

Advancing the International Environment, Peace and Security Agenda



Colophon

January 2025

PAX means peace. Together with people in conflict areas and concerned citizens around the world, PAX works to build just and peaceful societies across the globe. PAX brings together people who have the courage to stand for peace. Everyone who believes in peace can contribute. We believe that all the steps we take, whether small or large, inevitably lead to the greater sum of peace.

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Cover photo: A peacekeeper from MONUSCO (the United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo), 19 December 2021. Alexis Huguet/AFP

Executive Summary

The international community has so far been unable to keep pace with the increasing scale, speed, and complexity of environmental and climate risks facing humanity. Those risks and challenges are particularly acute in conflict-affected and vulnerable countries, where communities are suffering from conflict-linked environmental damage, failing environmental governance, disruption of ecosystem services, unsustainable management, and exploitation of natural resources. In turn, environmental and climate stressors can contribute to the risk of (more) conflict and instability, perpetuating the vicious cycle and impeding global efforts toward sustainable peace, development, and climate resilience. Yet, international prevention, mitigation, and response measures to address those interlinkages are currently ad hoc, incoherent, and uncoordinated across an overburdened and slowly responding system.

In September 2024, the international community convened for a “once in a generation” opportunity to reconfigure the multilateral governance system to better suit the needs of our more industrialized, digitalized, and globalized world at the Summit of the Future (SotF) in New York. However, while the Summit’s outcome document, the Pact for the Future, did contain a number of progressive commitments to improving multilateral approaches to tackling the world’s development and peace and security challenges, it fell short of acknowledging the vital interlinkages between the environment, climate, conflict, and peace. Hence, it did not provide a framework for dealing with these urgent, complex, and widespread global challenges. Amid this background, there remain both gaps and opportunities for the international community to find alternative ways of advancing a more comprehensive and coordinated international Environment, Peace and Security (EPS) agenda to better protect people, planet, and peace for future generations.

Therefore, this policy report explores opportunities for establishing, operationalizing, and mainstreaming the EPS agenda across the UN system to foster greater coherence and impact. As defined in this report, the EPS agenda integrates elements of other key international agendas, including the Protection of the Environment in

Relation to Armed Conflict (PERAC); Climate, Peace and Security (CPS); Food and Water Security; Environmental Peacebuilding; and the Exploitation of Natural Resources in Conflict, among others. The EPS agenda is centered around the need for robust international norms and practices to protect the environment throughout the conflict cycle, inform humanitarian action and strategic and operational military decisions, ensure accountability for environmental harm, support sustainable recovery and reconstruction, and strengthen environmental governance and resilience building

Examining how various elements of the agenda are currently being addressed by various stakeholders internationally and within the UN system, this policy report maps current key actors and policy processes in relation to environmental governance and resilience building, humanitarian action, the UN’s peace and security architecture, and legal and normative frameworks for environmental protection and accountability for conflict-linked damage. While much of the work required to deal with EPS-related issues is already underway (often without being labeled under this umbrella term), existing efforts face serious obstacles and limitations. Those include such institutional and operational challenges as the lack of means, resources, and funds to support EPS programs

and interventions in a sustainable way; fragmentation of environmental considerations across agencies; limited information-sharing between various actors involved; insufficient scope of broader expertise on differentiating EPS matters within the UN system and in Member States' representation at the UN; and insufficient engagement with civil society and local stakeholders on EPS policy development and implementation. However, EPS efforts are also impeded by such overarching challenges as political dynamics in key UN policy-making forums, the lack of political will to advance the EPS agenda and its implementation even where policies exist, and the lack of – or lack of enforcement of – strong, binding international norms for environmental protection and accountability mechanisms in this area. Making the EPS agenda a priority among competing global issues remains a significant hurdle, further hindering cohesive strategies to address these interconnected risks effectively. Based on the analysis of those gaps and limitations, this policy report explores various strategies and approaches that can be implemented to address the environmental impacts of conflict and better integrate the EPS agenda within the UN and beyond. As the findings of this policy report demonstrate, those strategies can include upscaling, strengthening, and expanding existing efforts, as well as new solutions for improving the international community's capacities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to environmental and climate concerns in conflict and at-risk settings.

In particular, the paper suggests the following pathways:

1. Establish a UN-system-wide Environment, Peace and Security Agenda through a formal thematic resolution in the UN Security Council or UN General Assembly.
2. Develop capacities and expertise within the UN system on the environment-climate-conflict nexus at both the policy and implementation levels.
3. Enhance information and data-sharing mechanisms for data on environmental aspects of conflicts across the UN system.
4. Increase funding and improve funding streams dedicated to tackling EPS issues.
5. Identify cross-cutting thematic areas as entry points for collaboration on EPS issues across UN agencies, Member States, local communities, and civil society.
6. Systematically engage local stakeholders and civil society in the programming and policy-making on EPS matters.

▼ A demining expert from the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in protective gear carries out a demining exercise on a mine field rigged up during the civil war at Gondokoro village in the capital Juba in January 2022. Source: AFP



Contents

Colophon	2
Executive Summary	3
1 Introduction	6
2 Defining the Environment, Peace and Security Agenda	8
3 Current State of Play in Addressing EPS-Related Issues	10
3.1 Environmental Governance and Resilience Building	11
a. UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) and UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA)	11
b. UN Development Programme (UNDP)	11
c. UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)	12
d. UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)	12
e. Conferences of Parties (COP) to UN Conventions	13
3.2 Environmental and Humanitarian Action	14
a. UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU)	14
b. Other UN Humanitarian Agencies	14
3.3 Environmental and Climate Considerations in the UN's Peace and Security Architecture	15
a. UN Security Council	15
b. UN General Assembly (UNGA) and UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)	16
c. Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	16
d. UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO)	17
e. Climate Security Mechanism (CSM)	17
3.4 Legal and Normative Frameworks for Environmental Protection and Accountability for Conflict-Linked Environmental Damage	19
a. Recent Developments and Clarifications in the Law Aimed at Protecting the Environment in Armed Conflicts	19
b. Mainstreaming EPS Considerations in Related International Normative Frameworks and Tools	19
c. The Role of Courts and Legislative Initiatives	19
4 Pathways to Advance the EPS Agenda beyond the Pact for the Future	21
1. Establish a UN-System-Wide Environment, Peace and Security Agenda	21
2. Develop Capacities and Expertise on the Environment-Climate-Conflict Nexus	22
3. Enhance Information and Data-Sharing Mechanisms across the UN system	23
4. Increase Funding and Improve Funding Streams Dedicated to Tackling EPS issues	25
5. Identify Cross-Cutting Thematic Areas as Entry Points for Advancing the EPS agenda	26
6. Systematically Engage Local Stakeholders and Civil Society at Every Level	27
5 Recommendations	28

1. Introduction

The current global governance system and its myriad of underpinning international agreements has so far been unable to keep pace with the increasing scale, speed, and complexity of the global catastrophic risks facing humanity. This has been made painfully apparent not only by the failure of the international community to halt large-scale environmental degradation and climate change, but also through the continued direct and indirect destruction of the environment by States and non-state armed groups in conflicts and military operations around the world. International prevention, mitigation, and response measures to conflict-linked environmental harm and climate risks in conflict-affected and vulnerable countries are currently ad hoc, incoherent, and uncoordinated across an overburdened and slowly responding system.

In September 2024, the international community convened for a “once in a generation” opportunity to reconfigure the multilateral governance system to better suit the needs of our more industrialized, digitalized, and globalized world at the Summit of the Future (SotF) in New York.¹ While negotiating the SotF outcome document, the Pact for the Future,² States had the opportunity to strengthen international environmental governance and response measures by building on the UN Secretary-General’s New Agenda for Peace (NA4P)³ and broadening its recommendations to include the interlinkages between the environment, climate, conflict, and peace. However, despite broad agreement by a majority of Member States to include explicit environmental and climate considerations in the various draft iterations of the Pact,⁴ in the end, full consensus was unable to be reached, resulting in the striking of explicit environmental and climate language in then-Action 21 from the final version of the Pact.⁵

This failure to include clear action on environmental and climate issues in Chapter 2 on international peace and security was a disappointing missed opportunity to address the international community’s current siloed approach to challenges around the environment-climate-conflict nexus. While Chapter 1, focusing on international development, acknowledges the need to restore and protect the environment, the Pact remains silent about the conflict drivers of and contributions to many of these challenges and omits key considerations of Climate, Peace and Security. Ultimately, the Pact falls short of formulating a more comprehensive approach

to dealing with these urgent, complex, and widespread global challenges.

Yet, amid this background, there remain both gaps and opportunities for the international community to find alternative ways of advancing and improving operationalization of a more comprehensive and coordinated international Environment, Peace and Security (EPS) agenda to better protect people, planet, and peace for future generations. Such an agenda encompasses other key international agendas, such as the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict (PERAC) and the established Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) agenda, but it would address a broader range of environmental and climate dimensions of peace and security throughout the conflict cycle. This would include a spectrum of tools from environmental peacebuilding and governance capacity-building to mitigate climate security risks to preventing, mitigating, and responding to environmental impacts of armed conflicts. To this end, the international community must embrace and strengthen growing international recognition of the need to address the mutually reinforcing interlinkages of the environment-climate-conflict nexus and the important role of holistic multilateral approaches in achieving these goals.

Therefore, **the objective of this policy report is to explore opportunities for operationalizing and mainstreaming the EPS agenda across the UN system to foster greater coherence and impact.** To this end, the policy report will first present a state-of-play analysis on how EPS issues

are currently addressed internationally and within the UN system across various dimensions of the agenda, identifying key gaps, current best practices, and areas in need of improvement. It will then outline strategies to address those gaps, concluding with a set of targeted recommendations for a variety of key stakeholders, including the UN, Member States, and civil society organizations (CSOs). With these findings, the policy report aims to inform advocacy work and contribute to the effective advancement of the international Environment, Peace and Security Agenda across the UN system and beyond.

Methodology

This report was developed through a comprehensive desk review of existing literature, leveraging reports, studies, and case analyses provided by UN agencies, think tanks, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, between November and December 2024, interviews were conducted with key experts from UN agencies, civil society, and independent specialists. These interviews provided deeper insights and perspectives on the environmental dimensions of conflict, peacebuilding, and security to complement the desk-review.

