



## CONCEPT NOTE

### Strengthening Youth Voices in MENA

**Youth Forum on Migration, Environment and Climate Change in MENA on 30 July – 31 July  
2024, Erbil, Iraq**

*Organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

#### Background

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)<sup>1</sup> are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change impacts including extremely high temperatures, limited groundwater and rainfall, scarce agricultural and arable land, high urbanization rate and varying adaptive capacity.

Due to the combination of water and precipitation scarcity, demographic pressures and population concentration, MENA is the most water-stressed area in the world with 14 out of 25 extremely high water stressed countries located in the region<sup>2</sup>.

Climate change impacts are expected to accelerate and intensify further in the near future, amplifying those stressors already at play.

Environmental and climate hazards have always been major drivers of migration, and climate change predictions indicate that even more people are expected to be on the move as slow onset processes and sudden onset climatic events such as floods, landslides, and drought degrade ecosystems, reduce crop yields, destroy habitable areas, livelihoods, jobs, infrastructure, and job opportunities.

In addition to the abovementioned impacts, in MENA, environmental and climate changes have significant implications for peace and stability in the region, as the region includes a number of fragile and conflict-affected countries. Therefore, the climate change-fragility nexus and its linkage with human mobility is increasingly gaining attention in climate change discussions across the region and beyond.

Furthermore, data is a critical component in managing migration effectively. The inclusion of data-driven approaches is pivotal to understanding and addressing the intricate challenges of human mobility in the context of climate change. Leveraging data analytics, can enhance the ability to predict and respond to environmental changes and migration patterns. Accurate and timely data can inform decision-making processes, helping to identify vulnerable populations, assess risks, and implement targeted interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> IOM MENA countries comprise Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wri.org/insights/highest-water-stressed-countries>



Data showcases that in 2023, disasters triggered 1.3 million new internal displacements in MENA<sup>3</sup>. The World Bank estimates that, without concrete action, as many as 19 million North Africans will be forced to migrate internally by 2050. This reality underscores the critical importance of intensifying regional efforts to address the challenges of human mobility and exploit the opportunities associated with environmental and climatic considerations.

Young people are at the forefront of these dynamics, as they represent a large and growing segment of the population in the MENA region, and as they are often the most affected by the socio-economic and environmental challenges. The MENA region, people from 15-29 years of age constitute nearly one-quarter (24%) of the population, compared with 19% of the population across OECD countries<sup>4</sup>.

Evidence shows how climate change can have different implications for particular social groups. Women and young people are often particularly exposed<sup>5</sup>. Women and young people are often disadvantaged in terms of land ownership, having a sustainable income, and accessing opportunities that could increase their resilience to climate change. However, young people are also key agents of change, innovation, and leadership, and have the potential to shape the future of the region in a more sustainable and inclusive way.”

Whilst many actors work on these links, IOM recognizes the necessity to step up national, regional, and international efforts to address human mobility challenges and tap into the opportunities associated with environmental factors and climate change. IOM's Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change (MECC) for 2021-2030 aims to guide efforts to strengthen capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters due to natural hazards. The strategy aligns with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM)<sup>6</sup>, and stands that contemporary migration governance, policies, and practices must reflect the importance of environmental factors and climate change on human mobility.

### **Road to Conference of Youth (COY19) and Conference of Parties (COP29)**

Two successive COYs have taken place in MENA. In 2023, the [Conference of Youth \(COY\)](#) in its 18th edition (COY18) took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 26 to 28 November. At COY18, **IOM had a pivotal role** in the Conference of Youth, holding several capacity building initiatives and advocacy work with youth representatives from all over the world. Next COY 19 will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> IDMC MENA region does cover IOM's geographical scope of MENA. IOM MENA countries may be found [here](#).

<sup>4</sup> “Young people in MENA: Coming of age in a context of structural challenges and global trends”, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2023: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/3ced02bf-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/3ced02bf-en>

<sup>5</sup> IOM 2021. People on the Move in a Changing Climate – Linking Policy, Evidence and Action. <https://publications.iom.int/books/people-move-changing-climate-linking-policy-evidence-and-action>

<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Migration, “Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021-2030”, Publications Platform, <https://publications.iom.int/books/institutional-strategy-migration-environment-and-climate-change-2021-2030>; Accessed March 17, 2024 at 12:55



**Two successive COPs have taken place in MENA the last two years;** COP27 was held in November 2022 in Egypt, while COP 28 took place in Dubai last November-December 2023. COP 29 will be hosted in Baku, Azerbaijan next 11-22 November 2024.

