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## How IOM Reshaped Its Obligations on Climate-Related Migration

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In 1990 the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report predicted that climate change could lead to ‘millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding, and severe drought’.<sup>1</sup> Since then, non-governmental organizations, scientists, international organizations, and some states have echoed these concerns that climate change may drive millions from their homes. Since 2007 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has played an important role in international policy discussions on the relationship between climate change and migration. They have pointed out that the links between climate change and migration are complex and not directly causal (i.e. not everyone affected by climate change will be forced to move). IOM has also noted that natural disasters will lead most people to be displaced internally, rather than across international borders.<sup>2</sup> IOM has emphasized that climate-related migration should not be seen as a ‘threat’ to states. Rather migration can be a positive adaptation strategy to climate change, and hence states should provide more pathways for international migration. IOM has also developed operational projects to assist people affected by climate change and outlined their positions through research, policy reports, and conferences.

Interestingly, IOM took on the issue of climate change and migration with no formal mandate for these activities. Initially there was a lack of support from member states at the Council. Here I examine how IOM expanded its obligations to include a broad category of climate and environmental migrants (both displaced and voluntary; internal and

<sup>1</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change the IPCC Impacts Assessment Report* (Australian Government Publishing Service 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm (eds), *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence* (IOM 2009) 18.

international movement). I ask: what drove IOM's expansion, if not states? And what does this case tell us about who generates IOM's obligations and how?

The chapter argues that IOM staff, especially the climate change focal point, lobbied member-states to make climate-related migration a policy priority.<sup>3</sup> Most member states were initially reluctant, yet IOM found ways to work on climate-related migration, by seeking financing from the private sector, other international organizations, and a few supportive states. In other words, IOM staff 'colluded' with supportive stakeholders to expand its obligations to include environmental and climate change-related migration. IOM was able to do this as many member states do not closely monitor its operations at the Executive Council, but rather influence it through their bilateral funding. In addition, states accept, and even take advantage of the fact, that IOM is 'projectized' and hence has multiple obligations to its funders, that may not parallel the obligations set by the Executive Council. In short, this chapter outlines how IOM's financing structure coupled with weak patrolling of IOM's mandate by the Executive Council enabled it to expand into a new area.

The first section examines international relations theories of obligation in international organizations, focusing on how states control institutions through the executive body and funding decisions. It also notes that individual states and the secretariat of an international organization can work together to 'collude' and advance common interests. The second section examines IOM's mandate and funding patterns. The third section traces how IOM worked on climate change and migration and convinced member states of its role in this area.<sup>4</sup> The chapter draws on primary interviews conducted between 2009 and 2013 with IOM staff, donors, and other international organizations in Geneva, New York, and Kenya. I also examined speeches, reports, policy papers, and executive committee proceedings relating to the issue of climate change in IOM.

<sup>3</sup> Scholars have pointed out that climate change in and of itself very rarely causes migration, as there are a mix of social, economic and political factors that shape when and whether people move at all. This chapter hence refers to climate related migration, rather than 'climate refugees' or 'climate migration', to capture this complexity. For more on these terms and definitions, see Laczko and Aghazarm (n 2) 18–19.

<sup>4</sup> This chapter draws directly on: Nina Hall, *Displacement, Development and Climate Change: International Organizations Moving beyond Their Mandates* (Routledge 2016) ch 3; Nina Hall, 'The Money or the Mandate: International Organizations Engagement with the Climate Change Regime' (2015) 15 (2) *Global Environmental Politics*, 79–90.

## 8.1 Obligation in International Organizations

Most International Relations (IR) scholars perceive international organizations as primarily holding political obligations to the member states that create, finance, and govern.<sup>5</sup> Under this account of the ‘ideal type’ IO, states control international organizations by establishing a clear mandate, delegating specific tasks to the IO, and by controlling its funding.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have typically focused on deliberations at an international institution’s executive board or council to identify the tasks and obligations states delegate to an international organization. An IO’s mandate tends to evolve over time as the executive body identifies and delegates new tasks or issues, and older ones may be deprioritized or subtracted. Most IR scholars conceive of a mandate as the tasks and obligations which are *formally* delegated to an IOs: not those which are *informally* decided or which are *unilaterally* decided upon by an individual state. Multilateralism is based on state parties collectively agreeing to common principles and priorities.

In addition, IR scholars examine how states control IOs through their funding.<sup>7</sup> States choose how much funding to give an institution to fulfil its tasks, and if they do not give it enough the institution cannot deliver on its mandate. States, and other funders, can also choose whether to give states earmarked or non-earmarked funding.<sup>8</sup> Earmarked funding is often a contractual agreement between one state and the IO to deliver a particular activity or focus on a particular region or topic. When international organizations have a high proportion of earmarked funding, their autonomy is often circumscribed. They are contracted to deliver certain tasks, which may or may not align with their mandate delegated by their

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth W Abbott and Duncan Snidal, ‘Why States Act through Formal International Organizations’ (1998) 42 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3.

<sup>6</sup> Alexandru Grigorescu, *The Ebb and Flow of Global Governance: Intergovernmentalism versus Nongovernmentalism in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press 2020). See also Stian Øby Johansen, ‘An Assessment of IOM’s Human Rights Obligations and Accountability Mechanisms’ in Megan Bradley, Cathryn Costello and Angela Sherwood (eds), *IOM Unbound? Obligations and Accountability of the International Organization for Migration in an Era of Expansion* (Cambridge University Press 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid; Erin R Graham, ‘Money and Multilateralism: How Funding Rules Constitute IO Governance’ (2015) 7 *International Theory* 162; Erin R Graham ‘Follow the Money: How Trends in Financing Are changing Governance at International Organizations’ (2017) 8 (5) *Global Policy* 15.