- ▶ *A Ukrainian soldier walks through crop fields near the burning Lysychansk refinery that was shelled by Russian forces over the summer of 2022. Source: @Sea40K account on X.*



2. Defining the Environment, Peace and Security Agenda

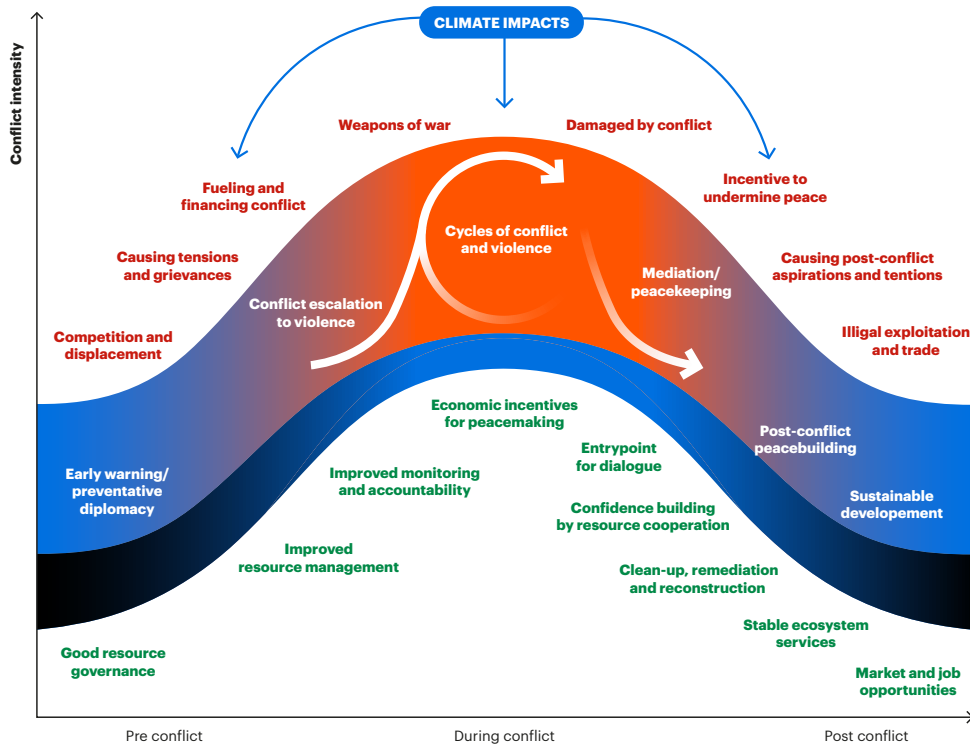
The link between environmental degradation, climate change risks, and armed conflict is complex yet increasingly evident. Armed conflicts and military activities destroy and pollute the environment, leaving a trail of toxic remnants of war,⁶ destroying ecosystems, and worsening biodiversity loss. This leaves communities exposed to environmental and health risks long after a conflict is over and undermines their resilience to climate change.

Devastating conflict impacts on the environment have been witnessed in conflict-affected areas worldwide, including in Ukraine,⁷ Gaza,⁸ South Sudan,⁹ Syria,¹⁰ Colombia,¹¹ and Iraq,¹² as some of the recent examples. Fragility and conflict also undermine environmental governance capacities and weaken systems of environmental protection and sustainable resource use. This further leads to overexploitation of natural resources, which is exacerbated by unsustainable coping strategies of affected populations and resulting illicit conflict economies. In turn, environmental and climate stressors can contribute to the risk of (more) conflict and instability, perpetuating the vicious cycle and impeding global efforts toward sustainable peace, development, and climate resilience. Conversely, the prompt detection, monitoring, and addressing of conflict-related environmental degradation are essential for protecting people and ecosystems. Inclusion of these considerations in post-conflict remediation and recovery can dampen wider climate consequences through restoration and nature-based solutions. Meanwhile, the environment and climate action can serve as an entry point for dialogue, offering opportunities for peacebuilding and cooperation, and informing decision-making on reconstruction, improving environmental governance, and management of ecosystem services.

The Environment, Peace and Security¹³ agenda, as

defined in this policy report, therefore represents a comprehensive framework to address these complex and mutually reinforcing interlinkages. It includes and/or integrates elements of other key international agendas, such as: the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict (PERAC); Climate, Peace and Security (CPS)¹⁴; Food and Water Security; Environmental Peacebuilding; Environmental Security; the Exploitation of Natural Resources in Conflict; and the Protection of Critical (Civilian) Infrastructure, among others. The EPS agenda focuses on the direct and reverberating environmental and climate impacts of armed conflicts and military activities, as well as on the exploitation of natural resources by State and non-state actors as means to sustain their conflict activities or by taking advantage of the lack of environmental safeguards in conflict situations. It also looks into the wide-ranging implications from such developments on communities' resilience, peace and security. The EPS agenda is centered around the need for robust international norms and practices to protect the environment throughout the conflict cycle, inform humanitarian action and strategic and operational military decisions, ensure accountability for environmental harm, support sustainable recovery and reconstruction, and strengthen environmental governance and resilience building.

Environmental Risks and Opportunities Across the Conflict Lifecycle



Adapted by PAX from Bruch, C., Jensen, D., & Emma, M.¹⁵

Difference between the EPS agenda and the existing CPS agenda

As this policy report covers pathways to better address the interlinkages between the environment, climate, conflict, and peace through establishing the EPS agenda, it recognizes that the interconnected relationship between climate change, conflict, and human security is addressed by existing the CPS agenda. However, although both agendas are closely related, they differ in scope and focus. While the EPS agenda shares the CPS agenda's approach to climate change as a threat multiplier that exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and tensions, it has a broader scope to also include consideration of the environmental impacts of conflicts, which are frequently exacerbated by the climate crisis – an aspect that is largely missing from CPS discussions. Therefore, the EPS agenda accounts for a broader range of environmental dimensions of peace and security that go beyond climate-related stressors to include environmental peacebuilding and security risks in conflicts and at-risk situations.

The EPS agenda highlights the interconnections between the climate crisis and environmental impacts of conflicts. This includes conflicts' direct and indirect contributions to the climate crisis through destruction of biodiversity, military emissions, and rendering climate adaptation efforts unfeasible in conflict-affected settings – and the compounding effects these can have on communities in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. This could

include, for example, the exacerbation of conflict-linked environmental degradation by climate change impacts such as drought or floods. As this policy report will further elaborate, while the CPS agenda must continue to be strengthened, the establishment of an EPS agenda is needed to better coordinate and integrate aspects of the many disparate, but related international agendas that address varying aspects of the environment-climate-conflict nexus. A holistic EPS agenda would go beyond CPS, PERAC, and other aforementioned agendas to promote environmental and climate peacebuilding to build resilience to risks and address environmental aspects of conflicts, while simultaneously enhancing CPS and other related policies, tools, and methodologies that can be expanded to include non-climate environmental dimensions of peace and security.

While much of the work required to deal with EPS-related issues is already underway (often without being labeled under the EPS umbrella term), those efforts are often fragmented across sectors and undertaken by a broad range of actors who may or may not be aware of synergies and/or conflicts across one another's programming. The following section will map current key stakeholders and policy processes aiming to address various EPS aspects.

3. Current State of Play in Addressing EPS-Related Issues

This section provides a state-of-play analysis of how Environment, Peace, and Security issues are currently addressed internationally and within the UN system across various elements of the agenda and by various stakeholders. For the purpose of this policy report, it will focus on the following four key areas: (1) efforts to strengthen environmental governance and resilience building; (2) humanitarian responses to conflict-linked environmental disasters; (3) the incorporation of climate and environmental dimensions into UN peace and security policies; and (4) the role of international legal frameworks for environmental protection and accountability for conflict-linked environmental damage. Based on an overview of the key actors and their mandates for each of these areas, this section seeks to identify both best practices and outstanding gaps in the current international architecture aimed at tackling challenges around the environment-climate-conflict nexus.

Please note: The stakeholders, tools, and areas analyzed in this section should not be considered an exhaustive list and – for the sake of brevity – each will only be introduced upon first mention despite many stakeholders working across two or more of the key areas discussed.

▼ *The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) undertakes a “Carbon Sink” tree-planting initiative in partnership with the Government of South Sudan, September 2018. Source: Nektarios Markogiannis / UN Photo.*



3.1 Environmental Governance and Resilience Building

a. UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) and UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA)

As the leading UN environmental agency, UNEP works to improve global environmental governance and to address pressing environmental challenges, including environmental emergencies stemming from natural disasters, industrial accidents, and human-induced crises, such as armed conflicts.¹⁶ Historically, the linkages between environmental dimensions of armed conflict were outlined in the important work UNEP did carrying out Post-Conflict Environmental Assessments¹⁷ in the Balkans (1999, 2002, 2004), Iraq (2003/2007), Afghanistan (2003), Lebanon (2006), and Sudan (2007), among other places, while it also advanced the legal questions around the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict through its 2009-2012 flagship projects.¹⁸ Such findings are crucial for post-conflict recovery and remediation efforts, helping to inform international and national actors' programming in conflict-affected countries. For example, UNEP's previous work in Afghanistan informed the European Commission's priorities and programming, including providing UNEP with seed funding for environmental administration in the country.¹⁹

However, there has been reluctance by some Member States to give UNEP a stronger role on conflict-relevant analysis, hence the organisation has faced pressure to keep a low profile on the topic. Renewed space was found after the environmentally destructive operations carried out by the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and later during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that put the environment more front and center in conflict analysis and response to environmental impacts of conflict. UNEP's current work on the intersection between the environment and conflict has been informed by three thematic resolutions adopted by the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) since 2016: 2/15²⁰ on the protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict, 3/1²¹ on conflict pollution, and 6/12²² on environmental assistance and recovery in conflict-affected areas. In particular, UNEP has provided preliminary assessments of environmental impacts of conflicts at the request of States, including for Ukraine²³ and Gaza,²⁴ to help minimize and mitigate long-term environmental harm.

