



Memorandum

Nexus²⁵ New York Climate Week side-event: Human Mobility at the Nexus of Climate, Food, and Conflict September 24, 2025

Amidst uncertainty regarding multilateral funding mechanisms and governance structures, human mobility continues to emerge as a critical risk at the nexus of climate change, food, and conflict. Today, the complex interplay between climate impacts and conflict is already displacing millions across the globe. At the same time, vulnerabilities within agri-food systems are intensifying these pressures on communities, prompting further movement and insecurity. While projections of this impact vary widely, estimates of displacement generally converge between 40-200+ million in the coming decades, underscoring the scale of the challenges ahead.

Recognizing the complexity of the policy environment at this nexus, the Nexus²⁵ team convened a private roundtable discussion at this year's NY Climate Week, focusing on how climate change, food security, and conflict are reshaping human mobility globally. Experts spanning multiple UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, private sector companies, research institutions, and more came together to discuss:

- How national authorities can properly mobilize domestic resources and engage in long-term planning across the climate mobility continuum;
- How policymakers can minimize the impact of divisive rhetoric surrounding migration and human mobility – and galvanize support for anticipatory action that helps people safely move or stay;
- Which upstream interventions are most effective in building partner capacity to handle internal displacement; and
- What new alliances and strategies at the multilateral level are required to manage increased human mobility.

Along those lines, major themes from the discussion included:

The Evolution of the Multilateral System: Participants agreed that the center of global power is shifting. While the United States steps back and Europeans take stock of their next steps, others, such as Brazil and South Africa, are stepping up. This represents a different multilateral policy environment than that of the mid-2010s that drove the SDGs, widespread investments in global health, and new treaties like the JCPOA.

A Recognition of the Ever-Growing Nexus: While there are many definitions of the "nexus," participants noted the need to include a wider set of issues in the policy discussion. This includes a recognition of how migration and climate change are contributing to resource conflicts, the challenges of displacement to already overcrowded urban areas, workforce shortages in many sectors essential for the green transition, and the cascading health impacts of a mobile population.

Engaging in Creative Communication – While Checking Our Assumptions: Participants emphasized that in a time of limited funding and cuts to traditional sources of information, actors in this space must be more creative about how they frame and communicate about climate mobility. This includes more data-driven engagements with political leaders and policymakers, more transparent discussions with the public, and more accessible information for those likely to move. At the same time, several attendees noted that this moment is a critical time for actors to check their assumptions at this nexus. For example, are we assuming that most climate migrants will be in the Global South? Are critical raw materials really critical – or just important for certain major economies? And, do we have the right answers to current political narratives around migration and mobility?

Ultimately, participants boiled the policy pathways ahead down to three key lines of effort:

1. *Information:* Across the board, policymakers need to better understand how and where climate change will drive human mobility. Current gaps often lead to reactive rather than anticipatory action, hindering government and communities' abilities to plan for climate or conflict shocks. Therefore, targeted investments must be made in better data collection and usable policy research. This includes improved capabilities for forecasting and tracking migration as well as enhanced early warning systems, along with continued research at the "nexus" to better understand how these challenges converge and exacerbate each other.
2. *Resources:* The current approach to climate mobility is unsustainable, particularly in light of the severe resource challenges ahead for multilateral organizations and government agencies. Shifting the focus from emergency response to proactive support by investing in resilience-building measures, establishing social protection systems, and enhancing infrastructure would be more effective and cost-efficient – and most impactful in building the capacity of communities to stay in place as the climate changes. At the same time, human mobility is inevitable, particularly in communities where climate change will make their environments unlivable. In these cases, allocating resources to planned, safe migration is the most effective policy mechanism, reducing the vulnerabilities and community shocks that often accompany mobility.
3. *Partnerships:* In a time of limited funding and geopolitical will, coalitions of the willing must be central to any policy response. This must include not only national governments, regional organizations, and multilateral organizations, but also civil society and the private sector. While the multilateral consensus and composition of the mid-2010s have passed, opportunities still exist for broad and strategic partnerships at this nexus.



Nexus²⁵ is a joint project of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome and the Center for Climate and Security (CCS) in Washington, DC. The project, led by Dr. Nathalie Tocci at IAI, Erin Sikorsky at CCS and Dr. Michael Werz at the Center for American Progress (CAP), is funded by Stiftung Mercator in Germany. This event summary was prepared by Siena Cicarelli

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