<sup>8</sup> Nina Hall, Lisa Schmid and Alex Reitzenstein, ‘Blessing or a Curse? The Effects of Earmarked Funding in UNICEF and UNDP’ (2021) 27 *Global Governance* 433.

executive body.<sup>9</sup> Hence, scholars have pointed out that earmarked funding may be undermining multilateralism and strengthening individual donor interests.<sup>10</sup> Earmarked funding weakens the position of developing country states where IOs operate as donor states have a greater ability to shape IO tasks, than most developing states, given they fund IOs.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars have also noted that international organizations have autonomy and can influence states' decisions on what issues they should tackle (i.e. their mandate), and how to fund them.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, individual member states may share preferences with IO staff and 'collude' to advance their goals, at the expense of other member states.<sup>13</sup> Collusion can work both ways: IO Secretariats can search for, and work with, member states who share their interests.

In sum, to understand the political obligations of IOs most IR scholars would look to (1) the *formal mandate*, as set out in its constitution and other foundational documents whereby states collectively delegate certain tasks to the IO; (2) the various tasks it is *financed* to do (through earmarked and non-earmarked funding); and (3) whether IO staff shape member states' preferences and/or 'colludes' with stakeholders supportive of its agenda.

Notably, the formally delegated mandate and funding are only two types of obligations an IO may have. Others include obligations to beneficiaries, particularly those in their care (e.g. migrants in IOM's case); obligations to private funders (e.g. foundations or private companies); obligations to staff; obligations to other IOs (e.g. through the

<sup>9</sup> IOs may charge an overhead fee when taking earmarked funds, which can be used for other activities or administrative costs. Thanks to Miriam Bradley for pointing this out.

<sup>10</sup> Graham 'Money and Multilateralism: How Funding Rules Constitute IO Governance' (n 7); Grigorescu (n 6); Hall, Schmid and Reitzenstein, (n 8). Ronny Patz, Svanhildur Thorvaldsdottir, 'Drivers of Expenditure Allocation in the IOM: Refugees, Donors, and International Bureaucracy' in Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécoud (eds), *The International Organization for Migration: The New 'UN Migration Agency' in Critical Perspective* (Palgrave MacMillan 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Cathryn Costello for this point.

<sup>12</sup> Nina Hall and Ngaire Woods, 'Theorizing the Role of Executive Heads in International Organizations' (2018) 24 *European Journal of International Relations* 865; Hall, *Displacement, Development and Climate Change: International Organizations Moving beyond Their Mandates* (n 4).

<sup>13</sup> Hylke Dijkstra, 'Collusion in International Organizations: How States Benefit from the Authority of Secretariats' (2017) 23 *Global Governance* 601. To complicate matters even more, individual member states do not have unitary interests and different government agencies (e.g. interior, humanitarian/aid and labour) may advocate different approaches in global migration governance. Thanks to Miriam Bradley for raising this point.

humanitarian cluster system); and obligations to the general public. In the next section, I examine IOM's formal mandate and funding.

## 8.2 Obligations in IOM

### 8.2.1 *Mandate*

IOM's mandate has evolved considerably over the past seventy years, as others in this edited volume describe. It was originally established in 1951 as an operational travel agency and was tasked with relocating displaced persons and migrants from post-War Europe to the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>14</sup> Its most significant mandate change occurred in 1989 when it took on a new Constitution, and a new name, to reflect its global ambit and broader scope. The new Constitution changes included a deletion of its focus on European migration; a new emphasis on a broader range of people requiring assistance; and the addition of new functions to its purpose. These functions included the provision of 'migration services' such as recruitment, language training, medical examination and reception, integration activities, and research on international migration.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, the 1989 Constitution mandated IOM to work with an exceptionally broad category of people, including refugees, displaced persons, and 'other individuals in need of international migration services'.<sup>16</sup> The ambiguity of the term 'individuals in need of international migration services' meant IOM had significant leeway to perform a wide range of tasks with different groups of people. Moreover, IOM was given no constitutionally articulated obligations for any specific people of concern, unlike UNHCR which has an obligation to protect refugees.<sup>17</sup> One member state

<sup>14</sup> It was originally called the *Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe* (PICMME). Marianne Ducasse-Rogier, *The International Organization for Migration, 1951–2001* (International Organization for Migration 2002) 15.

<sup>15</sup> IOM, Constitution of 19 October 1953 of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (adopted 19 October 1953, entered into force 30 November 1954) as amended by Resolution No 724 by the 55th Session of the Council (adopted 20 May 1987, entered into force 14 November 1989) and by Resolution No 997 by the 76th Session of the Council (adopted 24 November 1998, entered into force 21 November 2013) Article 1 (c, d and e). For more on the Constitution see Richard Perruchoud, 'From the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration to the International Organization for Migration' (1989) 1 *International Journal of Refugee Law* 501.

<sup>16</sup> IOM Constitution (n 15) Article 1(b).

<sup>17</sup> Kreuder-Sonnen and Tantow also make a similar point that IOM was 'not constrained by a mandate bound to legal definitions of who could be assisted under what conditions'. Christian Kreuder-Sonnen and Philip M Tantow, 'Crisis and Change at IOM: Critical

representative explained that IOM is ‘much more like a service provider. It has a Constitution but not a convention [such as the Refugee Convention] but the Constitution is just a founding document’.<sup>18</sup> The agency requires a request from a member state or from the UN to carry out its activities in a particular country.<sup>19</sup>

### 8.2.2 *Financing*

Although IOM has a broad and ambiguous mandate, it is circumscribed by its funding model. IOM receives the majority of its funding (over ninety per cent) through earmarked projects. In 2019 only one per cent of IOM’s revenue was unearmarked voluntary contributions beyond member states’ regular dues.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in 2019 only eleven donors made unearmarked contributions, and 68 per cent of all unearmarked funding came from just three donors (Sweden, the UK, and Denmark). IOM is concerned by this trend and has encouraged states to sign multi-year agreements and commit to voluntary unearmarked funding.<sup>21</sup> In 2019 they released a report on unearmarked funding trends, for transparency and to encourage other donors to shift away from earmarking.<sup>22</sup>

IOM is highly ‘projectized’ as many scholars have noted.<sup>23</sup> Funders contract IOM for specific tasks, and one scholar has even compared it to a company that produces only those goods that have been ordered in advance.<sup>24</sup> Ninety-seven per cent of IOM’s staff are in the field implementing projects

Juncture, Precedents and Task Expansion’ in Megan Bradley, Cathryn Costello and Angela Sherwood (eds), *IOM Unbound? Obligations and Accountability of the International Organization for Migration in an Era of Expansion* (Cambridge University Press 2023).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with member state representative to IOM (Geneva, 10 May 2012).

