



## **Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting**

### **Climate change and violent conflict: Challenges and opportunities for the EU and civil society**

Brussels, Friday 6 December 2019

#### **Outcome Document**

#### **Introduction**

There is widespread recognition that climate change poses a number of serious risks to peace. While global warming impacts everyone, it is mostly countries already affected by conflicts that suffer the most. Fostering their resilience and ability to peacefully resolve disputes is crucial.

In this context, the EU has been drawing attention to existing and future security threats that derive from climate change. For instance, the 2018 high-level event entitled 'Climate, Peace and Security: The Time for Action' which was hosted by High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, brought together ministers from many of the EU's partner countries, United Nations (UN) officials and various leading experts on the topic.

The overall objective of this CSDN meeting was to launch a discussion between EU policy-makers and civil society actors on the impact of climate change in conflict-affected countries, and to highlight the contribution that civil society peacebuilding organisations can make to mitigate this impact.

This document does not attempt to summarise those discussions, which were held under the Chatham House Rule, but presents key findings and recommendations.

#### **Key findings**

##### ***Linking conflict prevention and climate adaptation***

- Conflicts are complex and multifaceted. Climate-related factors, particularly extreme weather events and changed weather patterns can exacerbate security risks by:
  - Changing migration patterns;
  - Increased food prices;
  - Sea level rise (300 million people live in low-lying areas) ;
  - Exposing communities affected by conflict to a double burden;
  - Scarcity (e.g. of water) may be used by governments/armed groups to further their strategic objectives (e.g. in Iraq, Sahel). Early warning mechanisms need to capture this analysis;
  - Climate-related factors may be manipulated ('weaponised') by a regime (e.g. Assad regime) to distract attention from man-made factors (e.g. poor governance) and may become a driver of instability in elections (e.g. Zambia) by increasing inequality, exclusion and injustice;

- These factors are too often addressed in parallel when they should be addressed in an interdisciplinary manner.
- As there is less research and evidence regarding the effects of violent conflict on climate change, or how climate adaptation may support/work against conflict prevention and resolution, we need more investment in such research, to learn as we act.
- Macro studies are important to identify trends. However, the same climate-related trend can play out very differently in different situations so analysis must be rooted in robust, localised conflict analysis that integrates gender analysis, and qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to ensure that context-specific political dynamics of conflict and climate adaptation are understood and appropriate entry points for the intervention identified.
- Now we have a common understanding of the dynamics, action is key even as we learn more.
- Transition away from fossil fuels towards cleaner energy may exacerbate conflict drivers in fossil-fuel dependent economies, or the effects of transition may be difficult to assess (e.g. Ukraine). Conflict-sensitive approaches to transition are therefore important.
- Experience (e.g. the Congo Basin) shows that there is a need to re-examine past assumptions around hydroelectric power and the relationships between large-scale infra-structure projects (including for green energy) and drivers of fragility.
- Climate adaptation measures are urgently needed in conflict-affected situations (e.g. Sudan) but are not necessarily supported by the necessary conflict-sensitive approaches to be successful in their own terms and to avoid exacerbating conflict drivers. There is opportunity here for the conflict prevention community to support climate adaptation interventions.
- Climate scientists and the conflict prevention community need to find ways to communicate clearly and accessibly with each other – and to learn from each other. Bringing the different communities of practice from within each field together is important. (E.g. interdisciplinary, localised analysis of Lake Chad resulted in very granular understanding of conflict/crisis dynamics).
- In some places, there are old political frameworks that can inspire or be revived for international agreement even between partners otherwise hostile to each other (e.g. the apartheid-era Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) for the Orange River basin, or the Congo Basin Forest Partnership).
- Climate-related factors and the need for climate adaptation measures may also provide an entry point for dialogue between parties in conflict.
- Climate adaptation measures and conflict prevention often have common objectives. Conflict prevention approaches such as supporting mechanisms that enhance resilience in communities strengthen resilience to climate-related shocks as well as other conflict drivers. Similarly, inclusive and responsive governance increases the likelihood of conflict-sensitive responses to the effects of extreme weather events.

- Conflict prevention civil society organisations are beginning to consider their environmental impact and some are adopting sustainability policies to mitigate this. Some organisations are also reviewing ethical implications of working with some (private sector) partners in light of the climate crisis.

### ***The EU and the climate crisis***

- Addressing the climate crisis is a top, but not a new priority for the new College of Commissioners. The EU Green Deal is in progress.
- HR/VP Josep Borrell has highlighted conflict prevention as a priority for the new college and his first foreign visit was to the Conference of the Parties (COP), indicating the importance of the crisis for the European External Action Service (EEAS).
- This is also reflected in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) proposals. The EU is the largest donor for climate finance internally to the EU and externally.
- EU Member States (MS) have recently identified early warning priority countries for the EEAS; climate considerations were part of this decision-making process.
- There is not consensus on climate action among EU MS, and some of them work against the climate change agenda.
- The EEAS sees the importance of mediation and dialogue in the context of the climate crisis in conflict-affected situations, and also prioritises working with women as key agents of resilience in affected communities.
- The EU's 'Integrated approach to external conflicts and crises', and, at the higher level, the 'whole-of-EU' approach, provide the necessary tools for addressing climate considerations in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- There is a role for the EU to play in supporting water diplomacy, including through updating technical support.
- 30% of future European Investment Bank (EIB) support in Sub-Saharan Africa will go to green projects.
- The EU can support 'whole-of-government' approaches on the ground, bringing together local, regional and national authorities (e.g. in Nigeria) to support climate adaptation and conflict prevention.

### **Recommendations for conflict prevention organisations:**

- Share sustainability policies to learn from each other.
- Engage climate scientists and find mutually accessible language for clear communication.
- Identify opportunities to bring parties in conflict together around climate action, and seek to include climate adaptation measures in other processes.

- Undertake robust, detailed and localised analysis that combines climate-related factors, gender analysis and conflict analysis to inform programming, and to identify opportunities and risks.
- Investigate supporting climate adaptation initiatives in integrating conflict sensitivity.

### **Recommendations for the EU:**

- Support conflict prevention civil society organisations in the strands of work identified above.
- Ensure support and protection for human rights defenders and environmental defenders, including indigenous groups, bearing in mind how dangerous campaigning against extractive industries has become in many places.
- Require independent evaluation of the impact of the extractive industries.
- Review what and how the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) finances projects in order to evaluate the sustainability of projects and partnerships, including scaling up support to limiting population growth as an exacerbating factor.
- Support water diplomacy and other processes focused on climate adaptation with the necessary diplomatic, political, technical and financial support.
- Improve early-warning mechanisms to better capture climate change-related factors, including the 'weaponisation' of natural resources by some conflict parties.
- Ensure that carbon offsetting is an eligible expenditure in all conflict prevention and climate adaptation programming funded through EU instruments.

#### **Civil Society Dialogue Network**

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The third phase of the CSDN will last from 2017 to 2020. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).