As UNEP works to promote coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable

development within the UN system, it has fostered cooperation with other UN agencies on projects situated at the intersection of the environment-climate-peace nexus. For instance, UNEP and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) established a Joint Environment Unit (JEU) to support Member States in planning for and addressing environmental emergencies (more on this in section 3.2). In 2023, UNEP introduced the Conflict Sensitivity Toolbox, a resource designed for local, state, and national authorities to help address climate-related security risks by identifying effective responses to climate and environmental challenges in Nepal and Sudan.²⁵ Moreover, UNEP has been promoting a Nature-based Solutions (NbS) framework as an integrated approach to dealing with environmental and societal challenges, including in conflict-affected areas.²⁶ However, within UNEP itself, a stronger recognition of disaster and conflict-related work in its strategic planning is necessary to enhance environmental assistance, as requested by Member States in resolution 6/12.

b. UN Development Programme (UNDP)

With sustainable development at the core of its mandate, UNDP prioritizes the protection and sustainable use of natural resources, strengthening societies' resilience to climate change and environmental threats, recovery efforts after natural and human-induced disasters, and implementation of a green transition. In these efforts, UNDP has increasingly prioritized projects on environmental and climate security in fragile and conflict-affected countries, underscoring the EPS nexus. This is evidenced by its work on: strengthening biodiversity conservation and peacebuilding efforts in the Colombian Amazon; integrating green technologies and environmental solutions as part of its post-war reconstruction programming in Ukraine;²⁷ supporting environmental legal frameworks and governance in Iraq;²⁸ and improving the security and social cohesion of communities, including Indigenous Peoples in Burundi, amongst other innovative projects.²⁹ These efforts, among a list of many others in conflict-affected contexts, demonstrate UNDP's approach to merging environmental governance with building resilience and peace, which reflects the foundation of the EPS agenda.

Moreover, UNDP has helped draw attention to the need to mainstream peace and security considerations into climate and environmental policies and financing to more effectively meet the needs of countries affected by conflict and fragility. This is demonstrated by UNDP's and the Climate Security Mechanism's (CSM) 2021 study, "Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace,"³⁰ as well as UNDP's studies on climate and environmental security

and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)³¹ and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)³² under the Paris Agreement. UNDP's Climate Promise, launched in 2019, became the largest offer of support to developing countries on NDC enhancement and implementation to increase their resilience to climate impacts. UNDP has also provided training to policymakers, climate change negotiators and regional organization officials on climate/environmental policies and financing for peace, through its Climate, Peace and Security Experts Academy.

c. UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

Guided by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), which addresses risks associated with environmental challenges, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) leads global efforts in disaster risk reduction. In its approach, the UNDRR recognizes the dual connection between disaster risk reduction and nature — where disaster risk reduction tackles environmental challenges such as biodiversity loss and climate change, while ecosystem protection and sustainable management are essential for reducing disaster risks. Similar to UNEP's work on Nature-based Solutions (NbS), UNDRR's efforts on NbS, including Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) and Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA), play a crucial role in addressing the increasing complexity of disaster and climate risks. Eco-DRR provides a comprehensive disaster risk management approach, focusing on hazard, vulnerability, and exposure reduction, while EbA boosts resilience by reducing vulnerability to climate change and enhancing adaptive capacity.³³ Additionally, UNDRR has worked across the humanitarian-development nexus to integrate risk analysis and environmental-DRR interventions in crisis and conflict settings, ensuring a more resilient and adaptive approach to managing complex, interlinked risks.³⁴

While UNEP's, UNDP's and UNDRR's work has been instrumental for mainstreaming the EPS agenda across the UN system, these efforts continue to face obstacles and limitations. These include the lack of means, resources, and funds to support their responses to environmental degradation, as well as the flexibility needed to adapt to evolving situations effectively. Additionally, sustained, long-term engagement and commitment to support UNEP's efforts throughout the conflict cycle is essential given the complex nature of environmental challenges in conflict-affected contexts, yet this remains under prioritized. Greater recognition

is needed from States, international donors, and UN agencies across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus to mainstream environmental considerations.

d. UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)

The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has worked to integrate climate and environmental considerations in addressing the linkages between climate change and peace and security risks. Aside from its efforts in the CSM (more on this in section 3.3.d), DPPA is actively adapting its practices to address climate change by integrating environmental considerations into peace agreements and negotiations, as well as its analysis, planning, and strategies for prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding, including in its management and support to UN Special Political Missions (SPMs), Good Offices, and Peace and Development Advisors. For example, in 2021, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) - in partnership with the West and Central Africa Office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Regional Collaboration Centre of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and UNEP - launched a UN Regional Working Group on climate change, environment, security and development in West Africa. Its purpose was to support a cohesive, integrated approach to addressing climate change-related risks and to assist governments and the UN system in addressing these challenges. Additionally, DPPA has leveraged the use of technology, such as Geoguard, and deployed Environmental and Climate Advisors across its missions,³⁵ to mainstream analysis of climate-related security risks.

Integrating climate and environmental dynamics meaningfully into missions ensures that DPPA comprehensively includes these aspects in its political and peacebuilding strategies, supporting a more holistic and sustainable approach in supporting States and communities. Yet significant barriers persist, particularly in terms of: incorporating climate/environmental-related language into mission mandates; systemic issues like a lack of information-sharing; the deploying of dedicated and trained expert advisors on the nexus of both environmental and climate concerns and peacebuilding; and the managing of a deluge of priorities from the country team and national counterparts of Environmental and Climate advisors who struggle with competing demands and overall capacity. These challenges are compounded by insufficient resources and political will at the international and national levels, making it difficult to implement effective strategies.³⁶

COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace



COP28 UAE



▲ Launch of the COP28 Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace Declaration on December 3, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Source: IISD.

e. Conferences of Parties (COP) to UN Conventions

International meetings of Parties to UN conventions, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), have been gradually turning into platforms for discussions and initiatives directed at addressing the environmental and climate considerations in peace and security. In 2022, Egypt's Climate COP27 Presidency launched the Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP) initiative with the African Union Commission and UNDP, marking the first time the intersection of climate concerns and peace was tackled at the highest level within the UNFCCC process.³⁷ Since then, although still not part of formal negotiations, peace and security dimensions of climate and environmental conferences have been gaining increasing political recognition. For instance, peace, relief, and recovery were featured at a thematic convening day for the first time at the Climate COP28 in the United Arab Emirates in 2023³⁸ - a tradition continued by Azerbaijan's COP29 Presidency in 2024.³⁹ The COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery, and Peace, which emphasized the urgent need for climate action to address vulnerability, fragility, conflict, and humanitarian challenges, was endorsed by 90+ governments and 40+ intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations,⁴⁰ and was continued by the recent 'Baku Call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief, and Recovery' initiative.⁴¹ Similarly, at Biodiversity COP16 in 2024, Colombia's Presidency selected "Peace with Nature" as a conference

theme, for the first time bringing the intersection of nature, peace, and conflict in the traditionally solely environmental-focused agenda.⁴² The Peace Forest Initiative, a flagship programme by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), also aligns closely with the EPS agenda by highlighting the critical links between land, peace, and security, and by focusing on restoring ecosystems and land-based resources such as soil, water, and forests in fragile and conflict-affected areas.⁴³

Such initiatives often translate into new programs and projects supported or implemented by such UN stakeholders as UNDP or UNEP. They also help to advance the understanding of the EPS agenda and promote a more comprehensive approach to addressing EPS issues among governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, and societies at large. However, ensuring the continuity of such initiatives and meaningful long-term engagement of States beyond their presidency tenures is challenging. Furthermore, such COPs are often held in-person in capitals among the highest levels of government and international representation, making it difficult to ensure that affected communities are included and consulted in the development and implementation of such flagship COP initiatives. Moreover, for systemic impact, EPS issues must be integrated into the formal negotiations and convention frameworks rather than on the sidelines of such conferences, which would require strong political will to review the established conventions and approaches to their implementation.

3.2 Environmental and Humanitarian Action

a. UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU)

Since 1994, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNEP have worked together through the Joint Environment Unit (JEU) to integrate environmental considerations into all aspects of humanitarian response, focusing on the protection of people and their environment.⁴⁴ The JEU aims to address environmental risks in crisis situations by mobilizing environmental experts to support emergency teams on the ground, preparing rapid environmental assessments and analysis, and providing training programs, tools, and guidance to strengthen the response capacities of local and international actors.⁴⁵ For example, the JEU has facilitated technical support to UNEP leading environmental assessments of conflict-linked environmental damage after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam in Ukraine,⁴⁶ provided environmental assessments in the aftermath of dam collapse in Libya, supported programming aimed at protecting the environment in refugee camps in Sudan's Darfur region,⁴⁷ and assessed environmental and health risks related to chemical hazards in Iraq.⁴⁸

The JEU's role also envisages coordination with a wide range of stakeholders to enhance their interoperability and ensure a coordinated response to environmental emergencies and/or to address environmental concerns in humanitarian operations. In the past, the JEU has coordinated such initiatives as the Environmental Emergencies Centre (EEC)⁴⁹ and the Environment in Humanitarian Action (EHA) Connect,⁵⁰ which also aimed at enhancing the capacity of local actors through the "Localisation of Environment in Humanitarian Action" project. However, like other stakeholders and initiatives described in this chapter, the outcomes of the JEU's work are dependent on funding from and the political will of Member States, who may be reluctant or have limited resources to act on the JEU's findings and recommendations on addressing conflict-linked environmental harm. Furthermore, issues related to access and the tendency of international humanitarian actors to "parachute" into crisis areas (with short-term and unsustainable response measures for the duration of a program rather than the crisis) remains a challenge.

b. Other UN Humanitarian Agencies

Many other humanitarian organizations and aid-focused agencies are also actively addressing EPS-related

impacts in conflict-affected settings through various initiatives and institutional strategies. For example, the IOM's Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT) integrates data collection with community-based peacebuilding efforts by mapping transhumance corridors, monitoring livestock movements, and capturing and addressing real-time conflict-related information across the Sahel, while its Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change (2021–2030)⁵¹ systematically embeds environmental considerations into migration programming to adapt to evolving policies and evidence. Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) promotes sustainable environmental management in displacement settings, and the World Food Programme (WFP) supports fragile and conflict-affected communities by predicting and mitigating climate hazards before they escalate into disasters and rehabilitating degraded ecosystems as natural defenses against climate impacts. In recent years, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has prioritized research, advocacy, and programming on securing access to safe and sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services and infrastructure to address the severe health and environmental risks posed by deliberate attacks on such essential civilian infrastructure and the contamination of water sources. Furthermore, several UN actors – such as UNHCR, OCHA, and UNICEF – along with local, national, and international humanitarian organizations, have committed to the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations.⁵² Developed by the ICRC and IFRC with guidance from an Advisory Committee including UN agency representatives, the Charter emphasizes the urgent need for environmental and climate action. These collective efforts highlight the integration of the EPS agenda into global humanitarian work.

