

Brussels, June 2024

Building Peace with the European Union's Green Transition

Dear High Representative,
Dear European Commissioners,

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a platform of 55 European NGOs, NGO networks and think tanks working across the world to prevent violent conflict and build peace.

EPLO believes that the EU's efforts to promote the green transition, expand its climate diplomacy, and implement the EU Joint Communication on the Climate-Security Nexus, present key opportunities to advance the EU's priorities on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We are convinced that the EU is uniquely positioned to play a leading role on the world stage in responding to the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation and violent conflict in a more integrated, effective and sustainable manner. In this light, we would like to set out recommendations in four priority areas:

1. Provide adequate climate action and finance to fragile and conflict-affected contexts for a climate-just future

Many of the most climate vulnerable countries are also affected by violent conflict. UN data reveal how climate action in fragile states has lagged far behind, showing that the success of climate policies depends not only on reducing emissions but also on prioritising peace. Between 2014 and 2021, extremely fragile states received on average \$2.1 per person in climate finance, compared to \$161.7 in non-fragile contexts. Allocating a greater proportion of its climate finance to fragile and conflict-affected contexts holds an important opportunity for the EU to address this gap and maximise its positive support to climate adaptation efforts for vulnerable populations. This is also in line with the EU's commitment made at COP28, and can exert political leverage on other large global funders.

This support should be context-specific, and involve long term partnerships with governments, (local and community-led) civil society and the private sector on the basis of the needs and priorities of affected communities. In order to ensure long-term resilience, climate finance should be provided in the form of grants rather than non-concessional loans and debt-creating instruments. A higher risk tolerance, more flexibility, and simplified application processes are also essential. These improvements can be achieved and supported through EU channels, member state initiatives, and by leveraging the EU's influence on the boards of vertical climate funds.

2. Ensure the conflict- and gender-sensitivity of EU climate actions and finance

If green transition, and climate adaptation and mitigations actions are not carefully designed, they can inadvertently cause harm and further contribute to conflict by exacerbating social, political and economic tensions, and increasing inequalities and the further exclusion of marginalised groups, undermining the positive impact of and public support for the actions themselves.

To achieve more sustainable outcomes, the EU should apply conflict sensitivity to its climate actions, ensuring that they are adapted to socio-economic realities and informed by gender-responsive conflict

analysis processes, in which local civil society actors are consulted meaningfully. Beyond doing no harm, this is necessary to identify opportunities to foster dialogue and cooperation, and to strengthen inclusive governance, which are critical to sustaining peace. For example, this can include promoting international cooperation around the shared preservation and use of transboundary water resources, and ensuring that large-scale renewable energy projects and the mining of critical raw materials are socially positive and benefit local populations.

3. Support civil society for initiatives across sectors

Peacebuilding organisations have a wealth of on-the-ground expertise on responding to the interplay between climate change, environmental degradation and conflict dynamics in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, as well as in partnering with governments, local authorities, international organisations, and the private sector. The EU can build on and expand existing initiatives led by local civil society – particularly women-led, youth-led and indigenous organisations. Local civil society actors can support the EU in meeting its conflict-sensitivity objectives, and ensuring that its action has a regional transboundary impact. By providing these organisations with long-term, cross-sectoral, flexible and core funding, the EU can enable them to implement activities combining climate adaptation, environmental protection and peacebuilding components on their own terms.

As the intersections between climate change, climate action and peace are extremely context-specific, the EU should increase its financial support to civil society actors that implement, document and study these connections, to help develop their expertise, share best practices, foster collaboration across sectors, and use their analyses to inform its own interventions.

4. Develop the EU's internal capacities for a more integrated approach

The EU has made significant progress in developing policy frameworks for its approach to the interplay between climate change and conflict, and it has engaged with a range of partners to advance their implementation. However, the potential of its integrated approach to tackle climate security challenges is still to be fully realised. In order to maximise the synergies between its instruments, the EU should:

- Ensure the inclusion and prioritisation of climate security issues in senior-level staff mandates;
- Increase the number of conflict prevention experts across its institutions and services, particularly in those responsible for climate actions, and foster good practice exchanges between them;
- Ensure that all staff responsible for implementing external aspects of the EU's green transition agenda are adequately trained in conflict sensitivity and conflict prevention, have systematic exchanges with civil society and conflict prevention experts, and have to report on how EU climate actions contribute to peace;
- Establish an interservice coordination platform to share data, analysis, and best practices across the EU and EU Member States.

We hope that you will place these priorities at the heart of the EU's efforts for climate action in fragile and conflict affected settings, and would be happy to discuss any of the above-mentioned points, and provide further recommendations on translating them into practice.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries, or if you would like any additional information.

Yours sincerely,

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EPLO Executive Director