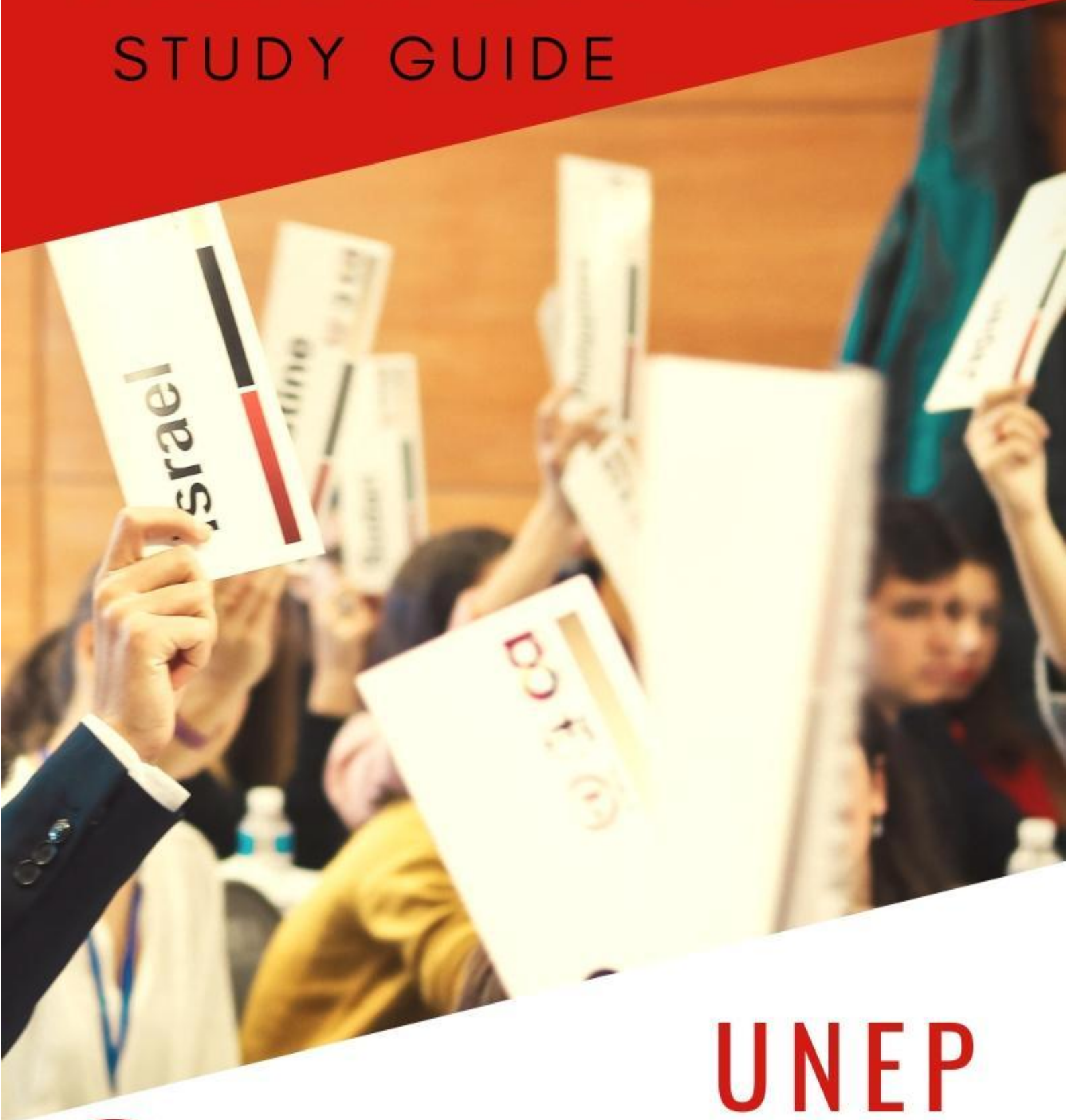


# SYMUN 2018

## STUDY GUIDE

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# UNEP



SYMUN



**This Study Guide on the topic:**

Environmental refugees. SDG: Climate Action, Life on Land and Sustainable Cities and Communities.

