

November 12, 2021

Jake Sullivan
National Security Advisor

CC:

Curtis Ried
Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director of Multilateral Affairs
National Security Council

RE: Further Action following the White House Report on the Impact of Climate Change on Migration

Dear Mr. Sullivan,

We write to request further coordination with civil society, membership organizations of affected communities, and local government partners to increase protection for climate displaced people. There is a pressing need for the U.S. government to leverage existing laws and develop new legal pathways to protect climate displaced people. In 2020, climate-related and other environmental disasters displaced more than three times the number of people than conflict within their own countries. The Biden administration can take a number of immediate steps to respond to the urgency of such increasing displacement with timely policies, and to support climate-affected communities and individuals in building resilience at home and seeking shelter abroad.

Our organizations welcome the release of the [White House Report on the Impact of Climate Change on Migration](#) ("the Report") ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021 (COP26). We applaud the Report's recommendation to establish a standing interagency policy process ("interagency working group"). However, further clarity on the interagency working group would allow key partners to meaningfully engage and support its mandate. We would recommend that the interagency working group publicly identify its members and share a timeline for its work. An articulation of the interagency working group's authority would also make the policy process more transparent, and therefore effective.

The Report describes the interagency working group's mandate as coordinating the government's response to averting and addressing climate displacement, including by advancing work on the Report's recommendations. The following would be important next steps for the interagency working group:

U.S. Government

- Coordinate with the Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate and the undersigned groups to integrate climate change into asylum & refugee officer training;
- End Title 42 in line with the Report's recognition that "the current migration situation extending from the U.S.-Mexico border into Central America presents an opportunity for the United States to model good practice;"
- Strengthen efforts to find durable solutions for internally displaced people following COP26 in line with the Task Force on Displacement's [recommendations](#);
- Identify the evaluative criteria that the U.S. government will use to determine whether to join the Global Compact on Migration.

Programming and Investments

- Operationalize the Report's recommendation to scale up investment in line with the Report's acknowledgment that "[s]ignificant additional development and humanitarian resources are needed to address the root causes of migration, support climate adaptation, build capacity at local, national, and regional levels, and harness the potential positive development impact of migration." This would include targeted investment in urban areas; and planned and voluntary migration, among others;
- Publish timelines, the relevant U.S. government stakeholders, and their authorities with regard to carrying out the Report's recommendations. Assess and publish the progress on those recommendations by 2024.

Legislative

- Plan a joint public meeting with congressional sponsors of the Global Climate Change Resilience bill to build on existing efforts to establish a new pathway for climate displaced people;

- Request an engagement with the Senate Climate Change Task Force, including briefing members on the Report.

It is critical that the interagency working group engage with civil society members, membership organizations of affected communities and individuals, and local government partners who work more directly on these issues. We therefore respectfully request a meeting with the interagency group to discuss the above-mentioned and other recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration. We can be contacted at: afrancis@refugeerights.org (International Refugee Assistance Project).

Sincerely,

Amnesty International USA
Church World Service
HIAS
International Refugee Assistance Project
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mayors Migration Council
Oxfam America
Refugees International
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at UC San Diego
University Network for Human Rights
Welcoming America