



# **THE GREEN TRANSITION AND PEACE**

Exploring Climate Crisis and Security Dynamics in Somalia

**Meeting Report**

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Civil Society Dialogue Network

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## Meeting Report

### **The Green Transition and Peace: Exploring Climate Crisis and Security Dynamics in Somalia**

3 July 2024

The objective of this meeting was to explore the effects of EU climate action in Somalia on local peace and conflict dynamics. It was intended to inform the EU's efforts in Somalia on how its climate action and engagements with partners for a green transition can be conflict-sensitive and actively contribute to conflict prevention and peace.

The meeting brought together 24 participants – 16 civil society experts and 8 officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC).

The discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule. There was no attempt to reach a consensus during the meeting or through this report, which presents the key points and recommendations put forward by the civil society participants.

#### **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 (Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fifth phase of the CSDN will last from 2023 to 2026. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).



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## 1. Integrate peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into climate action initiatives

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In Somalia, it is impossible to separate security dynamics from the effects of the climate crisis. The EU's climate action with partners in Somalia must reflect this interlinkage and ensure that green transition projects do not compromise – and indeed actively contribute to – conflict prevention and sustainable peace. As climate-related disaster is a known conflict driver, acute responses to such disasters should **include measures to address tensions and prevent potential conflict**. There should be dialogue sessions and opportunities for mediation on issues of dispute from very early on. **Indicators should be established** for when climate-related or other interventions are not advancing in a conflict-sensitive manner, so that emerging issues can be addressed proactively.

All interventions should be **conflict-sensitive and integrate peacebuilding approaches** from the very start. Even relatively simple climate-related projects such as the building of rainwater harvesting systems must be evaluated to ensure they do not increase the risk of conflict, by for example appearing to enrich one clan relative to another or failing to consult equitably with different groups of local stakeholders. **Conflict- and climate-impact assessments should be jointly integrated into all programming**. Local communities should be not only consulted but **involved in decision-making**; this is good practice not only for the intrinsic success of interventions but also to ensure any concern or disagreements can be addressed before they escalate. It also helps to ensure **equitable provision** of infrastructure and development aid.

In areas newly liberated from al-Shabaab, recovery projects such as infrastructure development, establishment of the justice system, and provision of public services must be **pursued in a manner that builds local population's trust in the state**, and particularly focus on the needs of youth. Long-term stability can only be achieved when people's needs and grievances are addressed, as these are drivers of recruitment for al-Shabaab. It must be kept in mind also that even when al-Shabaab has been driven from an area entirely, other sources of conflict (such as intra- or inter-clan rivalry) may persist.

Efforts should be made to **use climate issues as opportunities for dialogue between communities**. Dialogue will be a prerequisite for any lasting solution to the conflict and conditions of political instability; projects to respond to the climate crisis and resource scarcity may be leveraged to bring different groups together and improve social cohesion.

Land and ecosystem restoration projects **bring together various groups of stakeholders** from surrounding areas, and the process of cooperating towards a common goal **builds trust and demonstrates communities' shared interests**. These links and lines of communication, especially when established between different clans, make conflict less likely in future; participants pointed to the success of similar efforts in Niger.

On a national level, it was suggested that **recent policies of the Somali federal government may be entry points for using climate issues to facilitate dialogue and enhance resilience**. For instance, the Ministry of the Environment updated its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), while the Ministry of the Interior released the National Reconciliation Framework, meant to serve as a pathway to peace. Despite problems with horizontal (inter-ministry) and vertical (federal-state-local) cooperation, it is encouraging that both the federal ministries have identified climate security as a cross-cutting policy theme.

The intersection of the climate crisis and the al-Shabaab insurgency is complex. One participant noted that direct negotiation with the group can be dangerous for local leaders, and that al-Shabaab cannot be trusted to consistently honour agreements. The insurgent group has been known to block aid deliveries and destroy vital infrastructure. On the other hand, such negotiation may be **necessary to enable aid deliveries and to undertake preparation for climate shocks**, and some communities have been successful in talks with the group. This may lay the groundwork for broader dialogue with al-Shabaab and should be taken into consideration if the Somali government chooses to negotiate with the insurgents in future. A narrative of the need to come together to address the cross-cutting effects of climate change may be beneficial.

**Where Al-Shabaab harms the climate resilience of local communities, this sometimes serves to undermine their grip on power.** One meeting participant reported that in some cases, anger over the group having blocked aid to drought-stricken areas prompted local clan militias to force the insurgents out; in other cases, the pressure of the local community was sufficient to prompt al-Shabaab to lift its blockade.

## 2. Support local capacity on both climate and conflict prevention

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At a government level, environmental change began being treated as a serious issue at least a decade ago, but that **discourse still fails to filter down to communities**. People are keenly aware of the visible and tangible manifestations of the climate crisis – accelerating deforestation across the country, the increasing frequency of floods and droughts etc – but the interlinkage between local environmental problems and the global context of the climate crisis is often still not communicated successfully.

