

Challenges Annual Forum 2021



ANNUAL FORUM
REPORT 2021

Climate and environmental security in peace operations

The Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations. The partnership consists of 52 organisations in 24 countries, and it provides an impartial and informal platform for dialogue and convenes key actors for deliberations on different approaches to peace operations through events, workshops and publications. Central to the Challenges Forum founding concept is the hosting of the Challenges Annual Forum. The summary of the discussions held at the Challenges Annual Forums constitutes one of the main collective outcomes of the partnership.

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This report was developed in consultation with the co-host of the Challenges Annual Forum 2021, the Berlin Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF). It does not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum.

1. Introduction

Between 1 and 3 December 2021, the Challenges Annual Forum (CAF21) gathered partners and key stakeholders to exchange views, and discuss and develop recommendations on how peace operations could be more effective in addressing climate and environmental security risks and opportunities. The CAF21, co-hosted by the Berlin Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), engaged more than a hundred participants from across the globe.

As highlighted in the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ the world is facing unprecedented risks from climate change that affect every region of the world. Given the magnitude of the climate emergency, its cascading effects extend beyond

the environmental sphere and into the social and political realm. While climate change is rarely – if ever – the primary cause of conflict, it can act as a risk multiplier, exacerbating underlying vulnerabilities and compounding existing grievances.

It is against this background that the Challenges Forum partnership² focused on climate and environmental security risks and opportunities in peace operations. These will significantly shape and inform the debate and cooperation on ongoing and future peace operations. There is growing recognition that climate security affects missions' mandate delivery, the ability to support peace and security, and most critically host communities' efforts to build resilient and peaceful societies.



1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Sixth Assessment Report, <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

2. At the Challenges Forum Annual Partner Meeting in January 2021, it was decided that Climate Security was one of the key focus areas for the Partnership in 2021.

2. Key questions and challenges for peace operations

Climate change has a compounding effect on existing risks and factors that can lead to insecurity and conflict, as well as undermine prevention efforts. Climate change can reduce or destabilise rural livelihoods, increase competition over fewer natural resources, cause migration or displace-

“We certainly have much to learn together about how we can improve our preparedness, analysis and action to both prevent and respond to climate related risks to peace and security”

– Under Secretary General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, United Nations Department for Peace Operations at CAF21

ment of people and affect social cohesion and trust within communities. At the political level, the UN Security Council has recognised the negative impacts of climate security in many of the settings in which UN peace operations deploy and has included it in mandating resolutions for UN peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions.³

UN peace operations are not, and should not be, the lead entities in addressing climate security issues. However, the field missions seek to mitigate climate-related security risks that could affect the implementation of their mandates. UN peace operations such as the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the UN Office for West Africa

and Sahel (UNOWAS) and the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) have now integrated climate security risks into their political analysis, early warning, prevention strategies and mediation efforts. Other operations such as the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) are beginning to integrate climate considerations in their programming activities. Consistently, UN field missions reiterate the imperative for partnerships and a system-wide approach to address climate security. In UNMISS for instance, an integrated Task Force on Climate is co-chaired by the mission’s Civil Affairs Division and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

However, more needs to be done to strengthen UN field missions’ capacity for integrating climate risks into analysis – not least to improve the understanding of the specific contextual linkages between climate change and peace and security to develop effective adaptation strategies. To be able to do this better, more integrated data is required, as well as a better understanding of how to incor-

“We need to ensure missions are equipped to understand the highly contextual pathways through which climate change affects people and to develop effective response strategies.”

– Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča, United Nations Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations at CAF21

3. These include MINUSMA, MONUSCO, MINUSCA, UNMISS, UNFICYP, UNAMA, UNAMI, UNITAMS, UNSOM, UNOCA, UNOWAS and BINUH.

porate different methodologies. It is important for the field operations to learn to ask different questions and to build towards a common climate security vernacular. In this regard, specialised training for relevant mission entities and/or deployment of dedicated capacities would be necessary. Addressing climate security should be part and parcel of implementing the missions' mandates and not an additional or stand-alone task. It was particularly noted that the opportunities for peacebuilding and climate action were mutually reinforcing activities.

