



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
SECURITY COUNCIL
2022 - 2023

Ministerial Open Debate

Climate Change, Peace and Security

13 June, 2023



Overview

Climate change is the defining challenge of our time. Its interconnected consequences – intensified extreme weather, rising sea levels, food and water insecurity, biodiversity loss, and heightened health risks – jeopardise human life, livelihoods, and ecosystems and adversely impact national, regional, and global stability. Such a multidimensional challenge is unprecedented. An effective response requires distinct but complementary responses by the various pillars of our multilateral system, consistent with their respective mandates. This Security Council open debate will consider the implications of climate change on international peace and security under the agenda item “Threats to International Peace and Security.” It will explore how climate change-informed Security Council mandates can contribute to overcoming fragility, reducing vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs, and promoting resilient societies.



Objective

This meeting aims to explore how climate change impacts the capacity of UN peacekeeping and special political missions to implement their mandates - from basic access to at-risk populations and their protection to managing tensions and supporting peace processes and sustainable peace. It will draw on insights from conflict and post-conflict settings in which UN peacekeeping and special political missions have been deployed. Moreover, it will showcase through concrete cross-regional examples how climate action can provide entry points for conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. It will underscore the potential for synergies between security, humanitarian, development and climate actors that can reduce, and eventually eliminate, instability and fragility.

Building on that foundation, the discussion will explore how the Security Council can support the development of a collaborative and responsive approach to climate change, peace and security and how to target and tailor climate action to complement the Council's responsibility to maintain international peace and security.



Background

The Security Council first convened to discuss climate change, peace and security in 2007. Since then, a growing body of evidence has demonstrated how climate change systemically reshapes international peace and security, contributes to human suffering, and exacerbates political volatility, economic stress, forced displacement, and resource competition, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas. As a "risk multiplier," climate change can also generate new security risks, including intercommunal and potential cross-border conflicts over scarce resources and human mobility.

Climate change has implications for the entire peace continuum. The impacts of extreme weather events exacerbate competition over resources, a situation observed in Colombia, Iraq, the Central African Republic and Mali, among others. Climate impacts have also challenged efforts to resolve conflicts. In Darfur, desertification drove violence and exacerbated longstanding political grievances, while in Somalia, a weakened state could not respond effectively to prolonged and unprecedented drought, which has been exploited by the terrorist group Al Shabaab. Climate change further complicates peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, as evidenced in multiple contexts – from South Sudan, where the UN mission struggled to address climate-induced displacement and conflict, to Haiti, where the increased frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters are worsening the current humanitarian, political and security crises.

Additionally, the gendered impact of climate change has significant implications for international peace and security. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change's adverse effects, including food insecurity, displacement, and increased rates of conflict-related sexual violence. Moreover, women are often excluded from decision-making processes related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Evidence shows that by leveraging the role of women as agents of change, gender-sensitive work on climate change, peace and security can advance both stability and gender equality.

In response to these various challenges, regional, national, and local actors have taken the initiative to address climate-related risks to international peace and security. The following are some examples: the African Union's Master Road Map of Practical Steps to Silencing the Guns in Africa notes how addressing environmental degradation will reduce the risk of conflict; the Pacific Islands Forum developed a regional strategy on climate change and security with a gendered lens; numerous National Action Plans have incorporated climate impacts on peace and security; and local Colombian communities and civil society organisations developed community-based approaches to conflict prevention that consider climate change's impact on resource competition and political instability.

Coordination within the United Nations has played a crucial role in addressing the climate change-peace and security nexus, as exemplified by the Climate Security Mechanism - an interagency initiative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the UN Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Last year, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel's (UNOWAS) launched a UN Regional Working Group on Climate Change, Environment, Security and Development in West Africa.

In principle, the UN Security Council has recognised that the adverse effects of climate change may threaten international peace and security. The Council has also increasingly acknowledged the impact of climate change in the context of its decision-making on specific files, such as Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan and West Africa and the Sahel. It has also recognised the need for comprehensive risk assessments and risk management strategies associated with climate change. However, the Security Council has taken a piecemeal approach. It is yet to develop a holistic strategy to address climate change, peace and security, in part due to the unprecedented scale and complexity of the problem and the challenges associated with defining the Council's role alongside other UN bodies' mandates, especially the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN entity tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change.

Strategic and operational frameworks across the climate change and peace and security spectrum are needed to deliver effective solutions. Different mandates withstanding, no actor or sector alone is equipped to address climate change and its related security risks on its own.

Looking forward, the Security Council must adopt a collaborative approach to effectively develop and support climate-sensitive conflict resolution and peacebuilding while emphasising complementarity with the work of the UNFCCC and other climate-focused entities and agencies. Furthermore, the Council can improve transparency and inclusivity by actively engaging non-Council members and various stakeholders in climate change, peace and security discussions.



Guiding Questions

- 1) How can the Security Council better integrate the impact of climate change on peace and security into its conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding efforts?

- 2) What are some of the best practices and policy interventions, alongside the peace continuum for addressing climate-induced fragility in conflict-affected countries? What integrated solutions can be scaled up, accelerated or replicated to overcome fragility, advance conflict resolution, and sustain peace?
- 3) How can the Security Council best utilise the findings of the risk management strategies that Missions in climate-fragile settings have been mandated to carry out to inform its work? How might peace operation mandates be refined in light of these findings, and how can including climate fragility in the Secretary-General's reports contribute to this?
- 4) What mechanisms can be developed to monitor and assess the effectiveness of climate-sensitive conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, including regular reporting, evaluation, and using indicators and benchmarks to measure progress and ensure accountability?
- 5) How can we strengthen collaboration between the Security Council and local and regional initiatives that address climate change's impact on peace and security?
- 6) How can the Security Council develop transparent and inclusive mechanisms to engage on climate change, peace and security with Member States, the broader UN system, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders? How can it better promote the perspectives and voices of those most impacted, particularly women and children, to inform inclusive, gender-sensitive approaches to climate change, peace and security?



Briefers

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations (tbc)

H.E. Juan Manuel Santos, Former President of Colombia, Nobel Peace Laureate and Member of The Elders
Civil society briefer



Format

The ministerial meeting will be held in an open debate format and chaired by H.E. Mariam Almheiri, UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment. Participation is encouraged at ministerial level. All participants are encouraged to be succinct and focused in their interventions. The UAE encourages joint statements by both Security Council members and other Member States, where possible.

Member States wishing to participate in person should inscribe their names on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e delegate. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a i requesting to participate in accordance with Rule 37 of the Council's Provisional Rules of Procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE. Inscription for said meeting will open on Thursday, 08 June 2023 at 09:30am. Delegations are reminded that shortly before the start of the meeting, the list of speakers will be e-mailed to those delegations who have inscribed, along with the link to the live list of speakers.

The list of speakers will be determined by the order in which requests are received. Delegations are kindly requested to limit their statements to no more than four minutes.