Despite these active efforts, several challenges persist in mainstreaming the EPS agenda across humanitarian work. One key challenge is the fragmentation of environmental considerations across agencies, with each working in silos, often without sufficient coordination or shared strategies. This lack of integration makes it difficult to align different institutional mandates and effectively address the complex, interconnected nature of environmental degradation, climate change, and conflict, especially long-term effects. Furthermore, there is often a lack of adequate funding and resourcing to sustain long-term EPS initiatives, as many projects are short-term, donor-driven, and reactive rather than preventive or adaptive. This reliance on short-term funding cycles undermines the ability to build long-lasting, community-based solutions to environmental risks.

3.3 Environmental and Climate Considerations in the UN's Peace and Security Architecture⁵³

a. UN Security Council

The UN Security Council (UNSC), the primary body with the responsibility to maintain international peace and security, has increasingly discussed the environmental impacts of war, risks presented by climate change, and their devastating consequences for civilian lives and livelihoods.^{54 55} However, because key Council Members have failed to come to agreement on the Council's role on such issues, the links between security, environmental degradation, and climate change are often discussed either: informally, for example, in thematic Arria formula meetings or in country-specific convenings of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security; or formally, but as secondary topics as part of discussions of other related themes or as it relates to specific country cases on the Council's agenda.

However, the UNSC has demonstrated its potential by taking action to prevent an environmental catastrophe from the aging FSO SAFER tanker off the coast of Yemen, after years of advocacy by civil society groups, including PAX.⁵⁶ Despite delays in implementation due to a lack of established funding and response mechanisms, the UN was able to finally act in 2023, providing a replacement tanker in coordination with parties to the conflict and other relevant stakeholders.

The UNSC also has addressed the role of natural resources in conflict financing notably through sanctions targeting conflict resources such as diamonds, timber, and minerals in countries like Angola, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁵⁷ Over time, the Security Council has endorsed a multifaceted approach, combining sanctions with institutional reforms, private sector engagement, and global supply chain mechanisms such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds (KPCS) to promote responsible resource management and prevent conflict relapse.⁵⁸ The Council has in many cases referred the design and implementation strategies of natural resources management to other parts of the UN system, international organizations, States, civil society and the private sector.⁵⁹

Recognizing the need to address climate risks and their impacts on conflict dynamics, some Council Members have sought to address these EPS-related concerns and the gaps caused by incoherence in the system through

establishing it on the Council's agenda via a formal UNSC resolution. Most recently, Ireland and Niger introduced a draft UNSC resolution on the security implications of climate change in 2021, aiming for "a comprehensive, whole-of-UN approach to tackle climate change and its impacts."⁶⁰ However, disagreement in the Council, notably including a veto by Russia, caused the resolution to fail, and since then, Council Members have been hesitant to re-open the resolution process, fearing possible further vetoes by Russia and/or other Permanent Members. Even so, several UNSC resolutions on specific countries and mission renewals have interconnected environmental management and the adverse effects of climate change with peace and security, including resolutions on UN missions in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Iraq (UNAMI), and South Sudan (UNMISS),⁶¹ among others. There are also UNSC thematic resolutions 2417 (2018) on the link between armed conflict and food insecurity, and 2573 (2021) on the protection of critical civilian infrastructure, both of which relate to the humanitarian aspects of the EPS agenda. However, without an explicit resolution establishing the EPS agenda, no comprehensive framework, including mandated reporting or actions, has been established within the UNSC to address EPS-related concerns so far.

Nonetheless, environmental and climate impacts in conflicts have featured in the Secretary-General's annual report to the Council on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict since 2019, and Member States, as well as UN and CSO briefers, have repeatedly highlighted these issues at annual UNSC debates on PoC and related side events.⁶² Furthermore, some Council Members and other States have worked together to prioritize the EPS agenda at the UNSC and beyond. For example, supportive Council Members established the IEG on Climate and Security to provide space for regular consultations between Council Members and experts on urgent environmental and/or climate concerns in conflict-affected countries on the Council's agenda. Other broader groups, for example, the Group of Friends on Climate Security and the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts,⁶³ play a vital role in equipping Council Members and Member States with support and region-specific research and evidence to inform policy, raise public awareness, and bolster the UN system's initiatives on EPS-related issues of climate security⁶⁴ and water security. These groups have also been central to informing Council Members' further interventions and sponsoring of briefings on the protection of the environment in armed conflict, environmental peacebuilding, and climate change implications on peace and security during other related UNSC Open debates and a number of Arria-formula meetings.

Despite these efforts by Council Members and other States, the biggest gap that remains in the UNSC's

work on EPS issues is the lack of a formal EPS agenda that would institutionalize the connections between environment, peace, and security and help to address these interconnected challenges with greater consistency, impact, and foresight. However, issues of political will and current Council dynamics, particularly among the Permanent Members with veto powers and the often resulting gridlock, are likely to make any such agenda-establishing resolution improbable for some time. Moreover, even within the EPS agenda, the UNSC has displayed a tendency to focus more on climate change as a driver of conflict, rarely attempting to address the impacts of conflict on the environment beyond thematic discussions, which creates an operationalization gap in effectively addressing conflict-linked environmental damage in protection strategies and responses.⁶⁵

b. UN General Assembly (UNGA) and UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The UN General Assembly (UNGA), the main policy-making organ of the United Nations composed of representation from all Member States, has also increasingly addressed the environment-climate-conflict nexus. Member State initiatives have actively sought to embed environmental and climate considerations into global policy frameworks. This can be seen, for example, in a resolution spearheaded by Costa Rica, the Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia, and Switzerland that recognizes access to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a universal human right – which passed first in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2021, and then was affirmed in the UNGA in 2022. Furthermore, numerous UNGA resolutions incorporate environmental dimensions of conflict and/or weapons' use, including those adopted within its First Committee, which handles issues of international security, disarmament, and the regulation of weapon systems. Similarly, the Sixth Committee, which addresses legal matters, has made significant contributions by initiating and bringing to the attention of States frameworks such as the Principles on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC) (more on this in section 3.4). These resolutions underscore the ecological consequences of armed conflict and emphasize the importance of sustainable strategies for post-conflict recovery, reflecting the UNGA's commitment to advancing the environmental aspects of peace and security.

In addition, various UN Special Rapporteurs, who operate under mandates laid out by the UNHRC and also report to the UNGA, where relevant, have included environmental dimensions of conflicts in their reporting on human rights violations in countries and themes on the UNHRC's agenda. The notable examples include the 2021 UNHRC Resolution that recognized the negative effects of

pollution and other forms of environmental degradation in armed conflict and post-conflict contexts,⁶⁶ and the work of the UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights and Toxics. This includes the 2007 report on the adverse effects of the movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes on the enjoyment of human rights⁶⁷ and the 2016 report on the effects of hazardous substances on the lives of children,⁶⁸ which highlight issues around the toxic remnants of war.

A significant gap within the UNGA lies in the fragmented processes through which different aspects of the EPS agenda are addressed. Various Committees, each with distinct focuses and expert groups, often operate in isolation, leading to a lack of awareness about related efforts in other Committees. This disconnect extends to other UN bodies, such as UNEA and UNHRC, which may be unaware of initiatives occurring at UN headquarters in New York, Geneva, Nairobi or Vienna, often caused by a lack of interdepartmental communication within States' Ministries or limited capacity. As a result, efforts can become disjointed, undermining the advancement of the EPS agenda. Moreover, unlike other UN Special Rapporteurs, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict concluded and was not renewed after the adoption of the ILC's PERAC Principles, creating a missed opportunity in the UN's ability to continue to promote the Principles and their implementation, including through sustained oversight and advocacy on this critical issue. Additionally, varying degrees of access and participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and local stakeholders in policy- and decision-making across UN forums, including across UNGA Committees, can limit the inclusion of on-the-ground perspectives and grassroots expertise, which are essential for developing effective and inclusive strategies.

c. Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), an intergovernmental advisory body under the joint auspices of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Security Council (UNSC) that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries, and the Peacebuilding Fund, the UN's preeminent tool to invest in prevention and peacebuilding activities, have both increasingly prioritized environmental and climate matters across their work. The PBC has considered the effects of climate change on the sustainability of peace, particularly in discussions on the challenges climate change poses to peacebuilding and in driving cross-border transhumance in the Sahel and the Pacific. Meanwhile, the PBF has worked to address climate change through the funding of 43 projects with a climate-security component.⁶⁹

In its 2023 Thematic Review on Climate Security and Peacebuilding, recommendations and guidance were provided to the Peacebuilding Fund to inform its future investments in climate-security initiatives within fragile and conflict-affected contexts. These insights include prioritizing cross-border approaches to addressing climate security threats, adopting a risk-tolerant investment strategy in fragile States, increasing funding for climate security initiatives, leveraging the gender-climate-security nexus to promote inclusion, and enhancing project design, flexibility, and learning in climate security programming.⁷⁰

Recurring challenges remain in the EPS-related work of the PBC and the PBF, including the lack of consensus from Member States on the role of the PBC in discussing such topics, as well as a lack of sustained and flexible funding provided to the PBF to address the evolving needs for peacebuilding in a changing climate and fragile environmental contexts. The consensus-based decision-making process of the PBC often hampers its ability to quickly adapt and act, as a single member can block progress on key issues, including those involving climate change. Additionally, the PBF, funded through voluntary contributions from States, remains severely underfunded, providing only a fraction of the resources needed on the ground. These challenges are compounded and influenced by geopolitical gridlock across other forums and the limited attention given to critical but contentious issues such as the intersection of Climate, Peace, and Security.

d. UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO)

The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) has progressively sought to address environmental and climate considerations in peacekeeping missions as mandates have increasingly recognized the adverse effects of climate change and environmental impacts on mandated tasks. Initial peacekeeping initiatives aimed at addressing these concerns have already been in practice for over a decade. For example, DPO has implemented recommendations to reduce the environmental footprint of peacekeeping missions in order to “lead by example” in the transition to factor in environmental management in order to minimize risks to people, societies and ecosystems as part of the “Greening the Blue Helmets” initiative.⁷¹ This helps to ensure that peacekeeping operations prevent fueling conflict and competing with local communities over already scarce resources. Furthermore, missions in the 2010s, such as those in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the DRC, were tasked with supporting national authorities in restoring capacities for natural resources management. Today, UN peacekeeping operations in the DRC (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), and the Central African Republic

(MINUSCA), still have mandates and activities which factor these considerations in, but they go further in their preventive scope. For example, in UNMISS and MINUSCA, these mandates have “allowed the missions to deploy military patrols along transhumance migration routes to defuse tensions and prevent altercations.”⁷²

However, since 2022, UNMISS has also had one of the most robust mandates to address climate security risks. The inclusion of language in UNSCR 2265 (2022) - and subsequent renewals - that explicitly recognizes the effects of climate change on peace and security in South Sudan, including previous language on impacts of climate-related risks on the country’s stability and worsening the humanitarian crisis, has allowed UNMISS to deploy the first full climate security team, the Climate, Peace and Security Unit (CPSU), made up of one Senior Climate and Security Advisor and two Climate Security Experts since 2023. This dedicated team is “tasked with ‘streamlining’ climate indicators within the Mission’s threat and conflict analysis as well as improving coordination within and outside the Mission.”⁷³ UNMISS has further appointed dedicated focal points and formed task forces to address climate-related security issues, with its joint mission analysis center routinely integrating these risks into its assessments.

