

Civil Society Dialogue Network Background Paper

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

Lorenzo Angelini¹

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Civil Society Dialogue Network

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¹ This paper was written by Lorenzo Angelini, Policy Officer at EPLO, with research assistance from Ciara Kilroy.

Introduction

On 27 November, in a speech to the European Parliament (EP), the President-elect of the European Commission (EC), Ursula von der Leyen, affirmed the EC's commitment to ensuring that the European Union (EU) would lead the way in fighting climate change.² The following day, the European Parliament (EP) declared a 'climate and environment emergency' and urged the EC, EU Member States (MS) and all global actors to 'urgently take the concrete action needed in order to fight and contain this threat'.³

The EU has clearly acknowledged that it recognises the links between climate change and peace.⁴ Climate change already contributes to tensions and conflict in various countries through its diverse and complex impacts on land, natural resources, animals and humans. While climate change has an impact on everyone, many countries which are already affected by violent conflict are faced with particular challenges relating to its effects. Furthermore, violent conflict can make it more difficult for all actors to tackle climate change or to mitigate its impacts. As a result, it is essential that the EU addresses the linkages between climate change and peace in its external action, in particular by supporting civil society peacebuilding organisations which undertake work in the area of climate change and conflict.

The purpose of this Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Background Paper is to highlight some specific elements of the EU's efforts in fighting climate change as part of its external action, as well as some of the contributions made by members of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) network to address the links between climate change and peace.

1. EU external action and the fight against climate change

The EU's external action efforts relating to the fight against climate change take multiple forms, including pushing forward and contributing to international (and bilateral) [climate change negotiations](#) (including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement), providing technical and financial support to its partner countries in order to help them to tackle climate change and mitigate its effects (e.g. the [Global Climate Change Alliance Plus](#) (GCCA+) initiative), and supporting a wide range of climate and environmental protection projects and initiatives.

The following section includes examples of how the EU has supported the fight against climate change and the protection of the environment.

² [Speech by European Commission President-elect von der Leyen in the European Parliament plenary on the occasion of the presentation of her College of Commissioners and their programme](#), 27 November 2019

³ [European Parliament resolution on the climate and environment emergency](#), 28 November 2019

⁴ See for example the high-level meeting '[Climate, Peace and Security: The Time for Action](#)', which was hosted by High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the EC, Federica Mogherini, on 22 June 2018

The GCCA initiative was launched by the EU in 2007 and lasted until 2013.⁵ Its five priority areas were ‘climate change adaptation measures’, ‘mainstreaming climate change into national policies’, ‘disaster risk reduction’, ‘reducing emissions from deforestation’ and ‘participation in the global carbon market’, and it received € 285 million of EU funding. Its successor, the GCCA+, was launched in 2014 with a revised mandate and scope. As of 2018, the EC was planning to allocate € 465 million to the GCCA+ initiative which is focused on three main priority areas:

- Mainstreaming climate change into poverty reduction and development efforts;
- Increasing resilience to climate related stresses and shocks (promoting adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and reduced pressure on forests);
- Supporting the formulation and implementation of concrete and integrated sector-based climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

These efforts involve both (1) fostering policy dialogue and exchanging experiences in tackling climate change between the EU and developing countries; and (2) providing technical and financial support to address climate change and mitigate its effects, with a particular focus on least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). Civil society organisations (CSOs) may also be directly supported through the GCCA+.

Beyond the GCCA+, the EU is funding a significant number of projects and initiatives relating to climate change and the environment through its external development assistance. In its 2018 annual report, the EC’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) identified climate change as a ‘major threat affecting global sustainable development.’

Between 2014 and 2019, the EU institutions disbursed over € 1.52 billion for ‘General environmental protection’ outside Europe. This development assistance category covers actions relating to seven sectors: ‘bio-diversity’ (€ 292 million), ‘biosphere protection’ (€ 72 million), ‘environmental education/training’ (€ 25 million), ‘environmental policy and administrative management’ (€ 1.02 billion), ‘environmental research’ (€ 15 million), ‘flood prevention/control’ (€ 15 million) and ‘site preservation’ (€ 85 million).⁶ Sub-Saharan Africa received the highest amount of funding (€ 527.5 million) of any region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was the largest single recipient country (€ 107.9 million). Funding channels included donor country-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (€ 106.6 million), partner country-based NGOs (€63.7 million) and other international NGOs (€51.7 million).