<sup>19</sup> IOM Constitution (n 15) Article 1(b).

<sup>20</sup> IOM received US \$2.1 billion in total voluntary contributions (the first time the organization surpassed US \$2 billion), and \$28.5 million of this was unearmarked. IOM, ‘2019 Annual Report on the Use of Unearmarked Funding’, (2020) 3 <[www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/ICP/DRD/2019-report-use-of-unearmarked-funding-final.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/DRD/2019-report-use-of-unearmarked-funding-final.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid 5.

<sup>22</sup> IOM, ‘2018 Annual Report on the Use of Unearmarked Funding’ (2019) <[www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/ICP/DRD/iom-2018-annual-report-use-of-unearmarked-funding.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/DRD/iom-2018-annual-report-use-of-unearmarked-funding.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022. To my knowledge this was the first such report.

<sup>23</sup> Megan Bradley, *The International Organization for Migration: Commitments, Challenges, Complexities* (Routledge 2020) 39–41; Patz and Thorvaldsdottir (n 10) 75–98; Kreuder-Sonnen and Tantow (n 17).

<sup>24</sup> Fabian Georgi, ‘For the Benefit of Some: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Its Global Migration Management’ in Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécoud (eds), *The Politics of International Migration Management* (Palgrave Macmillan 2010).

which leaves a small staff of three per cent at headquarters working in strategic, administrative, and oversight roles.<sup>25</sup> This makes IOM distinct from many other UN agencies which have a larger proportion of non-earmarked funds, and more staff dedicated to policy-making at headquarters.

IOM is constrained by its projectized nature and earmarked funds. Donor interests play a 'greater role' in determining how funds are spent in IOM than in UNHCR.<sup>26</sup> The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) noted that: 'IOM has a market-oriented approach as a reactive project-based organization offering migration services in 12 broad areas of activities but is limited in its ability to direct resources strategically'.<sup>27</sup> IOM has a stronger tendency towards 'bilateralization' than UNHCR and many other UN-related organizations.<sup>28</sup>

Many states influence IOM's policies through bilateral financing, rather than decisions taken by the Executive Board or Council. Some IOM donors are more likely to target their influence through their funding decisions at the project level rather than by lobbying for changes at headquarters in policy.<sup>29</sup> Most states spend less time monitoring IOM at headquarters than they do for UNHCR, and some states manage their relationship with IOM from their capital, rather than from Geneva.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, some states still perceive IOM as predominantly a 'travel agency' responsible for migration services and thus the lead Ministry working with IOM is the Ministry of Interior, Immigration or Justice, rather than Foreign Affairs.<sup>31</sup> States are also less concerned with policy or mandate expansion at IOM council meetings than they are with UNHCR's mandate.<sup>32</sup> In fact, several states claimed that 'member states don't talk about mandate' and that IOM is 'more interested in filling a gap if they can find funding for it'.<sup>33</sup> Thus IOM has a high degree of operational autonomy: states may choose not to fund IOM's expansion into a new area, but they are also unlikely to strongly oppose expansion if IOM finds funding elsewhere.

<sup>25</sup> IOM, 'Review of the IOM Strategy' (12 October 2010) IOM Doc MC/INF/302 2.

<sup>26</sup> Patz and Thorvaldsdottir (n 10) 91.

<sup>27</sup> DFID, 'Multilateral Review: Assessment of International Organization for Migration' (February 2011) <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67600/IOM.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67600/IOM.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Patz and Thorvaldsdottir (n 10) 91; Hall, Schmid and Reitzenstein, (n 8).

<sup>29</sup> DFID (n 27).

<sup>30</sup> Interview with IOM and UNHCR member state representatives (Geneva, 10 May 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> One state described IOM Council meetings as 'very easy-going' and said they mostly focus on financial issues. Interview with IOM and UNHCR member state representative d (Geneva, 9 May 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Interview with IOM and UNHCR member state representative b (Geneva, 7 May 2012).

In sum, IOM's 1989 Constitution gave it an exceptionally broad and ambiguous mandate for international migration services, which gives it significant autonomy. However, it is also circumscribed by its highly projectized funding model and reliance specifically on earmarked funds. The next sections explore how IOM has navigated these opportunities and constraints.

### 8.3 IOM and Climate Change (2000–2014)

By the late 1990s, IOM had expanded its activities to encompass a wide range of migrants, IDPs, refugees, and other displaced peoples. IOM had also framed a new policy problem of 'ecological migration', which they defined as 'migration caused by processes of environmental degradation including worsening quality and accessibility of natural resources'.<sup>34</sup> In the 2000s IOM then engaged with climate change-related migration in three areas: (1) humanitarian response to natural disasters; (2) operational activities; and (3) policy and research expertise. IOM's work on climate-related migration collectively covered the full range of people on the move: internally or internationally; voluntary or forced.

#### 8.3.1 *Natural Disasters and Humanitarian Operations*

In the early 2000s, IOM became more engaged in natural disasters and humanitarian operations.<sup>35</sup> This work was not explicitly conceived as responding to climate-related displacement or migration, but rather assisting people affected by extreme weather, floods, droughts, and other natural disasters. There was an increasing need for humanitarian assistance following natural disasters. IOM for example sent teams to Gujarat post-earthquake (2001); Sri Lanka post-tsunami (2004); Haiti post-earthquake (2010); and Pakistan after the devastating floods of 2010 (IOM 2011: 101). In all of these cases, IOM was providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs.

