

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Harry Wijnberg, Chair Living Space for Environmental Refugees (LiSER) Antoniestraat 19, 2011 CN Haarlem, The Netherlands +31(0)23-5332892 info@liser.org www.liser.org IBAN: NL91 PSTB 0009 321158 on name of Living Space Chamber of Commerce: no.34174170</p> | <p>Stuart M. Leiderman, Director Environmental Refugees & Environmental Restoration Environmental Response/4th World Project P.O. Box 382 Durham, NH 03824 USA 356 Narrows Road, Ctr Barnstead, NH 03225 USA 603.776.0055 leiderman@mindspring.com</p> |
|---|---|

“THE TOLEDO INITIATIVE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION”

Toledo, Spain July 9-10, 2004

(Text current as of May 13, 2007,
signers current as of May 13, 2007)

I. RECOGNIZING ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

WE RECOGNIZE that there are millions of environmental refugees in the world, and know that their numbers are growing, both in absolute terms and as the percentage of all uprooted and displaced people.

WE NOTE that large numbers of writers, scholars, scientists and others have, for twenty years or more, used the term “environmental refugees” in news articles, speeches, publications, reports, government documents, radio and television programs, and that the number of website citations are steadily growing. Despite this, we note that few people have given their full attention to the plight of environmental refugees, their causes and remedies. We believe this needs to be changed.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE numerous other reports about people forced to move or flee from natural disasters, man-made environmental catastrophes or combinations of both, that do not use the term “environmental refugees” or recognize their plight as such. We believe this also needs to be changed.

II. DEFINING REFUGEES

HISTORICALLY, refugees were people who had already found refuge, asylum, tolerance and shelter among non-threatening people and institutions. In a sense, these refugees had claimed their human right to safety amidst a variety of dangers, threats and expulsions. During the twentieth century, however, both the definition of refugee and the relationship changed for the worse: Refugees became regarded as people fleeing troubles of their own, not troubles of the world. And, in the eyes of foreign nations, refugees had no right to refuge unless and until they fit stringent, preordained requirements for origin, cause and escape. Thus, the very definition of “refugee” became a threat to the survival of millions of people.

WE NOTE THAT the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees considerably narrowed the usage of the term “refugee” after centuries of broader use and connotation. By ignoring a) displaced people who were unable to escape their countries and b) others not suffering persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of

a particular social group or political opinion, the Convention and Protocol recognized only a minority of those who needed refuge, relief and repatriation, not the majority. We believe this is unjust and insufficient for international law, and should be changed.

WE WELCOME THE STATEMENT of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [in “The State of the World’s Refugees 1993: The Challenge of Protection”] that, “There are clear links between environmental degradation and refugee flows. The deterioration of the natural resource base, coupled with demographic pressure and chronic poverty, can lead to or exacerbate political, ethnic, social and economic tensions which in turn result in conflicts that force people to flee.... The international community has every interest in responding to the need to preserve and rehabilitate the environment before degradation leads to violence and persecution - and a mass of displaced people who easily meet the conventional definition of refugees.”

WE ALSO WELCOME THE STATEMENT of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2000: “...[I]nternational conventions do not adequately address the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, or women and children in complex emergencies.”

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE STATEMENT of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, 2002, that “...[T]he global environment continues to suffer. Loss of biodiversity continues, fish stock continue to be depleted, desertification claims more and more fertile land, the adverse effects of climate change are already evident, natural disasters are more frequent and more devastating and developing countries are becoming more vulnerable, and air, water and marine pollution continue to rob millions of a decent life.”

WE THEREFORE SUPPORT the implementation of AGENDA-21 adopted by the Earth summit convened in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development convened in Johannesburg in 2002 to preserve environmental conditions and rehabilitate the deteriorated ecosystems in vulnerable areas to reduce the numbers and plight of environmental refugees. We must promote a “culture of safety” in all countries, especially those that are disaster-prone and vulnerable to environmental deterioration.

FOLLOWING THE 1951 CONVENTION AND 1967 PROTOCOL, a few regional initiatives, of necessity, began to recover the traditional sense and use of the term “refugee”. Among them were:

1969 - Organization of African Unity [OAU] Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and

1984 - Organization of American States [OAS] Declaration on Refugees, Cartagena, Colombia
The OAU Convention expanded the definition of refugee to include “every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality. [article 1, section 2] The OAS Declaration recommended enlarging the definition of refugee to include “persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.” [conclusion 3]

We support initiatives such as these that expand the definition of refugee and the range of causes.