**Has been drafted by:**

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**SYMUN 2018**

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## I. WELCOME LETTER

Dear Delegates,

First of all, welcome to the United Nations Environment Programme of the Spain Youth Model United Nations 2018. It is an extraordinary honour for us to have the opportunity to chair this Committee at the second edition of the biggest and most diverse MUN for scholars in Spain. We are certain that this is going to be an unforgettable experience for all of you, and we can assure you that there is no better induction into the MUN world than SYMUN.

As you already know, UNEP is the leading global environmental authority, focused on promoting and defending the concept of sustainable development all around the world. In this conference, you will be debating about an extremely crucial and urgent matter: the situation of environmental refugees. It is very important that you understand that, although this is a simulation, you will be dealing with a topic that has very real, decisive and dramatic consequences. Therefore, we expect your full and undivided attention during the sessions, where you will have to cooperate and negotiate between the delegations in order to reach a complete and consensual resolution on this vital matter. Moreover, it is your chance to prove that you are the representatives of a prepared and informed youth, committed to the protection of the environment. Your preparation to become the leaders of a better tomorrow starts here.

In relation to your duties as a delegate, it is extremely important that you study the rules of procedure before the beginning of the conference. Also, we expect a profound and specialized knowledge of the topic, acquired mainly through the study of this guide. Last but not least, it is absolutely essential that you consistently respect and defend the diplomatic stance of the State that you are representing. If you keep



this three basic aspects in mind, SYMUN will be a unique opportunity for your academic formation, since it will undoubtedly help you to develop a large variety of fundamental skills for your professional future, such as negotiation or public speaking.

Lastly, formal debate sessions aside, we guarantee that you will have lots of fun in all of SYMUN's social events. This conference is a great chance to become friends with people your age from all around the world, who share the same interest for MUNs and who will contribute to make your experience in Madrid absolutely unforgettable. That said, it is our pleasure to welcome you to this year's edition of SYMUN. Of course, we remain at your entire disposal for any further information or clarification you might need.

Yours sincerely,

Leou Chen and Fernando Esteban,

Chairs of UNEP

## II. COMPETENCE, FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations Environment Programme was established in 1972 as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm (Sweden) and it is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. It has the institutional level of a Programme inside the UN structure, which means its organization and functions are very similar to the ones of a specialized international agency. UNEP's main goal is to promote the implementation of environmentally friendly policies around the world in order to contribute to the global spread of sustainable development. Essentially, this Programme is committed to sustainability so that the quality of life of future generations can be improved.

UNEP, like all other UN Programmes or Agencies, does not have binding decision-making powers, which means that its resolutions do not have the power to legally oblige the member states to implement a certain policy. Therefore, its work is basically expressed through recommendations or suggestions to those member states. In addition, UNEP also cooperates closely with representatives from civil society, businesses, and other Major Groups and Stakeholders. Inside the Programme, the work is divided into seven thematic categories: climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, and environment under review. UNEP's functions, as it is stated on their official website, are basically the following:

" 1. *Assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends*

2. *Developing international and national environmental instruments*
3. *Strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment*<sup>1</sup> “

In relation to the organizational structure, UNEP is led by their Executive Office, chaired currently by Erik Solheim, their Executive Director. The core structure of the Programme is divided into seven different Divisions in charge of diverse thematic areas, which work under direction of the aforementioned Executive Office.

## II. TOPIC: ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES

### A. Context: Definitions and clarifications

First of all, it is important to clarify that neither the academic community nor the UN have reached an understanding regarding an unanimously accepted definition of what an environmental refugee actually is. In fact, the existence of an enormous amount of different conceptions on the matter has led to questioning of the usefulness of the term itself<sup>2</sup>. So, before looking closely into some of those definitions, it is important to keep in mind that we are dealing with an extraordinarily broad concept, characterized by its vagueness and the influence of a large variety of interrelated factors.

