KEY DEFINITIONS

DISASTER refers to a “serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources” (UNISDR). In the Protection Agenda, disasters refer to disruptions triggered by or linked to hydro-meteorological and climatological natural hazards, including hazards linked to anthropogenic global warming, as well as geophysical hazards.

SUDDEN-ONSET DISASTERS comprise hydro-meteorological hazards such as flooding, windstorms or mudslides, and geophysical hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis or volcanic eruptions.

SLOW-ONSET DISASTERS relate to environmental degradation processes such as droughts and desertification, increased salinization, rising sea levels or thawing of permafrost.

HUMAN MOBILITY refers to three forms of population movement: i) displacement - understood as the primarily forced movement of persons, ii) migration - primarily voluntary movement of persons, and iii) planned relocation – planned process of settling persons or groups of persons to a new location (Cancún Climate Change Adaptation Framework).

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE are people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement).

DISASTER DISPLACEMENT refers to situations where people are forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of a disaster or in order to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. Such displacement results from the fact that affected persons are (i) exposed to (ii) a natural hazard in a situation where (iii) they are too vulnerable and lack the resilience to withstand the impacts of that hazard.

CROSS-BORDER DISASTER-DISPLACEMENT refers to situations where people flee or are displaced across borders in the context of sudden- or slow-onset disasters, or in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.

PROTECTION refers to any positive action, whether or not based on legal obligations, undertaken by States on behalf of disaster displaced persons or persons at risk of being displaced that aim at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of applicable bodies of law, namely human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law (Protection Agenda).

NOTE: “Climate Refugee” is often being used in the media to define a person displaced in the context of disasters like droughts, sea level rise or extreme weather events. This concept does not exist in international law and is not endorsed by the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

THE CONTEXT

DISASTER DISPLACEMENT, ONE OF THE BIGGEST HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES OF THE 21st CENTURY

Haiti, January 2010: an earthquake left more than 1.5 million people homeless. Philippines, November 2013: Cyclone Haiyan/ Yolanda displaced four million people. Every year, millions of people are forced to leave their homes because of floods, tropical storms, droughts, glacier melting, earthquakes and other natural hazards. Many find refuge within their own country, but some have to move abroad. Scientists keep warning that climate change is projected to increase displacement in the future, both internally and across borders.

Large-scale displacements have devastating effects on people and communities. They create complex humanitarian and development challenges that call for urgent partnerships and action beyond traditional silos. They require going beyond strides made in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process provides another opportunity to define and work towards collective outcomes and find ways to better protect and assist disaster displaced persons.

In his Report for the WHS, the UN Secretary-General expresses concerns that national and international actors continue to concentrate efforts on responding to crisis, rather than acting to prevent them. A shift is needed from managing crisis to managing risks, and preparing for crisis.
The main objective of the Platform on Disaster Displacement is to follow-up on the work started by the Nansen Initiative consultative process, and to implement the recommendations of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, endorsed by 109 governmental delegations during a Global Consultation in October 2015.

The Protection Agenda offers States a toolbox to better prevent and prepare for displacement before a disaster strikes, as well as to better respond to situations when people are forced to find refuge, either within their own country or across an international border.

People who are forced to cross a border in the context of a disaster and the effects of climate change face a unique form of protection when they arrive in another country. Rather than calling for a new binding international convention on cross-border disaster-displacement, the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda supports an approach that focuses on the integration of effective practices by States and (sub-)regional organizations into their own normative frameworks in accordance with their specific situations.

The enormous challenges that cross-border disaster-displacement generates are diverse. Besides their ‘borderless’ nature, international cooperation as well as regional and national engagement will be crucial. While being a state-led process, the Platform will build on existing partnerships between policymakers, practitioners and researchers and will constitute a multi-stakeholder forum for dialogue, information sharing as well as policy and normative development.

The Steering Group is directed by Germany as the Chair for 1.5 years (July 2016–December 2017). During this period, Bangladesh acts as the Vice-Chair and assumes Chairmanship thereafter (January 2018–July 2019). The Steering Group provides overall strategic leadership and guidance on coordination, policy and advocacy of the Platform.

The Steering Group contains between 15 and 20 States and the European Union, represented through their Permanent Missions in Geneva. Its composition reflects a wide and balanced geographic representation. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are standing invitees to the Steering Group.

Founding members of the Platform on Disaster Displacement:

- **Australia**
- **Bangladesh**
- **Brazil**
- **Canada**
- **Costa Rica**
- **European Union**
- **Fiji**
- **France**
- **Germany**
- **Kenya**
- **Maldives**
- **Mexico**
- **Morocco**
- **Norway**
- **Philippines**
- **Senegal**
- **Sweden**
- **Switzerland**
- **Bangladesh (Vice-Chair)**
- **Burundi**
- **Cameroon**
- **Canada**
- **Costa Rica**
- **European Union**
- **Fiji**
- **France**
- **Germany**
- **Kenya**
- **Maldives**
- **Mexico**
- **Morocco**
- **Norway**
- **Philippines**
- **Senegal**
- **Sweden**
- **Switzerland**

**THE PLATFORM ON DISASTER DISPLACEMENT: IMPLEMENTING THE PROTECTION AGENDA, A TOOLBOX FOR DISPLACED PERSONS**

**A STATE-LED PROCESS ADDRESSING THE PROTECTION NEEDS OF PEOPLE DISPLACED ACROSS BORDERS IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Under the leadership of member states, the multi-stakeholder Platform on Disaster Displacement is built on three pillars: a Steering Group, an Advisory Committee, and a Coordination Unit.

**STATE LEADERSHIP**

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**ADDRESS KNOWLEDGE AND DATA GAPS**

By linking up with existing data gathering mechanisms, the Platform will seek to address knowledge gaps on why, where, when, and how people are displaced in the context of disasters and climate change. It will also map and consolidate existing information management systems, review them and propose measures to address gap areas regarding comprehensive, reliable and timely global data on disaster displacement.

**ENHANCE THE USE OF IDENTIFIED EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

Although persons displaced across borders in disaster contexts are not adequately protected under international law, the Protection Agenda indicated that at least 50 countries have received or refrained from returning children, women and men from disaster-affected countries. For example, after the earthquake in Haiti, 200,000 people were admitted in the Dominican Republic and neighbouring Caribbean countries.

Yet, disaster displacement risks can also be reduced. The Protection Agenda identified measures States can take to help people stay or move out of areas at risk, and address the needs of people who have been internally displaced in the context of disasters and climate change. The Platform will, inter alia, engage with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) to support States in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that explicitly references actions related to displacement.

When living conditions deteriorate, individuals commonly use migration to seek opportunities within their country or abroad. Managed properly, voluntary migration has the potential for affected communities to better cope with recurrent natural hazards and climate change. On the other hand, the risks posed by disasters have prompted communities and governments to choose planned relocation to help people move to safer lands, before and after a disaster strikes. IOM and UNHCR have often assumed organizational leadership in the areas of voluntary migration and planned relocation. The Platform will work closely with both agencies to enable enhanced action.

**CORRELATION SUPPORT**

The Coordination Unit supports the Members of the Platform’s Steering Group and relevant partners at the national, regional and global levels in developing and implementing the Platform’s activities to fulfill the strategic priorities. The small unit will support, under the guidance of the Chair and the Steering Group, the work of all States, agencies and other stakeholders interested in implementing the recommendations of the Protection Agenda. The Coordination Unit is funded by the generous contribution of Germany.