WE ALSO NOTE regional initiatives such as:

1994 - Addis Ababa Document on Refugees and Forced Population Displacements in Africa that recognized degradation of the environment as a root cause of refugee flows and forced population displacement [part two, section I, item 9] and

1994 - Arab States Refugee Status Convention that recognized “natural disasters or devastating incidents” as a cause of refugees [article 1, paragraph 2]

We support initiatives such as these that acknowledge and respond to environmental causes of refugees.

III. DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS, scholars, humanitarians and environmentalists have expressed a growing need to recognize and define a new category of refugees -- those displaced by or fleeing from environmental causes. Milestones published in the English language, with excerpts, include:

1948 - William Vogt. *Road to Survival* [William Stone]. “Scores of millions of people who are using the land in disregard of its capabilities are Displaced Persons [DPs] in a much more serious sense than the few hundred thousands in European refugee camps. [p107]

“Latin America’s dilemma is inextricably ecological. Because of her climate, many millions of people have concentrated between two and eight thousand feet altitude in order to escape the diseases and agricultural limitations of the lowlands. This has placed most of them on sloping lands. The result has been such dynamic and widespread destruction of the land as is equaled, perhaps, only in China”. “The cardinal consideration in Latin American land management is that there exists in this area today *some twenty to forty million ecological DPs.*” [Vogt’s italics] [p191]

1985 - Essam el-Hinnawi. *Environmental Refugees* [United Nations Environment Programme]. [E]nvironmental refugees are defined as “those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life.”[p4]

1995 - Norman Myers and Jennifer Kent. *Environmental Exodus: An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena* [Climate Institute]. “In several parts of the world there is an emergent phenomenon of - environmental exodus-. It is made up of people who are increasingly coming to be known as environmental refugees. They are people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and other environmental problems. All have abandoned their homelands on a semi-permanent if not permanent basis, having little hope of a foreseeable return.” [p14]

1995 - Stuart Leiderman. “Reviewing Global Awareness of Environmental Refugees” [Symposium on International Change, University of New Hampshire, USA]. “[T]he term environmental should at least be reserved for episodes where the crippling, failure, disruption or endangering of natural life support systems and human’s relations to them and their dependence upon them, involving air, water, soil, biota and bio-geochemical cycles, etc., is predominant, detectable and implicatable in a chain of causation that has ultimately led, or may ultimately lead, to people’s flight. Further, this should hold regardless of the presence of other contributing factors.” Also see Leiderman article “Environmental Refugees” in *Encyclopedia of the Future* [Simon Schuster Macmillan, 1996, pp256-262.]

IN RECENT YEARS, numerous environmental organizations, human rights organizations, refugee organizations and development agencies have also helped lay the foundation for recognizing environmental refugees, through a variety of conference sessions, research and education projects, reports and investigations combining human rights and environmental justice. Among them have been: the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, the Geological Society of America, the Climate Institute, the Natural Heritage Institute, the Sierra Club, the Society of Wetlands Scientists, the Tolerance Foundation and the Worldwatch Institute. In addition, numerous colleges and universities have conducted lectures, courses and academic studies on environmental refugees. We support all these initiatives and encourage the future efforts of organizations, agencies, institutions and even countries.

IV. NEW INITIATIVES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

LANGUAGES AND LINKAGES - We believe the term “environmental refugees” should be advanced, adopted and accepted for use in all world languages. We believe it should be linked to relevant occupations and professions such as disaster relief and prevention, environmental protection, sustainable development, migration studies, human rights studies, geography studies, public health and ecological restoration.

MOVEMENT-BUILDING - We believe it is time for a global movement to recognize and aid environmental refugees. Therefore, there must be a common vocabulary. At present, very few people call themselves “environmental refugees” even though millions are displaced from their homelands and natural surroundings or are fleeing environmental causes. By contrast, many observers, analysts and writers have used all sorts of terms to describe these same people. We will try to close that gap.

GLOBAL SYNERGY - We will share our knowledge, libraries, databases, networks and other resources and capabilities to accelerate recognition of environmental refugees wherever they occur.

DATABASES - We will adopt common categories and formats to accumulate and organize data on environmental refugee episodes, chains of events, warning signs and other indicators of danger and population movement. We will create and maintain be a public database, with information accessible according to geography, cause, magnitude and other basic parameters.