Even though it was Lester Brown who first coined the term “environmental refugee” in 1976<sup>3</sup>, UNEP did not express its perspective on this concept until 1985. That year, in a UNEP policy paper, Essam El Hinnawi defined environmental refugees as “those

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/what-we-do>

<sup>2</sup> Bates, D. C. (2002). Environmental refugees? Classifying human migrations caused by environmental change. *Population and environment*, 23(5), 465-477.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, L. R., McGrath, P. L., & Stokes, B. (1976). Twenty-two dimensions of the population problem. *Population Reports. Series J: Family Planning Programs*, (11), 27.

*people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected their quality of life*"<sup>4</sup>. In that same document, the author established a distinction between three basic types of environmental refugees: those who have been temporarily displaced because of an environmental stress, those who have to be permanently displaced and re-settled in a new area and those who migrate from their original habitat, temporarily or permanently, because their original habitat can no longer support them due to excessive deterioration.

Building on the definition given in that policy paper, numerous authors established new conceptualizations and classification criteria around the concept of environmental refugees. For instance, for Professor Diane C. Bates, environmental refugees are "*people who migrate from their usual residence due to changes in their ambient non-human environment*" (2002), whereas for the expert Norman Myers, they are "*people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their erstwhile homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification and other environmental problems*"<sup>5</sup>. As you can see, the main difficulty in finding a correct, unanimous definition on the topic is the multiplicity of interrelated factors that influence this kind of human displacement.

Despite of the aforementioned categorization designed by El-Hinnawi, there is also no consensus in relation to the criteria that should be used to differentiate between environmental refugees. Nevertheless, one of the key factors is undoubtedly the type of environmental disruption that causes the displacement. Following this criteria, we could distinguish between people who have to immediately flee to save

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<sup>4</sup> El-Hinnawi, E. (1985). Environmental refugees. UNEP (<http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/2651>)

<sup>5</sup> Myers, N. (1993). Environmental refugees in a globally warmed world. *Bioscience*, 43(11), 752-761.



their lives due to a natural disaster, those who have to leave in order to avoid the most severe consequences of environmental deterioration and finally those who preemptively decide to voluntarily leave with the purpose of anticipating the mentioned consequences<sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup>. Naturally, these different situations need to be tackled with diverse measures in proportion to the urgency of the matter.

Finally, probably the most controversial part in the definition of environmental refugees is the use of the word "refugee". According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which is the most important United Nations multilateral treaty on this matter, a refugee is a person who has "*a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion*". Given the fact that environmental causes are left out of that definition, it is highly questionable that environmental refugees can benefit from the legal status granted to refugees through this Convention. In conclusion, it is clear that the terminology is absolutely crucial in this topic, and it should play a decisive role in the debate and the posterior resolution.

### ***B. Current situation***

Over the past several decades, multiple researchers attempted to determine the exact population of environmental migrants and refugees. Their estimations range from 10 million people in 1988 (Jodi Jacobson) to 200 million by 2050 (Norman Myers). Currently, the most common projection states that the world will have 150-200 million climate change refugees by 2050.

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<sup>6</sup> Renaud, F. G., Bogardi, J. J., Dun, O., & Warner, K. (2007). Control, adapt or flee: How to face environmental migration?. UNU-EHS.

<sup>7</sup> Terminski, B. (2012). Towards recognition and protection of forced environmental migrants in the public international law: Refugee or IDPs umbrella?.

In Asia and the Pacific area alone, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, more than 42 million people were displaced during 2010 and 2011, which is more than twice the population of Sri Lanka. The causes of these displacements include storms, floods and heat and cold waves. Although most of those displaced eventually returned when conditions improved, an undetermined number became migrants inside and outside their home countries.

