mexico. The encroaching sea levels could salinate freshwater habitats and thus affect the success of fisheries and crop production. More simply, housing and establishments along the coasts of Mexico could be destroyed directly by the rising ocean levels, creating a need to relocate large numbers of people. This could lead to overcrowding, as the majority of Mexico’s population resides in the middle of the country, with about a quarter of the population living around the inland city of Mexico City[[3]](#footnote-3). In addition to a lack of housing and resources caused by the encroaching sealine, the mass relocation of people contributes to an equally threatening issue: the spread of infectious disease.

Due to the the changing climate’s connection to air and water pollution and the effects that the changing climate has on disease vectors, climate change is heightening the issue of infectious diseases. Much like how people in Mexico will be forced to migrate if ocean levels continue to rise, vectors for disease—especially mosquitoes—will also migrate inland. Since mosquitoes require a warm climate to reproduce and thrive, they will be able to inhabit a much larger area if the global climate continues to rise. This could mean an increase in the population of disease-carrying mosquitoes. The dangerous Zika virus could not only become more prevalent in Mexico and other warm areas, but it could also spread to areas that currently have climates too cool for mosquitoes to spread the disease[[4]](#footnote-4). Air and water borne diseases also threaten Mexico with the changing climate. The drastic changes to the global climate are causing more drastic storms, floods, and droughts. As a result, water and air borne bacteria are becoming more prevalent and efficient at spreading diseases. While Mexico is fairly developed, 52.3% of the population is below the poverty line[[5]](#footnote-5). This high poverty rate will make it extremely difficult for Mexico to deal with the increasing spread of infectious disease that is occurring because of climate change. Some action must be taken to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Mexico has been a leader on the topic of climate change in the past, and would like to continue to lead efforts. At the twentieth Conference of the Parties, Mexico avidly supported movements to mitigate climate change, joining other Latin American countries in pledging to restore 20 million hectares of degraded forests by 2020, as well as pledging to contribute 10 million US dollars to the Green Climate Fund[[6]](#footnote-6). To continue to lessen the effects of climate change for the good of the people of Mexico, and the rest of the world, Mexico strongly suggests that climate change awareness continues to be spread, and that countries are expected to continue to contribute to global efforts to mitigate climate change.

Jimmy Waltman

Delegation of Mexico for the UNFCCC

Climate Refugees

Due to their location, Mexico and its surrounding countries face severe threats from climate change. Due to the damaging of farmland and encroaching of ocean levels, Mexico along with Central and South American countries will be forced to migrate in mass numbers to more suitable land if current climate trends continue. As it can be seen in the case of the Syrian refugee crisis, many complications arise from mass migration. Population distribution becomes unbalanced and countries end up receiving amounts of refugees that they cannot handle. Mexico faces both the issue of people immigrating to Mexico, and people needed to emigrate from Mexico. Some coastal areas of Mexico face threats of destruction, while other inland areas promise safety. The degree of migration that would occur involving Mexico would throw its population off balance. For this reason, the delegation of Mexico proposes a plan for resolution that attempts to both lessen the effects of climate change, and to adapt to the inevitable consequences, while respecting the sovereignty of all nations involved.

It is imperative that the drastic effects of climate change in the future are outlined. It is almost unanimously agreed upon by scientists that the global dependence on fossil fuels for energy is causing massive amounts of greenhouse gases to be released into the atmosphere. These gases in turn prevent heat from escaping Earth and warm the planet to an unnatural degree. This unnatural heating has begun to melt polar ice caps, releasing freshwater into the ocean and causing sea levels to rise. This truth must be accepted and acknowledged by all nations, as it poses a deadly threat to island and coastal nations. Being a coastal nation, a large portion of Mexico’s population is threatened. Those who reside by the ocean could see their homes destroyed by encroaching sea levels and an increase in the severity of storms. These people would then become either climate refugees or Internally Displaced Persons, fleeing to a foreign country, or migrating to inland areas of Mexico. If nothing is done to mitigate global climate change and respond to its consequences, then a refugee crisis exponentially worse than the current refugee crisis of Syria would occur. It is clear how difficult refugees from only one country are to accommodate for. If the nations of the world do not act now, then an enormous amount of refugees from multiple countries would be unaccounted for. It is absolutely necessary that a plan be agreed upon as soon as possible to prepare for what could be one of the greatest mass migrations in human history.

At COP21, Mexico agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 22% and black coal emissions by 51% by 2030, as well as to take numerous measures to adapt to the consequences of climate change[[7]](#footnote-7); these types of agreements must continue if the potential refugee and environmental crisis are to be accounted for. While the delegation of Mexico wishes not to infringe on the right of any nation to govern itself, there are certain measures that must be taken by all nations. At COP21, it was agreed that all countries must accept climate change and put some sort of effort forth to solve the issue. This was a groundbreaking development; however, these efforts must be enforced and continued. To address climate refugees and IDPs, all countries should be expected to take measures to lessen the source of the problem in reducing dependence on fossil fuels and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions. While steps must be taken to reduce climate change as a whole, the delegation of Mexico suggests that countries be left to decide for themselves what their policy on refugees should be. If it is only required that all countries make efforts to reduce climate change, then the issue can be mitigated without infringing on the sovereignty of nations. Forcing countries to accept refugees is disrespectful to the right of a country to rule itself and should be avoided. Nevertheless, a set of basic regulations for the carbon footprint of countries to remedy the issue at its source seems efficient and reasonable.