According to the EC’s Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) ‘Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) Map’, eight IcSP-funded projects are focused on ‘natural resources and conflict’ or ‘natural disaster preparedness and response’.⁷

⁵ European Commission Communication ‘[Building a Global Climate Change Alliance between the European Union and poor developing countries most vulnerable to climate change](#)’, 18 September 2007

⁶ [EU Aid Explorer](#) (NB/ The tool states that the information for the last two years (2018 and 2019) may not be complete.)

⁷ [IcSP Map](#)

2. Peacebuilding CSOs and the fight against climate change

Over the years, peacebuilding CSOs have increasingly sought to address the links between climate change and peace and conflict dynamics. Many EPLO member organisations carry out relevant activities in different policy areas and the following section is focused on examples of their work:⁸

- The aim of **Christian Aid**'s '[Resilience and climate](#)' programme is to 'help poor and vulnerable people to be better equipped to cope with disasters and during times of great need.' The organisation's 2016 global strategy for '[Tackling violence, building peace](#)' expressly underlines that 'the links between natural resources, climate change, and violence are becoming clearer', and that actions should be adapted as a result.
- The **Community of Sant'Egidio** has observed the impact of climate change in various fragile and conflict-affected countries. For example, in 2016 it launched an [awareness campaign](#) in Mali in order to highlight the 'devastating effects of climate change on vulnerable people and the elderly' and to stem the damage caused.
- The **Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid)** and its partners have been highlighting the need for [robust climate action](#) for some time, in particular to help the most vulnerable to deal with the effects of climate change and to develop [climate resilience](#). Its '[Resilience](#)' programme is aimed at assisting disaster-prone communities to 'become more resilient to disaster risks, in the face of climate change, environmental degradation and conflict risk.' (See for example Cordaid's EU-funded resilience projects in [Ethiopia](#).)
- **Conciliation Resources** has published research to 'understand conflict impacts of climate change' and to 'outline potential opportunities for peacebuilding'. (See for example its paper on '[Climate change, conflict and peacebuilding in Solomon Islands](#)'.)
- **International Alert** has worked to document the linkages between climate change and peace and to address negative effects, including through engagements aimed at building community resilience. (See for example, the EU-funded 'Climate Change, Fragility and Conflict' project which led to the publication of the report entitled '[A new climate for peace](#)'.) International Alert has undertaken actions relating to community resilience to climate change and to natural resource management in various countries, including around the [Niger River basin](#) and in [Tajikistan](#).
- **Oxfam International** includes '[building resilience to and campaigning to fight the climate crisis](#)' among its key aims and recognises the harm caused by [climate-related disasters](#). It seeks to build climate change resilience in multiple contexts, including in Niger where it works to help the Bermo pastoralist community to achieve [food security](#).
- **Peace Direct** has long sought to highlight the extremely important work carried out by local peacebuilding organisations in relation to climate change and environmental issues.

⁸ The information about EPLO member organisations' projects and programmes is based on information which was published on their websites (accessed in November 2019).

(See for example an article in which they present the work of [three local CSOs in Burkina Faso, Chad and Jordan](#) in order to illustrate the relationship between the environment and conflict.

- **Saferworld** has undertaken research to investigate the relationship between climate change and conflict in local communities in various contexts (e.g. [Kenya](#) and [Nepal](#)). In doing so, it has made [recommendations](#) for conflict-sensitive engagement on these issues.
- **Search for Common Ground** has sought to address some of the effects of climate change on conflict between communities by promoting durable conflict resolution mechanisms. (See for example the '[Climate of Peace](#)' project which it is implementing in Southern Chad.) Search for Common Ground's work on promoting the inclusive management of natural resources, including through an [EU-funded project in Chad](#), is also relevant.
- **World Vision International** recognises the importance of helping small farmers to develop their resilience to climate change in order to enhance their livelihoods and build their food security. The '[EU-funded 'Evergreen' project](#)' illustrates the importance of such actions.