IOM's role in natural disasters was strengthened in the humanitarian reform process. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main

<sup>34</sup> IOM, UNHCR and Refugee Policy Group, 'Symposium on Environmentally Induced Population Displacement and Environmental Impacts Resulting from Mass Migration' (International Symposium, Geneva, 21–24 April 1996) <[https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/environmentally\\_induced.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/environmentally_induced.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>35</sup> See Kreuder-Sonnen and Tantow (n 17).

coordinating mechanism for humanitarian agencies, appointed IOM as cluster lead for camp coordination and camp management in natural disasters under the new coordination system. Dealing with natural disasters was a significant share of these humanitarian activities.

Importantly, it was other UN humanitarian agencies that gave IOM this new role, not member states. In 2006, the director general Brunson McKinlay explained IOM's new cluster lead role to states at Council, as they had not given it a mandate to take on this work. He stated that:

IOM was now a major disaster relief agency, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) had recognized its role in the new cluster process and given it special standing with regard to natural disasters, i.e. emergencies that were not caused by war, oppression or human rights violations. Such disasters seemed to be increasing in number and duration, prompting IOM to focus more attention on them.<sup>36</sup>

The official record of this Council meeting does not mention any reaction from member states to the DG's claim. This is an interesting example of how international organizations can generate new obligations for other IOs.

States likely supported this work tacitly, even if they did not financially. One member state representative, for instance, explained that 'IOM does a lot of important work that you don't find in their mandate'.<sup>37</sup> Another member state explained that 'in Geneva we see them as a migration agency' but argued that IOM 'don't have to prove it [humanitarian operations] is part of their formal mandate' as long as 'they prove operationally sound'.<sup>38</sup> IOM sought to be active players in the humanitarian field, given the funding opportunities and need.

### 8.3.2 *Attempted Mandate Change*

In 2006 the organization appealed to states to fund a small meeting of academics, policy-makers, and experts on environmental migration. However, states did not fund the conference. One IOM official explained that developed countries claimed climate migration was, 'not part of the mandate'. Member state representatives also confirmed that 'there is a view amongst member states that climate change is not an issue

<sup>36</sup> IOM, 'IOM Report on the Hundred and third Session of the Executive Committee' (26 June 2006) IOM Doc MC/2201.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 11 May 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Interview with IOM member state representative (Geneva, 7 May 2012).

that ... IOM should be working on'.<sup>39</sup> Some states may have been reluctant for the organization to expand significantly into new areas. Although some member state representatives were unaware that IOM even worked in this area.<sup>40</sup>

Instead, IOM turned to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for funding and co-organized a seminar in February 2007 in Bangkok on environment and migration.<sup>41</sup> The meeting was held in the same month as the release of the fourth IPCC report which explicitly mentioned that climate change was likely to cause migration, making the issue 'very hard to deny' in the words of one IOM staffer.<sup>42</sup> This staff member maintained that the IPCC report gave IOM the legitimacy and inspired its 'willingness' to work on the issue.<sup>43</sup>

At the 2007 conference, IOM outlined a working definition of environmental migrants as: 'persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad'.<sup>44</sup> This intentionally broad definition, which covered some refugees, IDPs, and international migrants, became IOM's official definition and gave the organization much room to maneuver.<sup>45</sup>

Subsequently, IOM brought the issue of environmental migration to the attention of its governing Council. Yet again, states were reluctant to support this, and when given the choice they did not prioritize it as a topic for discussion.<sup>46</sup> The main reason, according to one IOM staff member, was that states had neither awareness nor interest in the issue.<sup>47</sup> Another IOM staff member explained that states asked 'what does IOM have to do with it? Is this [environmental migration] a real issue?'<sup>48</sup> IOM needed to do more research and awareness-raising to make it a priority for states.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Interview with IOM member state (Geneva, 23 March 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with IOM member states (Geneva, 7, 10 and 11 May 2012).

<sup>41</sup> Interview with IOM officials (Geneva, 17 March 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> IOM, *International Dialogue on Migration No 10. Expert Seminar: Migration and Development* (IOM 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Laczko and Aghazarm (n 2) 18.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with IOM senior official (Copenhagen, 15 December 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 17 March 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

IOM staff were aware of these constraints, as an IOM staff member working on the issue explained: states would be 'ready when they're ready'.<sup>50</sup>

In 2007 IOM convinced states to hold a three-hour discussion on migration, the environment and climate change at Council. Secretariat staff prepared a discussion note for this meeting, where they explained that environmental migration was a problem for those who moved, and the recipient country. IOM also maintained that: 'Increased migration can contribute to further environmental degradation, but it can also be a coping mechanism and survival strategy for those who move'.<sup>51</sup> In the paper, IOM recommended that countries of origin encourage 'host states to admit environmental migrants, whether as part of labour migration schemes, resettlement programmes, or humanitarian assistance initiatives'.<sup>52</sup> This paper set out IOM's position: cross-border environmental migration should be facilitated within the available legal migration channels. It also outlined a role for IOM in enabling 'more informed action and multi-stakeholder cooperation'.<sup>53</sup>

The subsequent discussion during the 2007 Council meeting focused predominantly on the issue of environmental migration, rather than IOM's role in addressing it. A panel of speakers, including representatives from China, Bangladesh, Greece, Cameroon, and Colombia, spoke about if and how environmental migration was a problem in their countries. Greece pledged it would create 'special funds in cooperation with regional organizations to finance adaptation projects in Africa and small island developing states and cooperate with IOM on various projects'.<sup>54</sup> Greece was then also chairing the international *Human Security Network* and the *Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE), and prioritized the human security impacts of climate change.<sup>55</sup> No other member state pledged funding for IOM on climate and migration.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> IOM, 'Discussion Note: Migration and the Environment' (1 November 2007) IOM Doc MC/INF/288 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid 7.

<sup>54</sup> IOM, 'Report on the Ninety-fourth Session of the Council' (5 December 2008) IOM Doc MC/2239/Rev 1.