In terms of UN peace operations' environmental footprints, tangible progress has been made to "climate-proof" the field missions, particularly in reducing their energy consumption and identifying options for greater reliance on renewable energies (e.g., solar panels, hydroelectric power grids). The UN Department of Peace Operations, together with the Department of Operational Support, the International Renewable Energy Agency, Norway and the United Arab Emirates,

recently signed a Compact to further support UN peace operations' efforts in this regard. Beyond reducing the missions' environmental footprints, the use of greater renewable energies could contribute to greater operational resilience, for example by reducing the need for long and in some cases dangerous convoys transporting fuel etc.

This could in turn leave a positive sustainable legacy and serve as a catalyst for the host country's potential transition to renewable energies and green technologies. The role of troop- and police contributing countries (T/PCCs) was highlighted as an important enabling factor. T/PCCs often constitute the largest energy consumption in field missions. In the context of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus framework, UN Headquarters in New York could engage in further dialogue with Member States to ensure that TCCs deploy with more environmentally friendly equipment and to encourage them to use renewable energy for their activities, to the extent possible.

Four insights on potential climate impacts and peace in the coming decade:

1. Climate change impacts affect competition and conflict over natural resources such as land and water.
2. Climate change impacts undermine livelihoods, affect human mobility, and push people into illegal coping mechanisms.
3. Climate change impacts contribute to extreme food price spikes and food insecurity.
4. The unintended consequences of poorly designed climate and security policies carry their own risks.

– Presented at CAF21 by Janani Vivekananda, Head of Programme Climate Diplomacy and Security, adelphi

3. CAF21 Thematic Areas

The Challenges Annual Forum (CAF21) gathered partners and key stakeholders to discuss climate security and peace operations around three sub-themes: improving analysis, identifying

opportunities for peacebuilding and exploring new partnerships. Three days of discussions resulted in the following key takeaways.

3.1 Analysis: Integrating climate risks into analysis and planning

Climate and environmental security considerations are increasingly included in UN Security Council Resolutions that mandate peace operations. However, there is often a lack of clearly defined activities, which leaves UN peace operations with limited guidance for identifying and addressing climate-related security risks. Key questions for UN field presences are, therefore, how to analyse climate-related security risks and how to identify entry points to address those challenges.

Given the complexity of identifying the linkages between climate, peace and security, a multidisciplinary approach to integrating climate considerations in the analysis is deemed necessary. It is considerably easier to bring different stakeholders to the table than it is to reach a common assessment.

There are concerns among some partners that adding another layer of consideration runs the risk of making an already issue-heavy analytical process more complex. This could potentially create a situation where various cross-cutting themes are “competing” to be included – over-burdening the field missions while trying to implement mandates. A recurring point made during the discussions is that the analysis needs to be closely related to the mandate implementation.

To better analyse climate and environmental security risks and identify entry points, UN

peace operations need to expand their capacities and expertise or ensure that they have access to external know-how. It was assessed that experience from other international and regional organisations and cross-cutting thematic areas could be drawn upon. For example, the lessons from successfully including gender aspects into mandates show that this works best if it is done by a combination of: creating dedicated positions and focal points, mainstreaming the topic into

“Leaving climate and environmental factors out of risk analysis will omit important impacts that these factors have on local, national and even regional security.”

– Florian Krampe, Director of the Climate Change and Risk Programme, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) at CAF21

existing positions and processes, and enabling external support and partnerships.

Recent efforts in UN peace operations include the establishment of the UN Climate Security Mechanism (CSM⁴), the deployment of the first Climate Security Advisor to UNSOM and the

4. CSM is a joint initiative by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to strengthen the capacity of the UN system to analyse and address the adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security. Early 2022 the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) joined the mechanism.

process of rolling out a system with Environmental Officers in different peace operations.