PUBLICATION - We will maintain archives of information about environmental refugees and ecological restoration and also provide assistance in the publication of website, journals, news articles, films and video about these subjects.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION - For timely recognition, protection and prevention of environmental refugees, scientific study and analysis alone are not sufficient. We believe that the plight of environmental refugees also must be told in a variety of artistic ways, including films, paintings, music, sculpture, poems, performances and human interest stories. To reach the hearts and minds of the general public, we will initiate and support such efforts. Further, we will develop and exchange lists of relevant cultural activities, works, events.

ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS - High priority will be given to addressing the immediate needs of environmental refugees, both individuals and groups, whether or not they call themselves by that term. Our interpretation of their status will be broad rather than narrow. The range of assistance will include information, education and action on prevention, refuge, resettlement, repatriation and restoration of damaged homelands. We support initiatives to offer ecological restoration employment.

V. ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

WE BELIEVE that environmental refugees are bio-indicators of damaged homelands. Thus, ecological restoration is an essential response to this refugee problem and, in fact, is inextricably connected to it. Therefore, our efforts concerning the plight of environmental refugees will proceed simultaneously with efforts to ecologically restore their homelands.

WE BELIEVE that, today, the pace and extent of environmental damage exceed that of ecological restoration. The result is what we call the *Remainder Earth Scenario* where, each year, the whole population of Earth must occupy a smaller and smaller portion of the planet that remains habitable. This leads to homelessness, strife, resource scarcity and fundamental changes in human relations, leading to new flows of all sorts of refugees. In some regions, this has already occurred; millions of people are already “refugees in captivity.” We believe that this trend must be reversed and we support initiatives to do so.

WHILE THERE IS a relatively active profession concerned with the restoration of wildlands, there is no corresponding profession for the restoration of human homelands. We support initiatives to create such a profession.

WE CONSIDER ecological restoration the job market of the future, capable of employing the labor of millions of people on all continents. To that end, we support initiatives where refugees of all kinds may work according to terms of bonafide agreements and conventions to help restore damaged lands anywhere in the world and, as payment, receive the legal right to claim and live upon those lands as their own property.

VI. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE DIMENSIONS, the crisis of environmental refugees may not be solved by simply adding a new category to existing refugee conventions, protocols and agreements. We believe the path of least resistance may be through a new Convention that couples the crisis of environmental refugees with need for ecological restoration. We support initiatives to create and approve such a Convention on Environmental Refugees and Ecological Restoration.

ONCE A YEAR, we will convene an open meeting to measure the progress of this Initiative, to amend its provisions and to promote the goal of a Convention on Environmental Refugees and Ecological Restoration.

VII. SIGNERS

WE INVITE AND WELCOME the endorsement and signature of additional parties to this Initiative. Please contact info@liser.org or visit <http://>

1. Prof . Essam El-Hinnawi, Research Professor, National Research Centre, Dokki, Tahrir Street, Cairo, Egypt, tel: (home) +20-2-7499007, Email: hinnawi@link.net
2. Jeannine W. Brown, MA Refugee Studies from the School of Cultural and Innovation Studies at the University of East London (London, UK). E-mail: jeanninebrown@lycos.com
- 3 Robert Stoianov, International Development Studies, Department of Geography, Palacký

tel: +420 585 634 515, email: iguana@prfnw.upol.cz

4. Cam Walker, National Liaison Officer, Friends of the Earth Australia. Melbourne, Australia Email: cam.walker@foe.org.au

5. Dr Md Mizanur Rahman, Post Doctoral Fellow, Asia Research Institute
Level 4, Arts Links, AS 7, Shaw Foundation Building, National University of Singapore, Singapore-117570,

Phone: 65-68747774, Fax: 65-67747306, Email: arirmm@nus.edu.sg or himumitu@yahoo.com

Website: www.ari.nus.edu.sg

6. Christel Cournil, juriste post doctorante, OMP/ Toulouse/ Université des sciences sociales,
Toulouse1, 10 place Saint julien 31000 Toulouse, Phone 06-61403053 christelcournil@wanadoo.fr

7. Stephanie Long, Climate Justice Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Australia, PO Box 5702,
Brisbane. QLD 4101