**Capacity- and knowledge-building efforts about the climate crisis should be intensified** to equip the local population with the tools to understand and address the issues they encounter and the knowledge to place these issues within the structural nature of climate change. Some projects of this kind exist already, such as informational radio programs in some states, but additional efforts are required, potentially at a more directly local level.

**Development projects can be fertile sites for knowledge-building on both climate and peacebuilding.** In the process of equipping and training farmers, for example, programs could include sessions on dispute mediation, cooperative land management, pollution prevention and water conservation. Regardless of their content, such projects should at all times be structured to be **inclusive of smallholding farmers, women, young people, pastoralists and other marginalised groups**, both for the sake of inclusivity as such and to avoid exacerbating inequities which increase conflict risk.

Investment in **training for green jobs**, especially in the agricultural and renewable energy sectors, is an essential precondition for peaceful green transition dynamics. Such investment holds significant potential to boost development and mitigate conflict risks. Enhanced economic opportunities for youth, in particular, can substantially reduce their incentives to join gangs or armed groups.

The capacity for **data collection and project development within Somalia** must be improved. Currently, state and federal government institutions are highly dependent on external partners to carry out these functions. Establishing those capabilities in-country would make the Somali state more resilient and self-sufficient in the medium to long term, and make HDP programming in Somalia more responsive to local needs. One participant also suggested that the capacity of Somali public institutions to **work with external partners on climate finance initiatives** should be improved.

## 3. Support local civil society to lead in peacebuilding efforts

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Wherever possible, **local organisations and actors should be given leadership and central decision-making roles of interventions**, from the planning phase to implementation. Due to the high scale of total intervention in Somalia in the range of hundreds of billions of Euros that result from the country's deep humanitarian, developmental and peace-related needs, donors are often wary about handing over responsibility to local groups. However, **locally-led and grassroots projects are more cost-effective and impactful in the long run**, as they are better at identifying and addressing the specific needs of different communities and they are more able to secure the trust, participation and cooperation of the population.

**Flexible, long-term, core funding and institutional support for local civil society** is crucial for effective peacebuilding efforts. However, the “P” part of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus is still vastly under-resourced. One participant pointed out that of UN funding going to Somalia through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, less than 10% was dedicated to peacebuilding.<sup>1</sup>

The EU can be a pioneer in this area and indeed expand the range of scenarios in which local civil society organisations (CSOs) are able to lead interventions. This could be accomplished in several ways:

- Recognising the degree to which many Somali **CSOs already have the capacity to take on leadership roles** in programming.
- **Increasing the “risk appetite” of EU funding mechanisms in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.** Locally led projects have the potential to be significantly more successful than those run entirely by international partners. Making room for more risky disbursement of EU funding may in the worst case result in an inefficient use of funds and failed programs. However, **the existing EU funding mechanisms already represent structural wastefulness** by being less effective over time.
- Removing the barriers blocking Somali CSOs from accessing EU funding directly. As it stands, local and grassroots organisations are often **only able to access EU funding indirectly**, by receiving grants or contracts from international NGOs (INGOs) which are funded by the EU. There are various reasons for this, most notably that EU tenders and grant offers are often very large and therefore functionally only open to large-scale INGOs. The EU could address this by offering more, smaller, better targeted disbursements.
- Providing **technical and financial assistance** to local CSOs to develop the capabilities necessary to lead interventions, rather than dismissing them for their current lack of those capabilities. This approach involves not only allowing Somali civil society to take the lead where possible, but also expanding the range of scenarios in which this leadership is possible.
- Providing **institutional funding in addition to project-based funding.** The EU should consider the build-up of a strong civil society space in Somalia as an end in itself, and therefore provide structural support to CSOs, especially those which are **women- and youth- led**. While pursuing this goal, it is vital that Somali CSOs are not just strengthened individually but **as a network, able to collaborate on a variety of issues holistically**. A disjointed civil society space, operating in silos, is less effective, and this is doubly true in Somalia when the many issues affecting the country – such as conflict, the climate crisis, economic opportunity, youth issues, and the status of women – are so profoundly intertwined.

One participant also suggested increasing efforts to establish **public-private partnerships** in Somalia and generally involve business in HDP work. The success of the Somaliland Development Fund was noted, and thought should be given to pursuing a similar project for Somalia. Similarly, there is a need to improve **collaboration and coordination on climate finance initiatives**.

Another participant said that a problem with international funding in Somalia is that it tends to be spread thinly; a given project with a budget in the tens of millions of Euros may aim to effect change across a dozen districts in multiple states over several years, meaning the **expenditure per community is too small to produce meaningful results**. Projects with a narrower but deeper scope are frequently more effective. By adopting the above strategies, the EU may significantly enhance the effectiveness of its interventions in Somalia, fostering a more sustainable and impactful approach to peacebuilding.