<sup>55</sup> The Human Security Network is an informal group of 13 states that meet regularly at the Foreign Ministerial level to promote the concept of human security. Interview with IOM senior official (Copenhagen, 15 December 2009).

<sup>56</sup> IOM, 'Report on the Ninety-fourth Session of the Council' (n 54); On collusion see Dijkstra (n 13).

At this Council meeting, IOM did not outline a new role for itself in environmental migration but outlined principles for states to follow to address environment and migration. These included: effective environmental migration management; proactive policy and early action; and bilateral, regional, and multi-stakeholder cooperation.<sup>57</sup> There is no official record of states disagreeing or agreeing with these principles and IOM did not explicitly establish its role in these principles.<sup>58</sup> This suggests there was an acknowledgement of the issue but not explicit support for IOM's engagement with environmental migration.<sup>59</sup>

Subsequently, in 2008 IOM received the first explicit financial support to work on climate change and migration from a member state. Greece financed and co-hosted a half-day long conference on *Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities*. However Greek support was limited to 2008 and was largely due to the leadership of its representative Theodor Skylakakis.<sup>60</sup> The conference's primary objective was to raise awareness of the human security challenge of climate change for the most vulnerable people.<sup>61</sup> The Director General of IOM, Brunson McKinley, spoke at the conference and emphasized IOM's expertise on climate and migration. IOM focused the conference on the human security dimensions of climate change mobility to counter the growing perception of migration as a threat.<sup>62</sup> By bringing together over 180 people from 67 countries and 33 inter-governmental organizations, IOM became a known expert and broker in debates on climate change and migration. IOM 'colluded' with Greece to advance their climate agenda.

In sum, IOM lobbied member states to recognize the organization had a role in responding to environment and climate migration. They did this by initiating conferences, setting the agenda of council meetings, and working with sympathetic states. However, they did not initially gain a formalized mandate change as states did not agree that it was a priority. IOM understands its Constitution to be very permissive, as many activities can be classified as a 'migration service'. This gives the organization

<sup>57</sup> IOM, 'Report on the Ninety-fourth Session of the Council' (n 54).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid 30.

<sup>59</sup> Notably throughout this period IOM framed the issue as 'environmental migration' and not as 'climate migration'.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with IOM senior official (New York, 12 October 2010).

<sup>61</sup> IOM and Greece, 'Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Addressing Vulnerabilities and Harnessing Opportunities' (2009).

<sup>62</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 11 May 2012).

a significant degree of autonomy to define its tasks and add new ones. However, IOM due to its heavy reliance on earmarked funding and projectized nature is also constrained by what member states will fund and is thus more responsive than most IOs to states' preferences. What's interesting in this case is IOM still sought collective agreement from its Executive Council on its priorities.

### 8.3.3 *Secretariat Staff Led Expansion*

In 2007–2008 IOM continued to work on climate-related migration, despite member states' reluctance to fund or support it. IOM established a focal point for environmental migration within the Migration Policy, Research, and Communications Division to be assisted by two Migration Policy Officers. There were ten other staff across IOM working on climate change, environment, and natural disasters. The focal point, Philippe Boncour, 'pushed' the issue internally, highlighting to others that 'this [issue] matters'.<sup>63</sup> The climate focal point remained, even during a period of major organizational reform in 2009.

Staff sought to establish the organization as an expert on climate change–induced migration, even without members' explicit support. IOM's DG Brunson McKinley stated for instance that 'The International Organization for Migration has an obvious role in addressing the linkages between environmental degradation, climate change, and migration'.<sup>64</sup> They frequently published research reports and participated in events with governments and universities on the topic.<sup>65</sup>

In 2008 IOM instigated a working group on climate change, displacement, and migration in the IASC.<sup>66</sup> The IASC was an important catalyst

<sup>63</sup> Interview with IOM senior official (New York, 12 October 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Brunson McKinley, 'IOM statement' (Institute for Public Policy Research Conference Climate Change and Forced Migration, London, 29 April 2008).

<sup>65</sup> IOM, 'Report of the Director General on the Work of the Organization for the Year 2008' (10 June 2009) IOM Doc MC/2278. In 2008 IOM published the following: IOM, 'Migration Research Series No 31: Migration and Climate Change' (2008); IOM, 'Migration Research Series No 32: Irregular Migration from West Africa to the Maghreb and the European Union: An Overview of Recent Trends' (2008); IOM, 'Migration Research Series No 33: Climate Change and Migration: Improving Methodologies to Estimate Flows' (2008); IOM, 'Survey on Remittances 2008 and Environment (IOM 2008)'; IOM, Migration Research Series No 35: Migration, Environment and Development' (2008). IOM staff wrote some of these reports and commissioned academics to write others, such as the report on *Climate Change and Migration: Improving Methodologies to Estimate Flows*.

<sup>66</sup> Nina Hall, 'A Catalyst for Cooperation: The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Humanitarian Response to Climate Change' (2016) 22 *Global Governance* 369.

for new policy responses to climate-related migration, as states were not party to IASC discussions (nor did they actively monitor them). In October 2008 the working group submitted its first working paper which outlined IASC's commitment to: 'Take account of, and manage, the humanitarian consequences of climate change, including protecting those who may move as a result' and to 'launch a dialogue among Member States on how to fill existing and foreseeable legal, operational and capacity gaps associated with climate change and human mobility'.<sup>67</sup> This work subsequently became the basis for the Nansen Initiative, led by UNHCR and the Norwegian government.<sup>68</sup> Through the IASC IOM also pushed for migration to be accepted as an adaptation strategy under the UNFCCC text.<sup>69</sup> IOM did not want migration to be seen simply as a 'failure of adaptation'.<sup>70</sup>

IOM also established a new *Climate Change, Environment and Migration Alliance* (CEEMA) with UNEP, the United Nations University, Munich Re Foundation, and civil society partners. This alliance's primary purpose was to develop policy approaches and research to investigate the links between climate change, environmental degradation, and migration. They wanted to support the most vulnerable countries with capacity-building and work with national governments on the degradation of natural resources. It was a broad and ambitious agenda ambit for a small alliance.<sup>71</sup> It illustrates how IOs can also 'collude' with the private sector, academia, and civil society to advance their agenda.

