

IPE 2021 Scenario: Defining “Climate Refugee”

Should “climate refugees” be recognized and protected under international law? In 2018, two new global agreements – the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR) and [the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration](#) (GCM) – were adopted by an overwhelming majority of UN member nations, with the United States a conspicuous dissenter. Yet while both agreements made reference to migrants fleeing the effects of global climate change, neither adopted a definition of climate change migration that would be recognized under international law. The 2021 Integrated Policy Exercise will explore the effort to create an international legal obligation to assist climate migrants, focused on the upcoming [2022 International Migration Review Forum](#) (a quadrennial conference on the implementation of the GCM).

The activity: A vote by member states in the UN General Assembly to include a session at the 2022 Forum focused on the adoption of a legal definition of climate change migration. A concurrent NGO event will seek to create a declaration on potential definitions.

The questions: The Environmental Justice Foundation, headquartered in Great Britain, defines climate refugees as “persons or groups of persons who, by reasons of sudden or progressive climate-related change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad.” (<https://ejfoundation.org/what-we-do/climate/protecting-climate-refugees>)

- (1) How might the starting definition of “climate change refugee” change in order to elicit more support, whether from UN agencies, civil society organizations or member states?
- (2) What other institutional changes, side agreements, or actions might be proposed/promised to rally support/opposition for a forum session?

Fall 2020 briefing and preparation: Students will receive an interest survey at the end of October, and will be assigned to represent a country or NGO in early November. Students must complete a required asynchronous introduction to the IPE topic before the end of the fall semester. An optional networking/group activity will be held in December.

Preparatory assignment: Students will be asked to write a one-page brief about the country or organization they represent by Friday, January 15, 2021.

Simulation: Thursday January 21 @ 8 pm through Saturday, January 23, 2021 @ 10 pm. All MPP classes are cancelled on Friday, January 22 to allow students to participate in the IPE. All activities are remote. Synchronous activities will be designed to allow students in different time zones to attend.

Questions? Contact the faculty organizer (Ann Lin) and GSIs (Victor Rateng and Marianna Smith) at IPE2021Questions@umich.edu.