Despite this progress, operative language across mission mandates recognizing aspects of the environment-climate-conflict nexus have thus far been restrained to only consider climate security risks, environmental impacts of missions’ own actions, and natural resources management. This demonstrates a continuing significant gap in holistically addressing the full spectrum of EPS concerns in conflicts, particularly conflict-linked environmental impacts. Some work has been done, for example, by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) as part of its work in environmental management⁷⁴ and clearing of unexploded ordinances (UXOs) in climate change-impacted mission settings, but explicit recognition and links are lacking.⁷⁵ Additionally, aside from UNMISS, other missions have yet to implement reporting requirements, which has prevented the ability to seriously incorporate climate and environmental assessments into mandated activities.⁷⁶

e. Climate Security Mechanism (CSM)

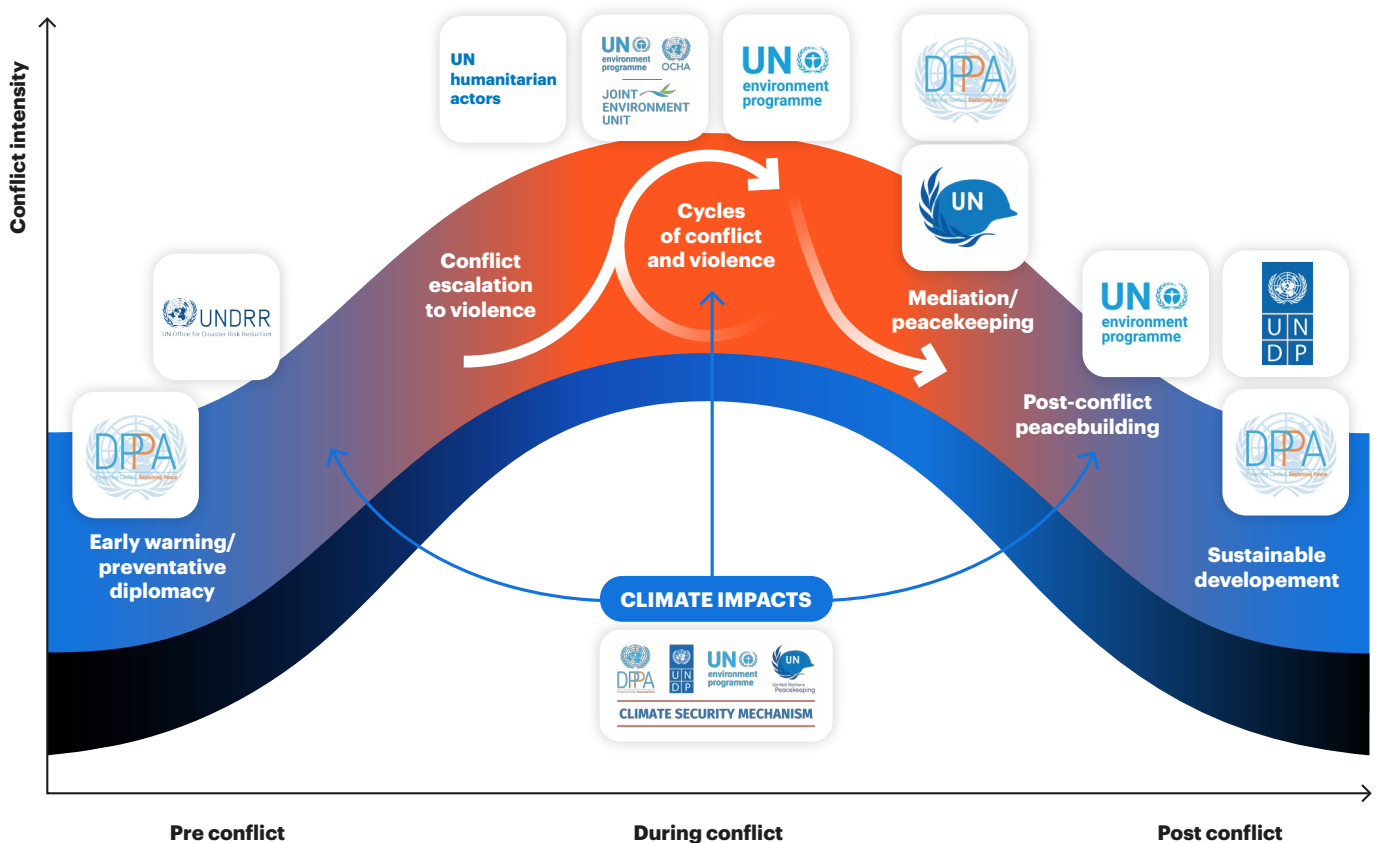
The CSM, established in 2018, is a joint initiative between DPPA, UNDP, and UNEP, and was later joined by the DPO. The CSM was established to leverage existing expertise and strengthen UN capacities for a systematic response to climate-related security risks.⁷⁷ By using the knowledge and skills within the areas of peacebuilding, sustainable development, and the environment, it assists field missions, UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams, and regional organizations in carrying













out Climate, Peace and Security risk assessments and formulating risk management strategies. The CSM has been instrumental in advancing CPS across the UN system through organizing training, events, and conducting research. It has launched 16 field initiatives to address Climate, Peace and Security linkages in climate-vulnerable countries and regions,⁷⁸ and trained over 1,230 personnel on integrated Climate, Peace and Security risk analysis. Moreover, it has deployed seven Climate, Peace and Security Advisors in UN field missions and four in regional organizations.

Despite the CSM's success in bringing together UN entities to strengthen and integrate climate considerations more coherently across the UN's work, the CSM shares similar challenges to those of the individual UN agencies and programs, which make up

the collective mechanism; these are namely: limited dedicated resources, institutional constraints, and insufficient integration environmental dimensions across broader UN frameworks. Climate and environmental considerations are perceived as an afterthought by decision-makers,⁷⁹ and like for many other stakeholders, long-term engagement and a lack of resources to upscale the work of the CSM is insufficient to meet the current needs.⁸⁰ Finally, while the CSM is important for advancing CPS efforts, it may not be the most suitable mechanism by design to comprehensively address the full scope of the EPS agenda. This is due to the CSM's exclusive focus on CPS issues, and the specialized technical expertise required to tackle the complex and multifaceted nature of environmental impacts in conflict contexts.

UN Bodies with Operational and Implementation Roles Across the Conflict Lifecycle



Pre conflict	During conflict	Post conflict
 <p>Integrates environmental and climate considerations into conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding</p>	 <p>Conducts (post) conflict environmental assessments and assists States with post-conflict environmental recovery, remediation, and governance</p>	 <p>Conducts (post) conflict environmental assessments and assists States with post-conflict environmental recovery, remediation, and governance</p>
 <p>Focuses on disaster risk reduction and environmental DRR interventions in crisis situations</p>	 <p>Integrates environmental and climate considerations into peacekeeping missions</p>	 <p>Integrates environmental and climate considerations into peacekeeping missions</p>
 <p>Responds to environmental emergencies in crisis situations and conducts rapid environmental assessments and analysis</p>	 <p>Supports post-conflict reconstruction, resilience building, climate action, and the protection and sustainable use of natural resources</p>	 <p>Supports post-conflict reconstruction, resilience building, climate action, and the protection and sustainable use of natural resources</p>
 <p>(e.g., IOM, UNCHR, WFP, UNICEF): Mitigate environmental risks for conflict-affected populations</p>	 <p>CLIMATE SECURITY MECHANISM</p>	 <p>Provides expertise on addressing climate-security risks</p>

3.4 Legal and Normative Frameworks for Environmental Protection and Accountability for Conflict-Linked Environmental Damage

a. Recent Developments and Clarifications in the Law Aimed at Protecting the Environment in Armed Conflicts

Over the past decade, a number of international frameworks have been developed to better protect the environment from devastating impacts of armed conflicts. In particular, in 2022, the International Law Commission - a body linked to the UN General Assembly Sixth Committee on Legal issues - adopted 27 Principles on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC), which provide detailed guidance for States and non-state actors on protecting the environment at all stages of the conflict cycle, including pre-conflict, during hostilities, and post-conflict recovery, as well as in situations of occupation. The so-called PERAC Principles serve as an instrumental normative framework for integrating environmental considerations into conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery efforts, ensuring that environmental protection remains prioritized.