<sup>67</sup> IASC, 2008, 'Climate Change, Migration and Displacement: Who Will Be Affected?' (31 October 2008) <<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2008/smsn/igo/022.pdf>> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>68</sup> Nansen Initiative, <<https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/nansen-initiative>> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>69</sup> IOM, 'Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability: Identifying Problems and Challenges' (UNFCCC Preparatory Meeting, Bonn, 9 October 2008) <[www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/env\\_degradation/env\\_keynote\\_speech.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/env_degradation/env_keynote_speech.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>70</sup> IOM, 'Migration and Climate Change: From Emergency to Adaptation' (14th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, Poznan, 8 December 2008) <[www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/env\\_degradation/webcast.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/env_degradation/webcast.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>71</sup> In April 2008 they also held an expert meeting in Munich to which many CEEMA members attended including: UNU, UNEP, Munich Re Foundation and with financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation. See Koko Warner, Workshop Report for 'Research Workshop on Migration and the Environment: Developing a Global Research Agenda' 16–18 April 2008 Munich, Germany (IOM 2008) <[www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/events/docs/programme\\_positionpapers.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/events/docs/programme_positionpapers.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

In May 2009, IOM published its first policy paper explicitly on climate change and migration. The nine-page brief 'Migration, Climate Change and the Environment' outlined the 'complex' relationship between climate change and migration.<sup>72</sup> It stated the 'irrefutable evidence regarding climate change' and expectation that global migration flows would 'rise significantly over the next decades as a result of climate change'.<sup>73</sup> The paper emphasized that the agency had a 'long established' interest and expertise in the area through its publications and research and operational responses to natural disasters.<sup>74</sup> It outlined ambitious future goals to mainstream climate change and environment into migration policies; and to minimize forced displacement by 'developing temporary and circular labour migration schemes with 'environmentally-vulnerable countries'.<sup>75</sup> IOM positioned itself as the organization with the necessary expertise, and experience to address climate-related migration. IOM's investment in developing climate and migration policy was significant given it has a small headquarters with little policy-making capacity.

#### 8.3.4 Operational Expansion

Alongside this policy development, IOM sought to publicize its operational expertise on climate change and environmental migration. The Geneva headquarters invited 40 missions to send in descriptions of projects which related in some way to climate change and environment.<sup>76</sup> The resulting *Compendium of IOM's activities in Migration, Climate Change, and the Environment* covered a broad range of activities in thirty countries.<sup>77</sup> The Compendium was a major enterprise due to the decentralized nature of the organization.<sup>78</sup> In the process of compiling the report, IOM staff in headquarters and the field became aware that a lot of work 'has already been done on climate change and environment'.<sup>79</sup> The 300-page

<sup>72</sup> IOM, 'Migration, Climate Change and the Environment: Policy Brief May 2009' (2009) <[www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/ICP/IDM/iom\\_policybrief\\_may09\\_en.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/IDM/iom_policybrief_may09_en.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022 1, 5.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid 7.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 11 May 2012).

<sup>77</sup> IOM, *Compendium of IOM's Activities on Migration, Climate Change and the Environment* (IOM, 2009) <<https://publications.iom.int/books/compendium-ioms-activities-migration-climate-change-and-environment>> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 17 March 2010).

<sup>79</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 25 March 2010).

compendium illustrated IOM's existing expertise on environment, climate change, and migration. In fact, it was so popular with participants at the Copenhagen summit that IOM ran out of copies to distribute.<sup>80</sup>

However, the Compendium raised important questions on IOM's role in environmental or climate change projects. It included activities where IOM had no core competency and only a very tenuous link to its migration services mandate, such as soil conservation and reforestation in Haiti or promoting youth employment in the environmental sector in Senegal.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the Compendium inadvertently highlighted the disconnect between the global policy debate and operations on the ground. IOM's activities dealt with a range of migrants and non-migrants who did not always fit within the clear typologies of environmental migrants that IOM had developed. The Compendium highlighted a conceptual ambiguity and tension between IOM's climate and migration operations and their policy statements.

Importantly, the existence of each project depended on what donors were prepared to fund. One member state for example visited IOM's Haiti operations and visited IOM's reforestation activities. They claimed these activities were not in IOM's 'core mandate' and not a 'core capacity of IOM'.<sup>82</sup> They acknowledged that 'mission creep' was occurring but did not see this as a 'dangerous development' as they argued 'someone needs to do it [reforestation]'.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, this state would not fund IOM's reforestation or other natural disaster activities as they only financed 'core' mandated operations, in particular IOM's assisted voluntary returns programme.<sup>84</sup> States often tolerate IOM's 'gap-filler' or 'catch-all' interpretation of its mandate and role, hence it can take on any task that they can find funding for.

In addition to the Compendium, the Director General, William Lacy Swing, also frequently highlighted IOM's operational and research expertise on climate change and migration. He highlighted IOM's contribution in carrying out 'relevant operations' in over 40 countries,

<sup>80</sup> Interview with IOM officials (Geneva, 17 March 2010).

<sup>81</sup> Note that adaptation is a broad category so some of these projects could fit within a broad definition of adaptation, however IOM gave neither a definition of adaptation nor made any explicit connections between these activities and climate change adaptation. I visited IOM's operations in Northern Kenya and saw a similar pattern.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with IOM member state representative (Geneva, 10 May 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with IOM member state representative (Geneva, 10 May 2012). Notably states' views vary on what constitutes IOM's 'core' mandated operations.

developing a research base, setting out the policy issues, and working in partnership with other agencies. In December Swing published an Op-Ed in the French newspaper, *Le Monde*, where he called on the international community to accept the ‘principle of mobility of people who must migrate, temporarily or permanently, in order to adapt or to survive climate change’.<sup>85</sup> The core message was that climate change-induced migration was a problem that the international community, needed to address.