At the same time, field missions noted that greater support was needed to transform the analysis into action. The model of the UN Climate Security Advisor in UNSOM is one example of how specific climate security expertise can be deployed in a peace operation. Additional necessary mainstreaming efforts are training and

capacity-building for those who already work on environment, climate and/or peace and conflict issues, such as environmental officers, mediation support units and peace and conflict advisors. Instead of creating additional processes, these individuals could rather integrate climate security analysis and action into existing analysis and planning processes, such as the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS).

Key takeaways

Peace operations need to develop an understanding of how climate change affects their political context. Identifying climate-related security risks and assessing the scale of their impact, lays the foundation for prioritising necessary actions. Mainstreaming these risks into the wider mandates of peace operations can help deliver a more conflict-sensitive response.

- **Improve climate “literacy” in peace operations.** Apply a climate lens to existing conflict analysis and planning processes, which requires a multidisciplinary analysis that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Work with peace operations to identify appropriate methodologies and structures to enhance their capacities. Increase collaboration with climate experts in the wider UN system at country and regional level to support analysis and programming.
- **Dedicated capacity and champions.** Speed up the institutionalisation of the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) as a key instrument for comprehensive climate risk assessment and analysis in peace operations. Increase dedicated capacities such as ‘Climate Security Advisors’ who can serve as “connectors or translators” to build bridges across various thematic areas and help mainstream climate and environmental considerations in peace operations. Avoid creating more silos in UN peace operations.
- **Create regional analysis.** Bridge the gap between climate security that has a regional dimension, whereas peace operations typically have a national orientation. The UN Secretary-General’s “Our Common Agenda” report underlines the importance of improving the predictive capacities for UN systems and is an opportunity to help peace operations draw from common regional sources of geo-spatial information and climate risk analysis.

Partnerships with local researchers and organisations, building on UN capacities such as the UN Climate Security Mechanism and UNEP's Resilience to Disasters and Conflicts Global Branch, as well as international expertise and think tanks working on climate security, could also

assist in filling capacity gaps, leverage expertise beyond the UN and ensure that international best practices are considered. It is equally important that lessons learned are fed back into the emerging community of practice.

3.2 Opportunities: Developing a people-centred approach to climate security

The effects of climate change are likely to lead to growing competition over natural resources. This, in turn, will possibly lead to increasing tensions and challenging social cohesion, especially in fragile states. Through an inclusive, people-centred, climate security approach, peace operations can help address and prevent climate-induced/related conflicts.

Climate security provides peacebuilding opportunities for strengthening good governance, reconciliation, conflict-sensitive and inclusive growth, improving social cohesion and equitable distribution of natural resources. Engaging local communities and partners is central. A starting point for harnessing climate security opportunities is to create a conducive environment that convenes and systematically engages local authorities and community institutions to secure local actors' acceptance, adherence and inclusive ownership of peace and climate change adaptation interventions.

The climate security nexus should be a central part of peacebuilding and development programming. The example of Somalia and the UN field missions there could highlight the importance of this approach. UNSOM's Climate Security Advisor's main tasks are to mainstream environmental approaches and to identify and manage climate risks which can negatively impact the implementation of the mission mandate. While still at a very early stage, the work of the Climate Security Advisor, with the support of NGOs and the wider UN, has proven increasingly important in bringing together humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches around water management, and in improving flood and drought resilience to break the worsening cycle of climate impacts, displacement and conflict.