Similarly, the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) 2020 Updated Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict complement the PERAC Principles and provide practical measures and international humanitarian law standards for preventing and mitigating environmental damage during hostilities and ensuring the protection of natural resources and ecosystems. They reflect the recognition of the importance of healthy environment for the survival and well-being of civilian populations and the long-term recovery of conflict-affected areas.

b. Mainstreaming EPS Considerations in Related International Normative Frameworks and Tools

Besides these two fundamental normative frameworks and the aforementioned UNEA resolutions (more details in section 3.1), environmental considerations have been integrated in other international norms on disarmament, peace and security, and humanitarian action. This includes legally binding treaties and conventions, such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons (TPNW),⁸¹ non-binding normative frameworks such as the 2022 Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas,⁸² as well as sets of principles, operational guidelines, and voluntary best practice standards. This includes the updated International Mine Action Standards (IMAS),⁸³ the Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure,⁸⁴ and the Principles for Assisting Victims of Toxic Remnants of War,⁸⁵ among others.

c. The Role of Courts and Legislative Initiatives

Moreover, environmental and climate issues have been progressively integrated into international legal jurisprudence and frameworks through cases brought before international courts and initiatives to apply their mandates to address these issues. For instance, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has considered cases involving conflict-linked environmental harm, such as in the 1999 case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against Uganda, or in the 2010 case of Costa Rica against Nicaragua. These cases are crucial not only for setting a precedent of pursuing accountability for environmental harm stemming from armed conflict and military activities, but also for highlighting difficulties in safeguarding fair compensations for it. In December 2024, the ICJ also began consideration of a landmark case on States' obligations in the respect of climate change, and is expected to deliver its advisory opinion, requested by the UN General Assembly in response to a campaign by the Pacific Island States.

Another international court - the International Criminal Court (ICC) - is currently developing its policy on advancing accountability for environmental crimes,⁸⁶ while the international campaign to recognize ecocide as an international crime under the ICC's Rome Statute led to the submission of an amendment by Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa in September 2024.⁸⁷ Ecocide has also been incorporated into the European Union's newly updated Environmental Crimes Directive, and introduced through national legislation in countries such as the Netherlands, Mexico, Belgium, Brazil, Peru, Italy, and Scotland.

The UN system has produced other precedents for providing accountability for conflict-linked environmental destruction through the work of the UN Compensation Commission (UNCC). Created in 1991 by the UN Security Council through resolution 687 (1991) in the aftermath of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the UNCC was tasked with processing claims and awarding compensation for losses and damages endured by Kuwait, including environmental damage (e.g., oil well fires, marine pollution, and damage to ecosystems) as a significant

and standalone category for compensation. The UNCC's work was groundbreaking in recognizing environmental harm as a compensable consequence of conflict and developing a country-specific funding mechanism (through a levy on Iraq's oil exports), offering inspirations for similar accountability mechanisms in the future.

All these developments in International Humanitarian Law, Environmental Law, Human Rights Law, and the UN Charter are crucial for advancing the EPS agenda through building better international norms and accountability mechanisms to help prevent environmental damage and its devastating consequences on people and ecosystems in conflict settings. However, the non-binding nature of some of these norms and the lack of enforcement mechanisms pose an implementation challenge of political will and capacity (or lack thereof). While many States have been increasingly considering environmental aspects in their military operations, as stipulated by the PERAC Principles, ICRC's Guidelines, and other norms,

some others have not only ignored these aspects but also blocked progressive policy initiatives on the matter.

This remains an issue especially in view of the UNSC veto power, which makes initiatives happening outside of the UNSC crucial for advancing the EPS agenda via alternative or complementary policy and legal pathways - especially those stemming from grassroots initiatives. Advocacy aiming at raising public awareness about the need to uphold and strengthen EPS-related international norms should also be accompanied by advancements in technical expertise and capacities by relevant actors to deal with those issues - such as the development of methodologies to assess the scope and monetary value of environmental harm for accountability purposes. Therefore, advancing the EPS agenda requires involvement of and cooperation between various types of stakeholders.

▼ In historic move, the UN General Assembly declares healthy environment a human right, New York, July 28, 2022. Source: UN Photo



4. Pathways to Advance the EPS Agenda Beyond the Pact for the Future

This section explores various strategies and approaches that can be implemented to address the environmental impacts of conflict and better integrate the Environment, Peace and Security (EPS) agenda within the UN and beyond, despite Member States' inability to come to a consensus on the topic during negotiations on Chapter 2, on International Peace and Security, of the Pact for the Future. It will examine how existing initiatives can nonetheless be upscaled, strengthened, and expanded to incorporate an environmental lens into peace efforts and vice versa, and propose new solutions and actors to lead these efforts.

As identified, the challenges in advancing the EPS agenda include fragmented efforts across the UN system, limited coordination and data-sharing between agencies, and insufficient recognition and resourcing of tools to address the critical environment-climate-conflict nexus. Making the EPS agenda a priority among competing global issues remains a significant hurdle, further hindering cohesive strategies to address these interconnected risks effectively. However, progress can be achieved in improving the international community's capacities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to environmental and climate concerns in conflict and at-risk settings. Below, we present arguments for six overarching solutions to the main gaps identified above, followed by a series of more targeted and specific recommendations aimed at achieving or supporting these suggested pathways.

Please note: The following should not be seen as an exhaustive list. Furthermore, the suggested pathways and following recommendations are presented in no particular order and should all be seen as mutually reinforcing. Efforts toward the following should not be sequenced but pursued concurrently in support of a more coherent, comprehensive UN-system-wide EPS agenda.

1. Establish a UN-System-Wide Environment, Peace and Security Agenda

Firstly, establishing a UN-system-wide Environment, Peace and Security agenda through a formal thematic resolution in the UN Security Council or UN General Assembly would: help to more formally acknowledge the environmental impacts of war at a policy-level; raise awareness on the environment-climate-conflict nexus; generate greater capacity to address it; and foster greater accountability for abuses in conflict settings. An EPS resolution could help to systematically mainstream environmental, climate, and conflict considerations across all relevant areas of the UN's work and could help to address many of the challenges outlined above, including notably providing a more uniform conceptualization of EPS and a more coherent, coordinated whole-of-system UN approach to prevention, mitigation, and response measures to EPS concerns.⁸⁸

Despite growing international recognition of the importance of addressing the environment-climate-conflict nexus in policy-making forums and by

practitioners, without a foundational understanding of EPS and its impacts, and with no centralizing mandate, international EPS efforts remain ad hoc and disjointed across the system. Efforts have been made in environmental and climate-focused forums to integrate peacebuilding or conflict-focused dimensions, for example, in UNEA resolutions, such as 2/15 on the protection of the environment in armed conflict, and in Climate COPs in recent years, starting with COP27 and the initiative on Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP). Further efforts have also been made to integrate environmental and climate considerations into the UN's peace and security architecture, especially the UNSC, UNGA, PBC, and across the UN Secretariat, as has already been outlined above. A thematic EPS resolution in the UNSC or UNGA would help to bridge these parallel, but disconnected efforts across forums, providing both conceptualization and improved operationalization for the system as a whole.

Lessons can be drawn from similar cross-cutting issue areas that have been addressed through establishing agendas via Council resolutions, for example, UNSCR 1325 (2000) establishing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security, and UNSCR 2282 (2016) on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, among others. These resolutions formally recognized the links between these issues and their impacts on peace and security, placing them on the Council's agenda for continued consideration in regular thematic debates and briefings, but also in relevant country-specific discussions. This also has opened up mandating and staffing in UN missions, for example, to support programming and initiatives aimed at promoting WPS in peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, it has helped to incorporate these agendas across other related forums, for example, the consideration of the WPS, YPS, and Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace concerns as a priority in the Peacebuilding Commission and in PBF funding streams. In addition, these agendas also establish more regularized monitoring and reporting on these cross-cutting issues by the Secretariat to the Council, and the broader UN Membership. This includes annual reports on the state of these agendas by the UN Secretary-General, as well as increased cross-cutting reporting across the system.

In some instances, UN resolutions have also led to the creation of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to strengthen and focus UN efforts on topics of concern across the system, like was done by the UNGA resolution 51/77, establishing the mandate of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict in 1996 (and subsequently renewed since). A UN Special Representative on Environment, Peace, and Security (EPS) would be instrumental in promoting the collection

of information and reporting on the impacts of the environment-climate-conflict nexus. This position would serve to foster international cooperation and coherence by ensuring environmental and climate sustainability measures are consistently integrated across the UN system. The Special Representative would act as a central figure in driving the UN's EPS agenda, working closely with Member States, UN agencies, and civil society organizations to advocate for robust environmental protections in conflict-affected regions and addressing the environmental impacts of war.

However, as has been outlined above – and as was underscored by the breakdown in the final hours of negotiations on the Pact and its subsequent omission of explicit mention of environmental and climate concerns in relation to peace and security matters – current political dynamics in the UNSC and broader issues of political will among the wider UN Membership remain an obstacle to such a comprehensive solution. Nonetheless, despite current political hurdles, the international community can still take steps towards supporting the establishment of an EPS agenda, such as establishing a Core Group of like-minded Member States focused on EPS policy development, coordination, and implementation. This initiative would work in complement with existing groups such as the Group of Friends on Climate and Security and the Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security. Through this group, Member States can collaborate to create a comprehensive roadmap for mainstreaming the environment into all relevant UN policy discussions and response mechanisms. Such a roadmap would include developing a meaningful set of criteria for integrating environmental considerations into peace and security resolutions, humanitarian aid strategies, and post-conflict recovery efforts.

2. Develop Capacities and Expertise on the Environment-Climate-Conflict Nexus

Notwithstanding the establishment of a formal EPS agenda, enhancing the capacities and expertise within the UN system on addressing the environment-climate-conflict nexus at both the policy and implementation levels can serve as a way to advance the EPS agenda and incorporate environmental considerations into peace and security strategies in conflict-affected settings.

As a start, Environmental and Climate Advisors must be propagated and more widely integrated into UN

peacekeeping operations, Special Political Missions (SPMs), and other UN field configurations, for example, in UN Country Teams (UNCT) and UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator Offices (RCO/HCO), as a standard practice where relevant. They must be granted direct access to mission leadership and consulted in strategic and operational planning. However, several interviewed experts stressed that the climate-focused mandate and training of current Climate, Peace and Security Advisors, such as those in the UNMISS CPSU, may not be the best suited to consider the full spectrum of the environment-climate-conflict nexus due to the distinct nature of each area of work and the broader technical expertise needed to assess wide-ranging environmental impacts on peace and security in conflict settings.