In December 2009 Swing spoke at the UNFCCC alongside the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian leaders. He again emphasized IOM’s expertise in working with environmentally displaced persons:

Certainly since Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998, IOM, together with its humanitarian partners, has been there every time a major disaster struck and forced populations to flee for sheer survival. We know how to put up the tents in displacement camps, we know of the protection and assistance needs of displaced persons, we know how important it is to build back better.<sup>86</sup>

He argued that migration should not be a strategy of ‘last resort’ but that the international community needed to respond sooner and see migration as an adaption strategy. Swing’s speeches sought to establish IOM as a legitimate actor in what they saw as a new field of climate change-related migration (both internal and external; voluntary and forced).

Throughout 2010 IOM continued to showcase its expertise on climate change and migration at a range of international events and through reports. For instance, two climate and migration experts recognized IOM as ‘Perhaps the most important international organization in this area [of environmental and climate migration]’ in a background paper written for the *Global Forum on Migration and Development* in Mexico.<sup>87</sup> Swing

<sup>85</sup> Author’s translation from the French: William Swing, ‘Aidons les pays en développement à faire face aux changements climatiques’ (*Le Monde*, 12 December 2009) <[www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2009/12/16/aidons-les-pays-en-developpement-a-faire-face-aux-changements-climatiques-par-william-lacy-swing\\_1281291\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2009/12/16/aidons-les-pays-en-developpement-a-faire-face-aux-changements-climatiques-par-william-lacy-swing_1281291_3232.html)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>86</sup> William Swing (15th Conference of the Parties UNFCCC Copenhagen Side Event: Climate Adaptation Continuum, Migration and Displacement: Copenhagen and beyond, Copenhagen, 16 December 2009) <[www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/env\\_degradation/speakingpts\\_swing.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/env_degradation/speakingpts_swing.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>87</sup> Koko Warner and Susan Martin, ‘Impact of Climate Change on Migration and Development’ (Background Paper for Civil Society Days, Global Forum on Migration and Development, Mexico 2010).

attended the 2010 UNFCCC summit and emphasized that: ‘Today’s reality is that climate change and environmental degradation are already triggering migration and displacement. In the past decade alone, for example, IOM undertook some 500 projects for a total of \$280 million to assist victims of environmental degradation’.<sup>88</sup> He reiterated that migration was not a ‘worst case scenario’ but that it ‘should be part of our response to climate change’.<sup>89</sup> IOM continued to walk a fine line between advocating for migration as a useful adaptation to climate change; and providing operational solutions to what most states saw as the core problem: mass displacement caused by climate change.

### 8.3.5 *Mandate Change*

Alongside IOM’s expanded policy, research, and operational activities on climate and migration, they returned to Council for support. In November 2008, McKinley announced to states at the annual IOM Council meeting that climate change was an area of strategic priority. There is no officially recorded response from states on this. However, member states at this meeting expressed a general concern about mandate creep:

[Y]ears of expansion in terms of both membership and scope of programming may have resulted in a form of ‘mandate creep’ and the Organization was urged to consolidate its work in line with the 12 strategic activities.... Particular disquiet was expressed about the possibility that IOM would stray from helping member states formulate migration policy and take on a normative role.<sup>90</sup>

The Director General’s responded that there ‘should be no mandate creep’ and pledged that IOM would always provide compelling evidence of linkages between its work and the 12 strategic activities established in 2007.<sup>91</sup> In addition, he stated that one of IOM’s five ‘broad strategic directions’ was to ‘engage cooperatively and thoughtfully in emerging fields such as...climate change’.<sup>92</sup> IOM could claim it had tacit consent, given there was no vocal disagreement, for continuing research,

<sup>88</sup> William Swing, ‘IOM Statement’ (16th Conference of the Parties UNFCCC Side Event, Cancun, 10 December 2010).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> IOM, ‘Report on the Ninety-sixth Session of the Council’ (26 November 2009) IOM Doc MC/2266/Rev.1 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

conferences, and submissions on climate migration.<sup>93</sup> However, it is highly likely that the agency would have faced strong opposition from states if it had sought a protection role for climate-related displacement as UNHCR did.<sup>94</sup>

Then at the next Council meeting in 2009, some states agreed that an area of 'special importance' to IOM was 'climate change and the consequent displacement of migrants'.<sup>95</sup> At the 2010 Council states again discussed IOM's work on climate change and migration. IOM noted in its 2010 strategic review that 'emerging issues with implications for migration, such as climate change, continue to rise on the global agenda, it may also be in Member States' strategic interest to ensure that IOM is tasked to specifically address such new challenges in the future'.<sup>96</sup> States then agreed that the *International Dialogue on Migration* (IDM) in 2011 should focus on climate change and migration. This was significant as the IDM is IOM's top-level policy forum and engagement with states and is a sign of state support for IOM's work on climate and migration.<sup>97</sup>

In March 2011 IOM convened the IDM on *Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration* and 221 people attended, including 151 member states representatives. The deputy director of IOM, Laura Thompson highlighted that in the past 10 years, IOM had received funding for more than 500 projects to respond to environmental migration. IOM's aim was to bring the 'topic to the table' and then let states decide if and how they would pursue it according to one IOM representative.<sup>98</sup> In the official record of the meeting, IOM did not advocate for a particular outcome from the conference and did not stipulate what its role was in

<sup>93</sup> There was also a discussion over whether IOM had a protection mandate for migrants or refugees. One delegation stated that 'IOM did indeed have a protection mandate stemming from the IOM strategy and constitution'. They added that it was 'becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between refugees and migration in the field. A factor that could hinder the effective management of mixed migration flows because institutional mandates did not appear to be in sync with reality in the field'. IOM, 'Report on the Ninety-sixth Session of the Council' (n 90) 30.

<sup>94</sup> Hall, *Displacement, Development and Climate Change: International Organizations Moving beyond Their Mandates* (n 4) ch 2.