“The shift needs to happen in the broader peacebuilding ecosystem on unearthing the traditional indigenous practices of communities and their solutions and using that to inform the global framework”

– Ilwad Elman, Elman Peace and Human Rights Center at CAF21

At the same time, broader grass root participation should be part of any adaptation and stabilisation efforts because community resilience and stability are central to delivering successful peace and stabilisation strategies. A concrete example is the handling of the annual flooding and drought cycle in the Juba-Shabelle river basin in Somalia, where the Advisor engages and convenes the local communities with humanitarian and development agencies. Focusing on breakage points in the river and taking a community-led approach, the support is focused on the most vulnerable people. Humanitarian (sandbags and lifesaving interventions), development (nature-based approaches to bank stabilisation and sand dams) and peace (stabilisation) actors, such as UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), are working together towards a comprehensive solution to the flooding issue with a people-centred approach at the core.

Another example is UNSOM's inclusive approach in the Mataban District in Somalia, where local communities have been in conflict for the past 10

years. Natural resource competition over grazing land and water access is an underlying cause of the conflict. Bringing women and youth's voices together with the UN peace operation is a way of testing a community-led environmental mediation process. With people at its centre, this process looks at nature-based solutions to grazing lands and water provision within the framework of a traditional mediation approach, using the effects of climate change as a catalyst for dialogue and peace between both communities.

Although implementing climate security approaches is relatively new to UNSOM, the mission is hopeful that a people-centred climate security approach will lead to a more integrated, environmentally sustainable and stable peace agreement and stable political and security contexts. Focusing on community resilience through an inclusive participation of all stakeholders – not just elites and ruling groups – concentrating on environmental protection and ecosystem regeneration, will lead to an overall more stable environment for peace and security.

Key takeaways

People and communities, not states, need to be the focus of climate security approaches, making sure that hardships and grievances exacerbated by the changing climate do not escalate into security issues. Peace operations should equally look at both conflict risks and climate change vulnerability, thus addressing and transforming the underlying structures and drivers of insecurity within countries.

- **Place people at the centre.** Focus on people's needs and the specific contexts, when tailoring interventions accordingly. The climate security nexus should be a central part of local peacebuilding and development programming, given the links between climate and conflict, including competition over natural resources, and its impact on vulnerable communities.
- **Creative partnerships.** Amplify local adaptive strategies for peace operations and identify entry points for turning competition over fewer resources into opportunities for more collaboration. Partnerships with civil society and local peacebuilders, particularly with women and youth organisations, will enable a more locally-owned approach.
- **Be more catalytic in peacebuilding.** Strengthen social cohesion and local development, including engaging more with public-private and local civil society initiatives.



Ilwad Elman at the Elman Peace and Human Rights Center was one of the speakers at CAF21.

3.3 Partnerships: Exploring new avenues for collaboration

UN peace operations today are reliant on thousands of diesel generators to power the work of nearly 100,000 peacekeepers. This use of diesel accounts for a significant share of global peacekeeping costs and the major part of UN greenhouse gas emissions. Many operations are deployed in off-grid settings, where mission footprints are often the largest energy consumer and producer in the area, and they are dependent on long fuel and supply convoys that represent high-value targets and security vulnerabilities.

To reach the UN climate targets⁵, UN peace operations should explore new partnerships with private sector actors, civil society and local peacebuilders. One example of such a partnership would be working with private sector energy developers to provide modern, renewable energy alternatives. Drawing on research by the Powering Peace initiative⁶ and citing examples

from South Sudan (UNMISS), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Somalia (UNSOS), a number of partnership models are emerging for transitioning to renewable energy and lowering the carbon footprint of UN peace operations. These partnership models include: Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), in-house procurement of renewable energy equipment (primarily solar systems) and local hydro power grid connection.

In addition to lowering the carbon footprint of UN peace operations, a renewable energy transition in the field presents new avenues for building peace dividends while also connecting to the Sustainable Development Goals. UN peace operations' choices around energy provision have the potential to support wider development and energy access strategies for host countries, led by UN Country Teams and development institutions.

5. In September 2019, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the UN Secretariat Climate Action Plan (UNSCAP), which included a target to achieve 80% renewable energy use by 2030. Renewable energy goals are also set forth in the UN Department of Operational Support's (DOS) Environment Strategy for Peace Operations.