Also, there have been 178 Alaskan communities threatened by erosion of their land due to the increasing annual temperature. Many of these communities have resided there for generations and are now facing eminent threats of loss of culture and tribal identity. Similar cases include Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana, which is being depopulated because of saltwater intrusion and sea level rise, and the Quinault village of Taholah in Washington State, which has requested relocation away from the encroaching Pacific Ocean.

In northern Africa, the region arguably most affected by this environmental trend, desertification threatens an additional 50 million inhabitants of land at risk of becoming uninhabitable due to climate change and poor farming techniques. This trend has led to a wave of North African migrants fleeing to Western Europe in order to escape crop failure and water shortage.

### ***C. Initiatives to tackle the issue***

Currently there are mainly two law frameworks within the UN system that evoke an association with environmental refugees. The first and earliest is the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which set out the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the state. It clearly states that the contracting states shall exempt refugees from reciprocity, respect a refugee's personal status and the rights, provide the possibility of assimilation and naturalization to refugees, etc. However, as we already saw in section A, it does not explicitly express that environmental refugees might be also considered as refugees. The Second principal

framework is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which gives out clear definitions of the meaning of the words “fundamental freedoms” and “human rights”.

Another important step in solving the environmental refugees issue is the Agreement on Long-term Cooperative Action signed in December, 2010 at the conference in Cancún. The Agreement was created under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and expressed the understanding and the effort to address climate change’s damage and loss including the “climate induced migration.”

Most of UNEP’s effort in coping with the environmental refugees is shown in their numerous local environment assessment reports and re-building programmes targeted at specific areas. One of the examples is the UNEP Post-Conflict Capacity Building Programme in Liberia, where UNEP’s efforts have focused on strengthening the enabling policy and legislative frameworks and the technical capacity of the country’s nascent environmental administration.

### **III. QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED IN A RESOLUTION**

Before issuing further suggestions to cope with environmental refugees, the members of the UNEP are advised to reach an agreement on whether an update on the definition, responsibility, and rights of environmental refugees is necessary. The final resolution should also try to answer questions including but not limited to:

1. How can the UNEP make efforts to reduce the total numbers of environmental refugees and enhance their current living condition?



2. Should different countries bear different responsibilities in dealing with environmental refugees? If so, by what measuring standards? For example, should countries with a higher amount of Carbon Emissions bear greater responsibilities?
3. What concrete measures can be taken by the UNEP to prevent the population of environmental refugees from increasing?
4. What role can the UNEP play in promoting international cooperation to better deal with the issue of environmental refugees?
5. Should environmental refugees be included in the 1951 Convention?
6. What definition of "environmental refugees" should the international community adopt?

#### IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND FURTHER READING

You should be familiar with the following sources of information. The material contained in this section could either appear during the debate or be useful for you to know more about the topic:

- United Nations Environment Programme (<https://www.unenvironment.org>)
- Climate refugees in the 21st century, Regional Academy on the United Nations, by Petra Ďurková - Anna Gromilova - Barbara Kiss - Megi Plaku
- UNEP Post-Conflict Capacity Building Programme in Liberia December 2007
- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
- 1985 "Environmental Refugees" UNEP policy paper (El- Hinnawi)

#### V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REMIDNERS

Regarding preparation for this Conference, that should go beyond is in this guide, you should prepare a **Position Paper** that has to be send to the Chair before the Conference starts.



Moreover, you should read in detail the **Rules of Procedure**, especially the articles applying to the dress code of this Model of United Nations:

*Delegates attire must be at all moments appropriate to the relevance of the event and the role represented. Therefore, compliance with the so-called Western Business Attire is mandatory.*

- *Female: full suit of blazer, with blouse or dress or formal shoe. No jeans or sneakers are acceptable. Cocktail dresses will not be accepted.*
- *Male: full suit or blazer and formal trousers (no jeans are accepted), shirt, tie or bow-tie, and formal shoes. Again, neither sneakers nor formal wear will be accepted.*

*Despite the above-mentioned provisions, delegates shall wear, at their discretion, clothes, badges, accessories and typical dresses of the countries they represent, if they are appropriate for the occasion according to the protocol of such countries.*

Moreover, if you have any doubt or need any information about the Committee, conferences or other issues, don't hesitate to contact us.