<sup>95</sup> A member of the Executive Committee explicitly 'recognised the Administration's role in raising the profile of migration-related issues in the agreement expected to be produced' at the Copenhagen UNFCCC Summit. IOM, 'Report on the Ninety-sixth Session of the Council' (n 90) 3.

<sup>96</sup> IOM, 'Review of the IOM Strategy' (n 25) 2.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 11 May 2012).

<sup>98</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 7 May 2012).

implementing the conference recommendations.<sup>99</sup> IOM sought to carve out a new role by directing states to this new issue.

In addition, IOM sought out financing for its climate-related migration work from sources other than member states. IOM had successfully lobbied for the inclusion of migration as an adaptation strategy in the final UNFCCC Agreement at Cancun.<sup>100</sup> This was applauded as a significant victory on the basis that IOM would have access to the adaptation fund. Subsequently, IOM did a 'mapping' of potential 'use of the adaptation fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, EU funds as well other bilateral, multilateral and private sources'.<sup>101</sup> IOM could not directly access the adaptation fund and so established a partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to access the fund.<sup>102</sup> The Director General held bilateral meetings with the ADB to develop this partnership and also explored funding for adaptation projects with the Swedish International Development Agency. IOM was proactive in sourcing financing. IOM worked around member-states to develop support and funding for its climate-related migration work.

By 2013 IOM's policy agenda relating to natural disasters, climate change, and environmental migration was spread in several key policy debates.<sup>103</sup> Firstly, they sought to ensure that migration was recognized as a driver of risk in the Hyogo Framework for Action discussions on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience and contribute to the UN system-wide action plan on DRR. Secondly, in the UNFCCC IOM lobbied for states to deliver on their promise to consider rehabilitation and compensation for migration under the 'loss and damage' domain. They also advocated for states to integrate migration as a positive adaptation strategy in National Adaptation Programmes of Action. Thirdly, in the humanitarian sphere, IOM collaborated with other agencies and pushed its 'Migration Crisis Operational Framework' to look at vulnerable mobile groups and

<sup>99</sup> IOM, 'International Dialogue on Migration 2011: Intersessional Workshop on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: Chair's Summary' <[www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/climate-change-2011/Chair%27s-Summary.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/climate-change-2011/Chair%27s-Summary.pdf)> accessed 4 April 2022.

<sup>100</sup> UNFCCC 'Framework Convention on Climate Change' (Cancun Agreements) (2010) UN Doc FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1, Paragraph 14 (f). See also Koko Warner, *Legal and Protection Policy Research Series No 18: Climate Change Induced Displacement: Adaptation Policy in the Context of the UNFCCC Climate Negotiations* (UNHCR 2011).

<sup>101</sup> Interview with IOM official (Geneva, 7 May 2012).

<sup>102</sup> Interview with IOM staff member (Geneva, 11 May 2012).

<sup>103</sup> IOM, 'Compendium of IOM Activities in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience' (2013) 11–12.

participated in the Nansen Initiative's steering committee (which focused on those displaced across international borders by natural disasters).

IOM developed research and policy expertise on climate-related migration, despite the small size and capacity of its headquarters, and projectized funding structure. They did this by looking for supportive partners and funders, such as humanitarian organizations, the UN University, Munich Re, and supportive states. Over time IOM staff convinced the Executive Council that climate-related migration issues fitted within their competencies, and states ultimately did not block this shift as they did in UNHCR's case.

#### 8.4 Conclusion

IOM staff developed a role for IOM on climate and migration and sought states' collective support for this. They organized conferences, wrote policy papers, conducted research, and spoke at important international summits, including the UNFCCC. IOM lobbied for migration to be considered a form of adaptation, worked with other IASC members to develop a humanitarian response, and completed hundreds of projects related to the environment, climate, and migration worldwide. Over time, by showcasing their work and the importance of the issue, IOM convinced states at Council to tacitly support this work and hence acquired a formal mandate for climate-related migration (as opposed to ad-hoc projects for work on this issue).

IOM was able to pursue its climate change and migration work without explicit endorsement from Council in the 2000–2008 period because states' generally accepted that IOM could be contracted for specific projects and purposes which did not neatly fit in the organization's core delegated competencies. This gave IOM a degree of flexibility to find and work with sympathetic member states, and forge alliances with other international organizations, the private sector, and civil society. States were largely not concerned that IOM 'colluded' with others to pursue a new issue, even if the IOM Council did not actively delegate or prioritize climate-related migration.

More research is needed on the relationship between IOM's obligations to its Council (i.e. its formalized mandate) and to its funders (who may not be IOM member states). In particular, scholars could look at how IOM acts when there is a direct conflict between private funders and IOM member states. In turn, member states could also clarify their expectations of IOM: should it be a 'gap filler', or stick to a set of core activities

where it has expertise? If they see utility in IOM's role as an organization with a 'catch-all' mandate that provides services wherever and whenever states want, then earmarking is not a major issue. If states want a more focused UN migration agency then they should reduce earmarked funding, or at least ensure that earmarked funding relates directly to the organization's core competencies, and does not undermine the mandate set multilaterally by the Council.

What does this mean for people affected by climate change? IOM will continue to offer humanitarian assistance to IDPs affected by natural disasters and develop policies and research on the relationship between climate change and migration. IOM is not the appropriate place to elaborate new protection frameworks for those displaced across international borders by natural disasters, an issue that the new Biden administration explored.<sup>104</sup> However, IOM could play a stronger role in advocating for more legal pathways for migration, and emphasizing the positive role that safe and legal migration can play in adapting to climate change.

<sup>104</sup> White House: Presidential Action, 'Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration' (4 February 2021) <[www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/executive-order-on-rebuilding-and-enhancing-programs-to-resettle-refugees-and-planning-for-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-migration/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/executive-order-on-rebuilding-and-enhancing-programs-to-resettle-refugees-and-planning-for-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-migration/)> accessed 4 April 2022.