6. The Powering Peace initiative is a partnership between the Stimson Center and Energy Peace Partners, conducted on the future of renewable energy in peace operations. For more information on our reports and past events, see here: <https://www.stimson.org/project/powering-peace/>

Partnerships with civil society and local peace-builders will also enable the inclusion of local knowledge and ownership. Partnerships with regional organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU) are essential for climate and environmental security and should feature more prominently in ongoing discussions, joint agreements and coordination mechanisms. Peace operations should also engage with the World Bank and other international financial institutions on climate security and development approaches in fragile and conflict settings to foster peace and stability.

Peace operations should collaborate with local actors on climate security issues such as climate risk analysis, water, wastewater, waste management and building resilience. Emerging renewable energy public-private sector models offer other potential benefits and ways to advance mission mandates: they can address the high upfront capital costs of constructing UN-owned energy infrastructure and can allow missions to serve as an anchor client for private sector developers. This can catalyse new local renewable energy development and increased electrification.

Key takeaways

Public-private partnerships could help foster local development of sustainable energy or waste management. Partnerships with civil society and local peacebuilders would enable the inclusion of local knowledge and ownership. Moreover, it is important to align efforts by UN, EU, AU and other international actors by establishing closer partnerships through joint agreements and coordination mechanisms.

- **Leave a positive legacy.** Scale up renewable energy use through partnerships with local providers, which would serve mission needs while supporting local development. A system-level change is required in how missions think about and operationalise energy use in the field. TCCs/PCCs should also be further incentivised to deploy more with renewable energy systems and be supported to reduce barriers of doing so.
- **Involve regional organisations.** Align efforts further, among the UN, EU and AU, through joint agreements and new coordination mechanisms. A good way forward are the upcoming “EU-UN Priorities 2022-24” which will mainstream climate security throughout this partnership.
- **Cooperate with the World Bank.** Enhance the theme of climate security in the World Bank–UN discussions, on how to improve development approaches in fragile and conflict settings to foster peace and stability.

4. Way forward

The Challenges Annual Forum (CAF21) provided a unique chance for policymakers, scholars, practitioners and civil society representatives to engage in high-level conversations as well as dialogue-driven working groups. Furthermore, it helped raise awareness and build stronger relationships between a diverse group of actors. The three-day event generated useful insights

“We need to sometimes rethink our approaches and there are quite a bit of changes that we can undertake as long as we talk to each other and with each other”

– Hazel De Wet, Director, Civil Affairs Division, UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) at CAF21

and concrete takeaways on how peace operations can more effectively address climate and environmental security risks and opportunities. Grouped per thematic theme in this report, Challenges Forum participants highlighted the importance of integrating climate risks into analysis and planning. They also stressed the importance of dedicated capacity and resources, including through supporting the UN Climate Security Mechanism and better regional collaboration. Furthermore, participants considered it essential to focus on people’s needs and specific contexts when addressing and preventing the effects of climate change on peace and security, including through amplifying local adaptive strategies and development opportunities. Participants also highlighted the importance of more creative public-private partnerships and of further aligning regional and multilateral efforts

by establishing closer partnerships through joint agreements and coordination mechanisms.

Challenges Forum participants welcomed that UN peace operations – both peacekeeping and special political missions – are deploying additional advisors on climate and environmental security. Although the UN Security Council did not adopt a resolution integrating climate-related security risks into conflict-prevention strategies⁷, it is very likely that discussions on climate change and related security implications will continue in the UN Security Council, including through debates, the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security and the mandating of peace operations.

Also welcoming other recent developments on climate security (see text box), the Challenges Forum Partnership assessed that the issue of climate and environmental security in peace operations will remain high on the agenda of its partner organisations and key stakeholders. The Challenges Forum will therefore continue focusing on this thematic area in the years ahead.