Moreover, in current missions that do merge both, agendas, resourcing, including staffing and training for mission personnel and local stakeholders, must be matched to needs-based assessments in order to allow missions to fulfill mandated tasks. For example, in the former UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), “the advisor [was] tasked not only with integrating climate throughout the mission’s work but also with supporting the climate-related work of the country team, government ministries, and local organizations,” thus creating “competing demands.”⁸⁹ As part of efforts already being implemented by the Climate Security Mechanism, dedicated training for all stakeholders, including mission personnel and local actors, on identifying, preventing, mitigating, and responding to conflict-linked environmental issues and climate-related challenges within their areas of responsibility would be invaluable. Such training would enhance capacity and expertise, guided by specialized staff like Environment and Climate Advisors and mission leadership. Lessons can be learned from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which was previously sanctioned and supported by the UN and has since been reconfigured as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The mission established mandatory Environmental Protection and Management Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)⁹⁰ for all personnel to follow while carrying out their duties in peacekeeping operations, demonstrating a proactive approach to integrating environmental protection into operations.

To mainstream environmental considerations across all mission components, the UNSC should explicitly provide language on the environment-climate-conflict nexus, particularly environmental protection, in mission mandates. As discussed, several missions already include specific language on climate risks, but very few include language on the environment aside from

UNSOM (Somalia), UNAMI (Iraq), and UNMISS (South Sudan). The UNSC must strengthen and expand mission mandates to explicitly consider environmental and climate implications throughout the conflict cycle, particularly within the reporting section to improve mission capacities, assessments, and learning on the environment and provide guidance for mission leaders for future operations.

In the aim of both propagating Environmental and Climate Advisors and mainstreaming expertise across missions and other stakeholders, comprehensive training should be provided to all personnel and collaborating non-UN actors involved in mission settings. The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) offers significant potential to enhance capacity-building through targeted training programs for UN personnel and local actors on integrating environmental and climate risks into their frameworks, analysis and programming. These trainings can cover such aspects as assessing climate-security risks, incorporating environmental sustainability into mission planning, and identifying the intersections between environmental degradation, conflict dynamics, and peacebuilding.

Beyond missions, UN agencies and Member States must dedicate personnel and resources to better understanding and integrating environmental and climate dimensions into conflict analysis and responses. Many Member State Missions to the UN already host advisors dedicated to mainstreaming and prioritizing environmental and climate considerations across the various UN forums in which they are represented. This is a positive step that should be encouraged across the representation of UN Membership. However, as has been discussed, such efforts remain limited in their capacities to embed environmental considerations across the UN’s work where consensus-based voting or veto powers can block progress. Hence, it is crucial to advance capacity-building and expertise across the UN and its Membership in parallel with political tracks in order to achieve a more holistic system-wide approach to addressing EPS concerns.

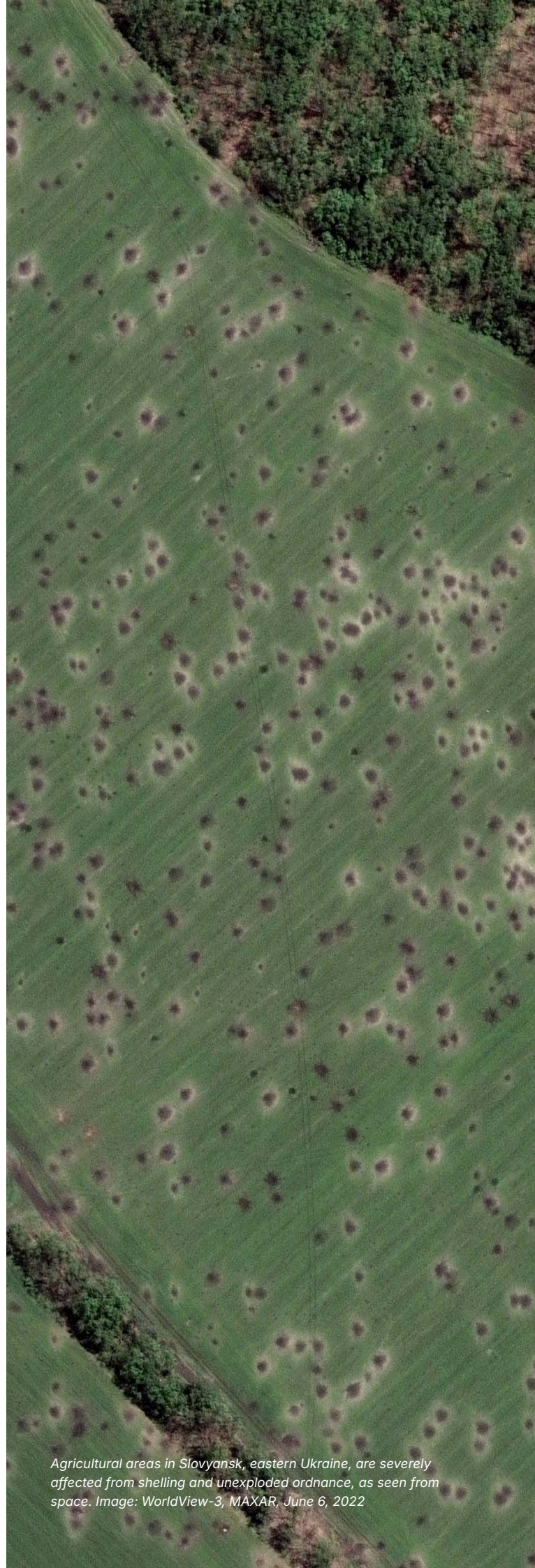
3. Enhance Information and Data-Sharing Mechanisms across the UN system

Effective responses to the complex intersections of environmental degradation, climate change, and conflict require comprehensive, timely, and accessible data to inform decision-making and operational strategies. While

various UN agencies collect valuable environmental and conflict-related data, the lack of systematic coordination and data sharing often results in fragmentation, duplication, or critical information gaps. Establishing robust mechanisms for sharing data and analysis across the UN system would not only strengthen early warning systems and preventive measures but also enhance the integration of EPS considerations into peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development efforts. This coordinated approach is vital for improving situational awareness, enabling evidence-based policymaking, and fostering policy coherence on EPS issues.

Currently, the data collection and sharing efforts in the UN system are fragmented and underfunded. During the humanitarian response phase, limited data relevant for environmental analysis is collected. For example, damage assessment of buildings or agricultural land is done by United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) or the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and environmental health data is collected by the World Health Organization (WHO), either on its own or through the UNOCHA-coordinated Humanitarian Cluster. UNEP, the body with the strongest environmental expertise in principle, faces constraints in actively monitoring environmental damage during conflicts due to its mandate. It often relies on data collection by civil society groups and affected governments, with recent exceptions such as in Ukraine and Gaza. However, this approach comes with difficulties such as a lack of baseline data or the absence of a clear testing methodology to ensure robustness and reliability. Post-conflict environmental assessments conducted by UNEP are important but depend on a request by the affected State and on the availability of funding, which can significantly limit the scope and depth of such studies. Other UN agencies, such as UNDP, UN HABITAT, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme (WFP), also include environmental data in their assessments during and after the active conflict phase, but this often depends on funding availability and a recognized need among decision-makers in the specific context. Some UN missions include environment and climate analysis in their mandates, which may include data collection, yet this data can also be sourced from third-party actors and is not necessarily collected directly by mission experts.

For climate data, various UN bodies collect long-term projections on climate change, which can inform country work by UN agencies with regard to conflict-sensitivity or the compounding impacts of conflict on climate resilience. For instance, the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) Global Framework for Climate Services provides tailored climate services to support decision-making at all levels in addressing climate-related risks.⁹¹ Similarly, UNDRR's DesInventar platform offers disaster loss data



Agricultural areas in Slovyansk, eastern Ukraine, are severely affected from shelling and unexploded ordnance, as seen from space. Image: WorldView-3, MAXAR, June 6, 2022

that supports monitoring progress toward the SDGs and the Sendai Framework, enhancing the understanding of climate impacts and resilience in conflict-prone settings. Other available tools, such as Strata or GeoGuard, offer additional capacities to monitor environmental trends and stressors that inform conflict-sensitive programming and interventions, and to act as a common baseline for transboundary collaboration and mediation.

UNEA resolution 6/12 is supporting the improvement of environmental data collection by UNEP through promoting broader engagement with other UN agencies to make optimal use of the expansive expertise and data available. This will make a significant improvement in efficiency and effectiveness in responding to environmental and climate damages in the wake of armed conflicts. To improve the coherence of collection and analysis of the EPS-related data, the UN should develop a framework for specific environmental and climate-related risk factors, as well as relevant tools and methods to collect, analyze, and monitor data on these factors. This can be streamlined across relevant UN agencies working in (post-) conflict-affected States. Such a systematic approach would greatly improve rapid collection and sharing of data that can facilitate better, more efficient humanitarian response and in between post-conflict reconstruction and strengthen accountability and norm-building around PERAC.

Additionally, UN actors should make greater use of information and tools developed by a variety of other non-UN affiliated platforms and organizations. Yet, the lack of centralized coordination between these different initiatives can lead to duplication of efforts and missed opportunities for synergy.⁹² UN bodies can play a more distinct role in facilitating cross-sectoral insights of various stakeholders dealing with EPS-related issues - both in thematic and country-specific contexts. Understanding local environmental dynamics and broader long-term analysis would further require ensuring that CSOs from affected countries should be involved where possible in data collection and analysis through citizen-science and public reporting, while the academic community can play a vital role by providing novel approaches using remote sensing data. This improved data collection and sharing and of leveraging best practices and lessons learned can be done through establishing platforms for dialogue and collaboration, such as workshops, conferences, or digital hubs from diverse contexts, which can further tailor effective strategies and promote innovation in addressing EPS-related challenges.

Furthermore, it is crucial to channel this data into policy discussions through improved public reporting. Member

States, especially those chairing key UN forums, should call for more systematic briefings from UN and other international bodies, civil society experts, and local stakeholders on environmental and climate issues impacting conflict, peace, and security in country contexts and related thematic discussions. These briefings can provide critical insights, highlight the environmental aspects of conflicts, and offer evidence-based recommendations for integrating environmental considerations into peace and security efforts. Reports, white papers, and briefings to any UN body should be made readily available and should be more systematically shared across all UN bodies considering the relevant country or region involved. This should also apply to briefings or reports by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General or Special Rapporteurs on human rights issues who include environment- and/or climate-related issues in their reporting on countries or themes of concern to various UN and international forums. In addition, environment- and climate-focused bodies, such as the UN Environmental Assembly and the various COP configurations, should similarly systematize the formal inclusion of peace and security angles in their agendas.

