



Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting

Water, Peace and Conflict: Exchanging on Opportunities and Best Practices

Thursday 27 October 2022 (08.40-14.00 CEST)

Thon Hotel EU,
Rue de la Loi 75, 1040 Brussels

Concept note

Background

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has made clear that it is committed to addressing the linkages between the climate crisis, water resources, and peace and conflict dynamics. The [EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy](#) (2016), the [Climate Change and Defence Roadmap](#) (2020), the new [EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](#) (2021) and the [Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security](#) (2021) all underline the importance of responding to how the climate crisis may affect conflict, including with respect to issues around access to (and control over) water resources. Similarly, the [European Green Deal](#) characterises climate change as ‘a significant threat multiplier and a source of instability’, and the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe](#) (NDICI-GE) includes several provisions relating to these linkages, including with respect to addressing ‘threats having a potentially destabilising impact on peace and security, deriving from climate change impacts’ and to ‘promoting [...] conflict sensitive management of water resources and transboundary water cooperation.’¹

As part of the EU’s efforts to strengthen the way it addresses these issues through its engagements and funding instruments, this meeting will bring together civil society experts from the peacebuilding, environmental protection and climate adaptation fields and EU officials to exchange on lessons learned, best practices and opportunities for action, going beyond policy rhetoric.

Objectives

The overall aim of this meeting is to exchange and to gather input on how the EU should enhance the way it addresses the linkages between the climate crisis, water resources, and peace and conflict dynamics, particularly in relation to mediation and issues of governance. The geographic focus of the meeting will be the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the Horn of Africa.

Specifically, the meeting will seek to gather input on how the EU should (inter alia):

- Support dialogue and mediation efforts in relation to the use of water resources, including through local community mediation and multi-level engagement (local, national and regional) on transboundary issues;
- Promote the creation or strengthen inclusive governance and cooperation structures for the management and protection of water resources and ecosystems (including transboundary water basins), notably as part of Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans;

¹ See for example Annex II, ‘Areas of cooperation for the geographic programmes’, paragraph 4(m); Annex III, ‘Areas of intervention for thematic programmes’, paragraph 3.2(b); and Annex IV, ‘Areas of intervention for rapid response actions’, paragraph 3(a).

- Support integrated and innovative engagements, and promote collaboration between actors from the peacebuilding, environmental protection, climate adaptation, development and diplomacy fields;
- Systematically support local initiatives and consult diverse local actors as part of its efforts.

The discussions will explicitly address the gendered implications of these issues and how the EU should adopt a whole-of-government approach in responding to them.

Format

The meeting will take the form of a facilitated round-table discussion under the Chatham House Rule.² It will be held over half a day. Participants will be split into small groups during some of the sessions.

Participants

The meeting will bring together about 35 participants, including about 15-20 civil society experts and officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC).

Language

The discussions will be held in English.

² Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed (see: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule>).

Agenda

08.40 – 09.00	Registration and welcome coffee
09.00 – 09.20	<p>Opening remarks (plenary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Krengel, Head of Unit, FPI.2, Service for Foreign Policy Instruments • Anna Strzaska, Head of Division, GLOBAL.GI.3, European External Action Service • Laura Davis, Senior Associate, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
09.20 – 09.40	Panel kick-off: responding to the water-peace-conflict nexus (plenary)
09.40 – 10.35	<p>Session 1: Supporting dialogue and mediation efforts around water resources (small groups)</p> <p>This session will serve to gather input on how to promote and support dialogue and mediation efforts at the local, national and regional levels, particularly in relation to populations' access to, and use of, water resources.</p> <p>The following questions (and others) may be discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the challenges and conflict risks faced by communities, civil society and governments, in relation to the shared use of water resources and the implementation of environmental protection actions and climate change adaptation initiatives around water basins, rivers and wetlands? • What are possible peacebuilding and conflict prevention responses to these challenges and risks? • What are good practices in ensuring that dialogue, mediation and environmental protection efforts relating to water are conflict-sensitive and therefore gender-sensitive? • What are good practices in connecting dialogue and mediation efforts to investment plans and financial support for natural resource management and environmental protection and regeneration?
10.35 – 10.50	Coffee break
10.50 – 11.40	<p>Session 2: Supporting inclusive governance and cooperation structures around the use and protection of water resources (small groups)</p> <p>This session will serve to gather input on how to develop or strengthen governance and cooperation structures that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse groups for the management and protection of water resources and ecosystems.</p> <p>The following questions (and others) may be discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are good practices in ensuring that governance structures and public services responsible for water management and ecosystem protection are inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse groups? • What are examples of governance issues that may undermine water infrastructure, weaken government responses to extreme weather events, and contribute to conflict? How should they be addressed? • What are good practices in developing multi-level cooperation structures to govern the use and protection of transboundary basins, rivers and wetlands?

11.40 – 12.50	<p>Session 3: Recommendations for deepened EU engagement (plenary)</p> <p>The session will start with reporting on the key points raised during the small group discussions in the previous two sessions. Then, building on the points raised, participants will discuss how the EU may enhance its actions relating to the links between climate change, water resources, and peace and conflict dynamics.</p> <p>The following questions (and others) may be discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How may the EU enhance how it supports initiatives by local civil society, and consults diverse local actors, as part of its efforts? • How should the EU develop and support investment plans strengthening cooperation around the use and protection of water resources? • How should the EU support integrated and innovative engagements, and promote collaboration between actors from the peacebuilding, environmental protection, climate adaptation, development and diplomacy fields?
12.50 – 13.00	<p>Closing remarks (plenary)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Sellwood, Chief, Environment and Security Unit, United Nations Environment Programme • Laura Davis, Senior Associate, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch

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 fourth phase of the CSDN will last from 2020 to 2023. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).