#### 4. Address the issue of resource use and scarcity

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Somalia is significantly affected by changes in the global climate, but the main local aggravating factor is **deforestation**. This is a result both as a second-order effect of droughts, and as trees are harvested for cooking

<sup>1</sup> <https://mpf.undp.org/country/somalia>

fuel or to make charcoal both for use in Somalia and for export. Somalia loses approximately 1% of its total tree cover per year.<sup>2</sup> It is necessary not only to find ways to slow the pace of this loss, but to **actively reforest to address the harm already done**. While droughts exacerbate tree loss, **reforestation would aid in water management** by helping to prevent floods in at-risk areas.

A large-scale plan is urgently needed to help much of the population **transition from wood- and charcoal-burning stoves**. Approximately 89% of the population uses one of those two fuels, with charcoal predominant in urban areas and wood in rural ones.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the stress on forests, both fuels produce fumes which are harmful to health, and collecting firewood is a labour and time intensive task which frequently exposes women to the risk of violence. Initiatives are underway in some areas to distribute fuel-efficient stoves which require less wood or charcoal, which can contribute to mitigating the problem. However, the provision of actual alternatives, and capacity-building targeting women specifically is necessary. As an example, one participant reported having spoken to a Somali organisation which produces briquettes from carbonised coconut shells, producing fuel which is both less environmentally damaging and cheaper than charcoal. However, the organisation is struggling to achieve financial stability.

Another participant noted that **many Somalis are acutely aware of the problems of wood and charcoal**; the disappearance of the country's forests is self-evident, as are the dangers and labour associated with using these stoves. Many Somali people are reluctant to use these fuels, but currently lack viable alternatives. The Somali federal government needs a **comprehensive transition plan for domestic fuels**, and will likely need significant institutional and financial support from international partners to create and implement it. Fuel transition will need to extend beyond cooking fuels and include, for example, electricity generation; solar power could replace petrol-driven generators.

**Competition for resources is a major conflict driver**, whether those resources are livestock, land, wood, water, minerals or other commodities. Some participants perceive it to have overtaken either clan disputes or grievances with the state to become the chief source of conflict in Somalia. As in many other conflict-affected countries, **disputes between farmers and pastoralists** are a particularly serious source of tension. In many cases, pastoralists are unable to support themselves due to lack of land and/or water and end up abandoning their way of life and moving to urban areas, further straining infrastructure and resource supply in cities.

Resource management, including both forestry and water, is a cross-border and multi-sectoral issue, affecting almost every stakeholder in Somalia and in neighbouring countries. Programming to address this issue will therefore need to feature **cross-border and multi-sector cooperation**.

As touched on in Section 2, **providing capacity-building to communities on the cooperative and sustainable management of resources** like land, livestock and water is essential. Resources will only become scarcer as climactic conditions worsen, so it is essential that people are equipped to make the best use of their available resources and to do so in an equitable way that prevents conflict.

**Water is an omnipresent concern in Somalia**. Droughts and floods make up the overwhelming majority of climate shocks in the country; better water management on both a local and national level is therefore urgently needed. To accomplish this, local communities and state and federal governments will need technical, operational, logistical and financial support. Additionally, the EU may provide assistance in policy development capacity and, in the case of local actors, training in advocacy.

Best practices for water governance and management from comparable contexts should be mirrored. As with all interventions, but especially those addressing water scarcity, **equitable provision and conflict-sensitivity must be integral to the process**.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/african/somalia-needs-its-trees-restore-landscapes-and-livelihoods>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/somalia-energy-and-electricity>

## 5. Design anticipatory interventions to tackle root causes

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Much of the response to both the climate crisis and conflict in Somalia is **reactive, with little done to address root causes or the long-term outlook. Anticipatory program funding should be increased** and should be made more available to local CSOs. One participant gave the example of **preventing proliferation of small arms and light weapons** as a valuable anticipatory action.

The EU should also consider planning projects on a multi-year basis but including **crisis modifier components** so that it is possible both to work on a medium-term basis while remaining adaptable in changing circumstances and in the case of climate shocks and the resultant humanitarian crises.

In the case of EU climate action, there is a need to expand beyond just humanitarian aid after climate shocks and to focus on **enhancing community resilience** to prevent such shocks causing harm in the first place. It can also, where possible, mean addressing the root causes of shocks, such as establishing water-management systems and planting trees to prevent flooding. As ever, these initiatives are most effectively implemented when **locally led**; local actors know, for example, what effects of disasters most hurt their communities and thus need to be most urgently addressed.

Development and resilience-building elements can and should be **integrated into humanitarian responses to climate shocks**, so that the process of disaster prevention and self-sufficiency building can begin as soon as possible.

In the case of EU support to peacebuilding in Somalia, there should be **more focus on governance** in the medium to long term. After fighting ends in a given area, and after some measure of reconciliation has been accomplished, structures must be established to govern properly and ensure fair representation of the local population. Such governance-building may also be integrated into development projects. **Equitable management of resources and infrastructure, democratic decision-making, and the rule of law** are essential for stability and peace. There is a tendency currently to rely excessively on long-standing social structures, like clan leadership, but to entrench such structures often serves to exacerbate the marginalisation of certain groups within society. As part of governance, there must be a **comprehensive effort to address corruption** at every level of administration in Somalia, from local to state to national level.