4. Increase Funding and Improve Funding Streams Dedicated to Tackling EPS Issues

Beyond the continued and increased funding of initiatives contributing to the above pathways, namely those supporting capacity-building, training, and data collection and sharing, improving funding streams aimed at tackling EPS issues is essential to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of related initiatives. Despite this, the funding for EPS-related projects is often insufficient, fragmented, and reliant on short-term allocations, which hinders the long-term impact of interventions. To address this, there must be a concerted effort to make funding structures more adaptive and diversify funding sources, including greater involvement of private sector investments, philanthropic organizations, and international financial institutions.

As discussed, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) remains significantly underfunded, and a key starting point would be to strengthen its financial base from Member States. The nature of climate-security threats requires cross-border and regional approaches in which the PBF is uniquely positioned to bridge the UN's work in peace and security, and development. For instance,

PBF-funded projects in Liptako Gourma on climate-security aimed to strengthen climate change and environmental degradation resilience, and showed promise by addressing the root causes of violence and demonstrated support for a more 'One UN' Approach to peacebuilding.⁹³ Building on the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) vision for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture,⁹⁴ the principles of quality financing should guide all financial decisions, with strengthened donor coordination and a focus on incentivizing investments that explicitly includes environmental and climate peacebuilding as a priority. Furthermore, prioritizing improved financing for environmental and climate peacebuilding in the 2025 PBAR process, with a dedicated share of financial allocations to EPS-related criteria, is essential to ensuring sustainable and effective solutions. Moreover, Member States should advocate for flexible, long-term funding for the PBF that can adapt to evolving needs, which is essential for scaling successful EPS programs, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions where environmental and security challenges are most pronounced.

Member States should also consider direct contributions to UN programming and missions, for example, through direct contributions to explicit EPS-related projects and/or through contributing seconded personnel with specialized expertise needed to address the knowledge and experience gaps of existing personnel on the environment-climate-conflict nexus. This could be through provision of personnel across all levels, from Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) through to dedicated area specialists.

Furthermore, improving funding mechanisms for the EPS agenda requires addressing significant gaps in climate finance, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions, where risk perception and management processes often hinder investment. In this regard, the efforts of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in fragile and conflict-affected situations provide a good example and an avenue for funding EPS projects helping to address environmental degradation and attract additional funding in environmental and climate action.⁹⁵ In numerous instances, the GEF has provided the initial funding necessary to pilot projects around conflict-sensitivity and lay the groundwork for larger investments from other institutions, thereby expanding and extending the impacts of the GEF's financial support and the UN's environmental initiatives to tackle environmental and security challenges.

Mainstreaming climate-related security risks into climate finance architecture can be achieved by using specialized pathways and proposals to launch projects that deliver both climate and security benefits. Previously mentioned initiatives from the Conference

of Parties (COP), such as COP27's Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP) and the efforts by the UAE and Azerbaijan at COP28 and COP29 respectively, incorporate financing for Climate, Peace, and Security. It is also crucial to ensure conflict sensitivity of any climate and environmental programs and interventions, in line with the Common Principles for Effective Climate Finance and Action for Relief, Recovery, and Peace.⁹⁶

5. Identify Cross-Cutting Thematic Areas as Entry Points for Advancing the EPS Agenda

Even in the absence of the formally established EPS agenda, advancements can be achieved through cross-cutting thematic areas that serve as entry points for collaboration on EPS issues across UN agencies, Member States, local communities and civil society. These are areas or issues that sit on the intersection of environmental and climate action, humanitarian work, and peacebuilding, and hence, can fall within the mandates and interests of multiple stakeholders.

One such entry point is the protection of natural resources in conflict-affected zones. A notable initiative in this regard is the ICRC's work on so-called protected areas, aligned with Principle 4 on designation of protected zones of the PERAC Principles, aiming to safeguard areas of particular environmental importance or fragility from conflict-linked destruction, as those ecosystems are critical for biodiversity preservation and sustaining livelihoods of the local population.⁹⁷ Demilitarizing areas such as recharge zones for groundwater, biodiversity hotspots, ecological corridors, and regions crucial for coastal protection or disaster risk reduction can significantly enhance environmental security. Frameworks like the Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention, and regional agreements provide tools for identifying and preserving these zones. For example, collaboration among local communities, national authorities, and UN actors such as DPPA, UNDP, UNEP, and UNMAS in a conflict setting could facilitate the establishment of ecologically significant areas, fostering peace by building trust among stakeholders and promoting shared environmental stewardship. Moreover, transboundary protected areas encourage cooperation on shared environmental concerns, building trust, and promoting regional stability, reinforcing the relationship between environmental protection and sustainable peace.

Another entry point for advancing the EPS agenda relates to the protection of water resources and water and sanitation services and infrastructure in armed conflict, given their vital role for human survival and ecological resilience. Destruction of and damages to the WASH sector have both acute and long-term environmental and public health effects, with the ability to trigger both humanitarian and environmental crises. At the same time, degradation in the availability and quality of water resources, exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, can fuel more conflict and instability. Hence, initiatives like the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts are instrumental for raising awareness about this problem at the highest UN levels and promoting the integration of water protection into all stages of the conflict cycle, by bringing together Member States, representatives of militaries, UN agencies, and civil society organizations around a shared goal.

6. Systematically Engage Local Stakeholders and Civil Society at Every Level

Engaging local stakeholders and CSOs, particularly women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, is essential to an effective strategic context assessment and the establishment of a stable governance system in any peace and security approach, but especially in relation to environmental and climate concerns. These groups often play a critical role in managing activities related to the environment, such as agriculture, stewardship

of land rich in natural resources, and other key sectors. Their inclusion ensures that policies and strategies are informed through a bottom-up approach by using on-the-ground knowledge, culturally relevant practices, and diverse perspectives, fostering more sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Yet, meaningful and effective engagement of communities in long-term programming remains a challenge and an underutilized resource across the UN system. Although many actors are already engaging with local stakeholders when it comes to localization of peacebuilding programming, efforts should be more systematic and purposeful, as noted in the 2020 UN-System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.⁹⁸ The Guidelines, which provide recommendations to more effectively engage with local CSOs and communities, should also be applied to engaging local stakeholders in environmental and climate peacebuilding programming and policy-making. This also applies to humanitarian actors who can improve localized response efforts that empower local communities and utilize their knowledge in emergency response and by making use of innovative and inclusive technologies. Given the role of climate change as a driver for humanitarian needs, better integrating climate change into emergency preparedness and response would achieve greater impact. Additionally, it is essential to recognize women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities as pivotal agents of change and vital sources of expertise, ensuring a localized approach to peacebuilding, environmental governance, and peace and security challenges.

▼ *Indigenous Guards from the mountains of Miraflores, Quinchía, department of Risaralda, Colombia. Source: Sandra Bejarano Aguirre.*



5. Recommendations

For Member States:

- Establish a UN-system-wide Environment, Peace and Security (EPS) agenda through a formal thematic resolution in the UN Security Council or UN General Assembly. This can help to mainstream measures aimed at addressing the environment-climate-conflict nexus throughout the work of the UN system, and improve coherence in conceptualization, mandating, and resourcing, as well as the sharing of data and best practices.
- Call on the UN Secretariat to establish a UN Special Representative on Environment, Peace, and Security to strengthen and focus UN efforts to promote understanding of the interlinkages of the EPS agenda by improving the collection of information and regularizing reporting on the impacts of the environment-climate-conflict nexus throughout the UN system.
- Establish a Core Group of Member States to create a comprehensive roadmap for mainstreaming the EPS agenda into all relevant UN policy discussions and response mechanisms, including those focusing on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, the impacts of the use of arms, water and food security, migration, and the protection of essential services and critical infrastructure, etc.
- Support the inclusion of language on the environment-climate-conflict nexus, particularly environmental protection, in mission mandates, and establish a requirement for missions to systematically report on environmental degradation and its impacts to ensure these concerns are fully integrated into mandates.
- Support the resourcing and training of dedicated Environmental and Climate Advisors – including within the UN Regular Budget rather than funded from year to year through Extra-Budgetary Resources – in peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions (SPMs), as well as within UN Country Teams (UNCT) and Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator Offices (RCO/HCO), to carry out such mandated activities.
- Provide dedicated capacity within your Permanent Mission to the UN in New York to prioritize the inclusion of a climate and environmental lens across relevant UN policy-making forums, ensuring these considerations are integrated into comprehensive UN peace and security strategies.
- Endorse and implement the various frameworks dedicated to protection of the environment in armed conflict, including the PERAC Principles and the ICRC's Updated Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict.

- Commit to increasing dedicated financial contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), advocating for flexible, long-term funding with specific allocations for environmental and climate peacebuilding projects, and provide direct contributions to UN programming and missions for explicit EPS-related projects and/or through contributing seconded personnel with relevant expertise, such as Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) and Environmental and/or Climate Advisors.
- Allocate flexible funding streams specifically for cross-cutting EPS initiatives, such as water resource protection and environmental demilitarization, to overcome the limitations of short-term and earmarked funding and to ensure sustained and adaptive engagement that meets long-term needs of affected communities and ecosystems.
- Facilitate access for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), experts, and local stakeholders, particularly women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, to provide briefings and share insights on EPS-related issues across the UN system to ensure their voices and perspectives contribute to decision-making processes.

For UN Actors:

- Establish systems to improve documentation and monitoring of environmental degradation in conflict-affected areas and enhance information and data-sharing mechanisms across the UN system and in collaboration with non-UN actors to inform policy decisions and response strategies.
- Leverage the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) to develop comprehensive training programs on integrating both environmental and climate risks into programming for mission personnel, UN agency staff, and local actors.
- Engage with local stakeholders and communities to identify entry points for integrating environmental considerations into peacebuilding and development efforts, addressing the environmental impacts of conflict and climate change, and empowering them to participate in sustainable recovery and resilience-building initiatives.
- Prioritize systematic inclusion of women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples in EPS policy and programming to harness their unique knowledge, generational expertise, and stewardship for more effective and inclusive outcomes.
- Facilitate regional dialogues and initiatives to foster transboundary cooperation initiatives on environmental and climate issues as a pathway to peace and stability.

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