Within this framework, and with the support of the Africa Regional Migration Program (ARMP) funded by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), and IOM's internal funding, a Forum on youth, migration, environment, and climate change in MENA will be organized **from 30-31 July 2024, in Erbil, Iraq**, to bring together regional youth representatives and key actors to debate, share experiences, and develop tailored solutions while ensuring the full participation of young people in decision-making as per their critical role that is increasingly recognized.

## Objectives

The MENA Youth Forum on Migration, Environment and Climate Change will aim to foster dialogue, increase knowledge and understanding of the interplay of migration and environmental and climatic considerations; plan, agree, and coordinate actions to strengthen and bring together young people from across the region. Furthermore, the purpose of this youth forum is to **establish key messages** that can contribute to the Global Youth Statement at COY19 and COP 29.

More specifically, this forum will:

- Improve young people's knowledge and understanding of the links between migration, environment and climate change,
- Facilitate the exchange of views and experiences among young people from different backgrounds
- Increase the visibility of the role of youth in the field of migration, environment and climate change in preparation for national, regional, and global commitments, initiatives and dialogues on climate action and migration.
- Showcase good practices and initiatives of young people and youth organizations on climate change and migration in across the MENA region.

## Outcomes

- Set of key messages of youth to address challenges and opportunities of human mobility in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters in MENA.
- Strengthen MENA-wide youth networks for continued advocacy on climate change and human mobility nexus.

## Structure, format and participation

### Forum

- The partners will organize a two-day in-person workshop in Erbil, Iraq.
- Sessions will be facilitated jointly by the organizers and the participants.



### Consent

- Participation in the forum is voluntary.
- Photographs will be taken, and sessions may be recorded.
- By participating, you consent to the use of photos and recordings for public information materials.
- Social media will be actively used during the workshop.

### Language

- The workshop will be run in English for all sessions with simultaneous interpretations to French and Arabic.

### Participation

- 1 youth representative will be chosen from each **IOM MENA** country as follows: **Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen.**
- Youth will be selected through a Call for Expression of Interest.
- Particularly youth (age 18-35) will be selected based on their familiarity with human mobility in the context of climate change, as well as experience in climate action.
- Participation is also encouraged from migrants and refugees, and persons affected by climate change.
- The invitations will be shared via email.

### Proposed draft Agenda (opt to changes)

DAY 1: 30 July		
Time	Topic proposed	Facilitation
	Registration	IOM
	Opening, introductions, modality of the workshop	IOM
	Introduction to human mobility and climate change in the MENA region	IOM
	Sharing of successful contribution of youth to address challenges and opportunities of human mobility in the context of a changing climate that could be replicated across the regions	Youth
DAY 2: 31 July		
	Topic proposed	Facilitation
	Relevant policy processes to human mobility and climate change in the MENA region	TBC
	Working and agreeing on MENA Youth Key Messages on human mobility in the context of climate change	Youth



## Call for Expression of Interest

Building from the above concept, IOM is seeking for young persons (18-35 years) who are nationals of any the IOM MENA region **only**<sup>7</sup>, familiar with human mobility in the context of climate change as well as experience in climate action. Young people who are committed to raising the voices and the interests of climate migrants and disaster displaced persons, are invited to participate in the two-day workshop on **30 July– 31 July 2024, in Erbil, Iraq**. Moreover, the selected participants engage to continue increasing the visibility of the human mobility and climate change nexus leading-up to COY 19, COP 29, and beyond.

This **Expression of Interest does not guarantee that applicants will be selected for this event**. Applicants will be selected based on their knowledge, experience and proven engagements previously undertaken on engaging with the topic of human mobility in the context of climate change and environmental degradation.

Selected participants are to arrive **in Erbil on 29 July and depart either on July 31 after the last session or the following day, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2024, at the latest, and subject to flight availability**.

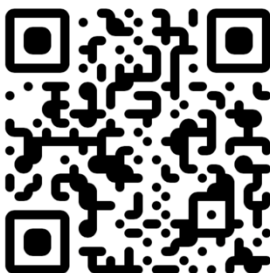
**Selected youth representatives must have the relevant travelling documents** (such as passport valid for at least 6 months), as well as relevant documents (such as visa, and other security clearances as appropriate).

**IOM will cater for the costs** (air travel, accommodation, meals) **of successful candidates only**.

Participants will need to be able to cover their visa costs, transportation to the airport in the location of departure as well as in Erbil in advance. **These costs will be compensated later against receipts upon your arrival**.

Please express your interest as soon as possible and no later than Tuesday **25 June, 2024 23:59 Erbil time**.

Please share your responses via this link [here](#) or QR code



Only selected participants will be contacted, at latest **27 June**.

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<sup>7</sup> OM MENA countries comprise **Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen**.



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