“Peace operations must be organised in a way that responds to local drivers of conflict and takes them into account. Climate change and its effects on vulnerable communities will accelerate this need even further”

– Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden at CAF21

7. On 13 December 2021, the Security Council failed to adopt a resolution on climate security which was co-sponsored by Niger and Ireland.

Several recent developments indicate that climate security is likely to remain high on the agenda of the international community:

- Mid December 2021, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) released a communiqué on the theme of climate change, peace and security.
- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council passed a ground-breaking “Decision on Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change” which will inform Member States’ policies and the organisation’s activities and field missions.
- The EU, as one of the first bodies worldwide to identify climate change as a security issue, will establish a network of environmental and climate advisors in all Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, as part of its green deal diplomacy.
- Egypt will host the next UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in November 2022, with a special focus on climate adaptation, an issue also central to future peace-building and crisis management measures.
- Based on a Canadian initiative in June 2021, NATO plans to open a centre of excellence on climate security in Toronto in 2023.
- Currently presiding the Group of Seven (G7), Germany will focus on climate and environmental issues in 2022 and plans to put special emphasis on the link between climate change and security in the run-up to the UN General Assembly in New York in September.

“Climate and environmental change affect mission’s mandate delivery. Understanding and integrating these risks will increasingly shape the debate and cooperation on peace operations.”

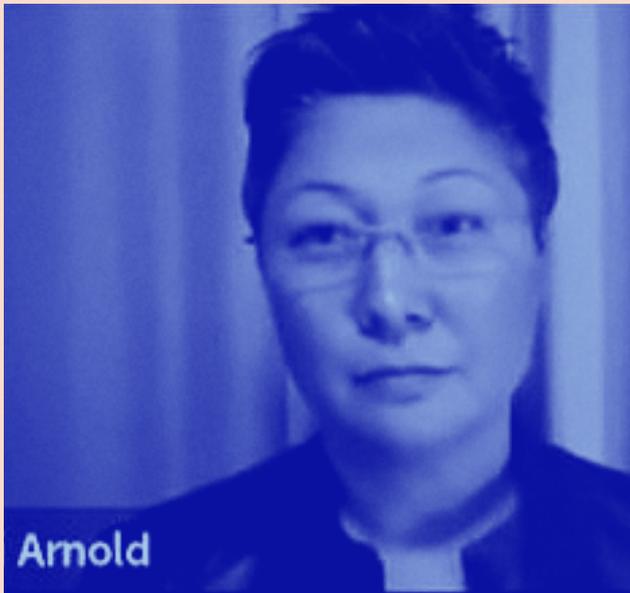
– Pernilla Rydén, Director, Challenges Forum International Secretariat





“We have to protect especially the vulnerable populations against the negative impacts of climate change. Peace Operations can play a key role in this effort.”

– Almut Wieland-Karimi, Executive Director, ZIF



ABOUT THE EVENT

The **Challenges Annual Forum** serves as a platform for launching research, concepts and policy initiatives in the area of peace operations reform. The Annual Forum is hosted yearly on a rotating basis by partner organizations. This summary report captures some of the discussions and recommendations that emerged during the three-day forum from a range of individuals serving in peace operations and engaged in the reform of peace operations as part of the Challenges Partnership.

ATTRIBUTIONS

This Annual Forum report was written by the Challenges Forum International Secretariat together with the Berlin Center for international Peace Operations (ZIF), on behalf of the Challenges Forum partners and Forum participants. It does not necessarily represent the views of all participants at the Forum.

ABOUT CHALLENGES FORUM

The **Challenges Forum** is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.



The Challenges Forum consists of Partners from:

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|  Argentina |  Egypt |  Indonesia |  Pakistan |  Turkey |
|  Armenia |  Ethiopia |  Japan |  Russia |  United Kingdom |
|  Australia |  France |  Jordan |  South Africa |  United States of America |
|  Canada |  Germany |  Nigeria |  Sweden |  Uruguay |
|  China |  India |  Norway |  Switzerland |  World Federation of United Nations Associations |