## **V. POSITION PAPER**

A Position Paper is a document in which is written the official position of the country you are representing, based on the topic that you are discussing. Every topic is ideally segmented in 3 Paragraphs of roughly equal length.

**1st Paragraph:** The first paragraph explains the topic through the viewpoint of your country. You can add a short chronology of milestone events or of events which matter to your country. This way you can shape the topic into the most favorable format for your assignment. Remember that you always represent a State and it

*may be that your personal opinion clashes with your country's position. A good diplomat puts his own opinion on hold in favour of the country's position, and that should be also reflect in the paper.*

**2nd Paragraph:** This part gives room to previously adopted resolutions and official documents. As in the first paragraph, you should concentrate on those documents which are in line with your country's political course. By highlighting certain documents, you can again shape the topic in a favorable manner. Please take care to write down the documents with their official code, e.g. S/RES/1979 (2003). In this case, the S stands for the Security Council, the RES stands for resolution and the number states that this is the 1979<sup>th</sup> Resolution the UNSC has ever adopted. After the code you add the year.

**3rd Paragraph:** This is by far the most important paragraph. That is why it can be longer if it helps you to develop new and innovative ideas. The 3rd Paragraph should contain concrete measures and action plans dealing with the question on how to tackle the problem which is currently being discussed. The more creative and expansive you are, the higher your advantage is compared to your fellow delegates. Don't just propose new programs or funds. Lay out how, where, and who pays. Give your plan a name and where it will be located in the UN System, etc

#### IV. SAMPLE POSITION PAPER



**Committee:** United Nations Security Council

**Topic:** Improving Global Emergency Preparedness for Nuclear Crisis Situations

**Country:** State of Qatar

**Delegate's Name: ...**

The State of Qatar is fully aware of potential dangers posed by nuclear energy. The nuclear accidents of Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima in 2011 demonstrated the uncertainty and the limited controllability of nuclear technologies. Hence, for Qatar, the military use of atomic energy is currently not an option. For Qatar, a serious issue that occurs in the case of a nuclear incident is the lack of networking structures to connect the relevant authorities. Qatar criticises the fact that currently, there is no institutional structure within the IAEA dealing with an effective handling of nuclear crisis situations which includes swift and thorough information as well as quick measures of evacuation. For Qatar there is a need for international transparency and coordination in the case of a nuclear emergency. Therefore, the State of Qatar emphasizes the need for concrete actions and underlines its will to get to a sustainable solution within the IAEA.

Over the past years there have been a number of attempts to contribute to the issue of Emergency Preparedness in Nuclear Crisis Situations, such as the Convention on Nuclear Safety in INFCIRC/449 (1994) and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management in INFCIRC/546 (1997) requesting all states to take appropriate steps to guarantee the safety of their nuclear facilities and materials. GC/55/RES/10 (2011) and GC/56/RES/9 (2012) emphasize the importance of national emergency preparedness as well as the importance of timely and effective responses in case of an emergency. The Nuclear Security Guidance Committee (NSGC) established Safety Standards pursuant to its creation in 2011 and measures to strengthen cooperation in nuclear crisis situations are mentioned in the Director General's report GC/56/6 (2012) referring to GC/56/RES/9 (2012).

In order to tackle the challenge of Improving Global Emergency Preparedness for Nuclear Crisis Situations the State of Qatar proposes a High-speed Emergency Real-time Monitoring and Evacuation System (HERMES). Consisting of an internet-based Monitoring System, this IAEA pilot project is connected to every nuclear power plant. In case of emergency, a notice is sent to the System which informs the relevant authorities. The HERMES project improves transparency and offers a window of time



for the officials to act immediately whenever needed and initiate evacuation measures



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