(07) 38465793, 0414 136461 stephanie.long@foe.org.au

8. Joseph Chilengi, Executive Director, Africa Internally Displaced Persons Voice (Africa IDP Voice
) , P.O Box 32368, TEL: +260-1-266468 /

+260-1-266469, FAX: +260-1-266482, MOBILE: +260-97-773258, africaidp@zamtel.zm,

<http://www.africaidp.org/>

9. Poumo Leumbe Jean Jacques Parfait, International environmental law student PHD (Doctorant),
Université de Limoges/ Crideau/ Cnrs, France, PO BOX: 5739 (ISMA) Douala CAMEROUN

Tel: 237 765 76 64/777 70 81, E mail: poumojj@yahoo.fr

10. Michael See PE PhD, Author, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Global Business Aspects, Bertelsmann
Springer & Business GmbH, Heidelberg 2001, mikepsee@netscape.net

11. Francois Gemenne, FNRS Research Fellow, Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations
(CEDEM), Université de Liège

Boulevard du Rectorat 7/45 - Bât B31, B-4000 Liège, Tel: +32 4 366 30 17, Fax: +32 4 366 47 51, E-
mail: F.Gemenne@ulg.ac.be

E-mail: Francois.Gemenne@sciences-po.org

12. Carlos García-Robles, Activist, Research, Mexico City, Mexico, carlosagrb@gmail.com,
www.ambientalista.org.mx

13. Marioliva González Landa, National Coordinator, Red Global de Acción Juvenil, GYAN México,
marioliva@gmail.com, www.mexico.youthlink.org/mx

14. Lana Kelly, Climate Justice Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Brisbane, Email:
s4030601@student.uq.edu.au, Address: 7 Egbert St, WEST END, QLD, AUSTRALIA 4001

15. Shawn Shen, Department of Geography and School of Planning, University of Otago, PO Box 56,
Dunedin, New Zealand, Ph: +64-3-479-8496 (office), Fax: +64-3-479-9037 (dept), E-mail:

shawn.shen@geography.otago.ac.nz

16. Julianne Hazlewood, Ph.D. student in Geography, University of Kentucky, 1457 Patterson Office Tower,
Lexington, KY 4506-0027, Phone 530-220-3202, jahaze@gmail.com

signers current as of June 5, 2007

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Harry Wijnberg, Chair Living Space for Environmental Refugees (LiSER) Antoniestraat 19, 2011 CN Haarlem, The Netherlands +31(0)23-5332892 info@liser.org www.liser.org IBAN: NL91 PSTB 0009 321158 on name of Living Space Chamber of Commerce: no.34174170</p> | <p>Stuart M. Leiderman, Director Environmental Refugees & Environmental Restoration Environmental Response/4th World Project P.O. Box 382 Durham, NH 03824 USA 356 Narrows Road, Ctr Barnstead, NH 03225 USA 603.776.0055 leiderman@mindspring.com</p> |
|---|---|

BECOME A SIGNER OF “THE TOLEDO INITIATIVE ON ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION”

I endorse and support the Toledo Initiative on Environmental Refugees and Ecological Restoration. Please add my name and contact information to the list of signers, and add me to your list of future mailings and announcements.

Signature:

Name and Title:

Affiliation:

Address:

Phone and E-mail:

Please include these personal comments to your Annex to the Toledo Initiative:

For convenience, you may e-mail this form to Harry Wijnberg <harry.wijnberg@12move.nl>, then please follow with a signed hard-copy by post mail to his address above. Thank you.

Relevant websites:

1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm

1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_p_ref.htm

1969 Organization of African Unity [OAU] Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
http://www.unhcr.bg/bglaw/en/convention_governing_specific_aspects_Africa_en.pdf

1985 Organization of American States [OAS] Declaration on Refugees, Cartagena, Colombia
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/cartagena1984.html>

1993 “The State of the World’s Refugees 1993: The Challenge of Protection,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ> and then link to
http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/+_wwFqzvhXK8x6m6xFqzvhXK8x6m6mFqhT0yfEhFqhT0NultFqnp1xczFqn7uFPAFqwDzmwww1Fqn7uFP

1994 Addis Ababa Document on Refugees and Forced Population Displacements in Africa
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/africa/REFUGEE2.htm>

1994 Arab States Refugee Status Convention
document not available; refer to <http://www.pap-medclearinghouse.org/pdf/trans.pdf>

2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration
<http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

2002 Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development
http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POI_PD.htm

rev February 7, 2005