The issue of climate change and migration because of its consequences is severely threatening, and certain global regulations must be put in place to mitigate it and to protect those vulnerable to its effects. At the same time, Mexico believes that the independence of countries should be respected[[8]](#footnote-8). Because of this, the delegation of Mexico suggests that a regulations be put to lessen the issue of climate change, while all nations are free to decide what to do with climate refugees.

Jimmy Waltman

Delegation of Mexico for the UNFCCC

Enforcing the Paris Agreement and Further Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

After having actively supported the Paris Agreement at COP21 and having the agreement ratified, Mexico is strongly in favor of the Paris Agreement. Global climate change has worsened to the point where it is one of the greatest threats to humankind. It is vital that all countries both have their head of state sign the agreement and have their respective legislature ratify the document. While the delegation of Mexico sees that there are extensive procedures to these steps, completing these steps to make the agreement binding are by no means impossible. In addition to ensuring that the Paris Agreement is ratified, further plans for both mitigating and adapting to climate change must be put into place. The state of the whole planet is in the hands of each country, and matters pertaining to global climate change should be given a higher priority both internationally, as well as nationally.

The threats of climate change are countless, yet the issue is still not given the utmost priority that it deserves. At least 55 countries that represent at least 55% of global emissions must ratify the agreement for it to become binding. Although 180 countries have signed it, only 16 have ratified it[[9]](#footnote-9). While countries should be respected as independent, some issues are too important to leave up to individual countries to fix. The issue of climate change must be addressed by all countries together. Climate change threatens to destroy inhabited land, damage the ability of populations to provide for themselves agriculturally, and worsen the spread of infectious disease. Therefore, further efforts must be put forth to ensure that all countries are acting in response to climate change.

Before any countries begin to put forth future plans, the Paris Agreement must be ratified and made binding. Other efforts have been put forth in the past, but the Paris Agreement will be the first resolution met globally about climate change. This makes its ratification of the agreement imperative for the combatting of climate change. As far from the majority of countries have ratified the agreement, climate change appears to be a low priority for many countries. The delegation of Mexico recognizes that all countries have their own agendas that should be respected, but climate change is a global issue that affects all humans. The issue should be given more respect and made a higher priority. If absolutely necessary to have the agreement ratified, methods of enforcement could be taken. Economic or diplomatic sanctions on countries that fail to ratify the document could be made. Climate change is plainly too important of an issue to ignore, and sanctions, such as an embargo on a country’s goods or a severance of diplomatic ties, could be necessary to ensure that the important issue is addressed. The agreement has already been voted on, so all countries are expected to sign it for the greater good of the world.

In addition to making sure that the Paris Agreement is ratified, it is necessary to think about the next step in dealing with climate change. Everything that can possibly be done to lessen the effects of climate change must be done. At COP22, delegates must continue to discuss global climate change and meet another agreement with new goals. Once every country has accepted climate change and agreed to put some effort forth, those efforts must be specified. Each country should be given the right to determine how their country goes about solving this issue. At the same time, more specific goals can be set in place for every country. With global dependence on fossil fuels being a major cause of human caused climate change, some goals should be set for the use of sustainable and alternative power sources. Possibly every country could aim to increase their production of renewable energy to at least 5% of their total energy produced. A new set of goals must be set forth to mitigate climate change. At the same time, some effects of climate change are irreversible currently. It is inevitable that the ocean level will rise to some degree. While it is possible to slow down the overall warming of the planet, it is impossible to completely reverse it. Therefore, efforts must be put into place to adapt to changes in climate. Goals should be set to create Natural Disaster Emergency Response Plans for every country in order to deal with the increasing severity of storms and other natural disasters. The countries of the world must always be looking to go further with mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The delegation of Mexico is strongly affected severely by climate change. Mexico’s coasts are threatened by rising oceans and increasingly violent storms. Mexican agriculture and other industries are also in danger. Furthermore, climate change could cause diseases to become more prevalent in Mexico, and a mass migration of people could be prompted. However, the issue of climate change goes beyond the personal interest of Mexico. The entire planet is threatened by climate change. The complex biosphere of the Earth can and will be thrown off balance very easily. The nations of the planet must therefore prioritize what is the most important. While it is important to allow countries to govern themselves, issues like global climate change must be debated and agreed upon globally.

1. "The World Factbook: MEXICO." Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed November 06, 2016. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dennis, Brady, and Chris Mooney. "Scientists Nearly Double Sea Level Rise Projections for 2100, Because of Antarctica." Washington Post. March 30, 2016. Accessed November 06, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2016/03/30/antarctic-loss-could-double-expected-sea-level-rise-by-2100-scientists-say/. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "The World Factbook: MEXICO." Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed November 06, 2016. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mercer, Greg. "The Link Between Zika and Climate Change." The Atlantic. February 24, 2016. Accessed November 06, 2016. http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/02/zika-and-climate-change/470643/. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. "The World Factbook: MEXICO." Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed November 06, 2016. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Maxwell, Amanda. "Mexico Ratifies the Paris Agreement." NRDC. September 21, 2016. Accessed November 07, 2016. https://www.nrdc.org/experts/amanda-maxwell/mexico-ratifies-paris-agreement. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. "The World Factbook: MEXICO." Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed November 06, 2016. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. "The Next Challenge: How To Make The Paris Agreement Work - Ecosystem Marketplace." Ecosystem Marketplace. Accessed November 07, 2016. http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/articles/the-next-challenge-how-to-make-the-paris-agreement-work/. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)