

How can integrated climate responses contribute to sustaining peace: The role of the Peacebuilding Commission?

Hybrid Discussion | 14 February 2023

Summary Note

The 2020 peacebuilding architecture review (hereafter, the 2020 review) concluded on 21 December 2020 with the adoption of dual resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/75/201) and the Security Council (S/RES/2558). The resolutions call on Member States, the UN, and other stakeholders to “continue to take action to implement the resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and to advance efforts to bring greater coherence to peacebuilding efforts” (S/RES/2558, OP1). In line with this call, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (the Foundation), the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) are continuing a series of roundtable discussions to examine strategies and pathways towards the operationalization of the 2016 resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

Summary

The first roundtable of 2023 focused on recent developments in the climate, peace and security field, including the “Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace” initiative launched at COP27 by Egypt as the President and host of COP27.¹ Specifically, this roundtable discussed a range of opportunities for integrating climate responses and efforts to sustain peace, as well as the unique role of the Peacebuilding Commission in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders representing these two broad agendas, to promote conflict- and gender-sensitive climate mitigation and adaptation work within the UN system. Participants also discussed strategies to better integrate local and regional knowledge into sustaining peace efforts, while at the same time ensuring that women and youth-led climate responses are included in formal processes and that these stakeholders have access to climate financing.

The following key points emerged from the discussion:

1) Encouraging integrated programming that mutually reinforces climate responses and sustaining peace

The “Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace” initiative is important for the UN peacebuilding community because it makes the case for expanding the climate security agenda to include a strong emphasis on sustaining peace. In an Arria-Formula Meeting organised by Kenya and

¹ For more information on the ‘Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace’ initiative, read its concept note: https://www.cccpa-eg.org/pdf_read_download.php?type=read&newFileName=Climate+Responses+for+Sustaining+Peace+Initiative&file=4415_17103347.pdf

Norway in November 2022 on the topic of “Climate, Peace and Security: Opportunities for the UN Peace and Security Architecture,”² the co-hosts similarly argued that the effects of climate change go beyond their impact on the outbreak and intensity of conflict. They pointed out that climate change introduces variables that influence the effectiveness of all peace efforts, including the prevention of conflict, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and transitions out of conflict. Both these initiatives recognize that the effects of climate change are highly interconnected with development, socioeconomic and political factors, and thus make a point to call for more integrated and adaptive governance responses that can leverage the combined knowledge and capacity of a broad range of civil society and government agencies, as well as the need for climate financing to be more predictable and flexible.

This opens space for UN actors to elevate work at the climate, peace and security nexus, including through the support of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and other funding mechanisms within and outside of the UN system, as well as through coordination and cooperation between diverse UN entities beyond those involved in the UN’s Climate and Security Mechanism (CSM). Experts in the discussion emphasized the need for a broader understanding of the climate-security nexus that embeds both climate responses and climate-related security risks within the framework established by the 2016 resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Building stronger synergies between climate responses and sustaining peace will shift the focus away from seeing climate change as a threat multiplier and highlight the co-benefits for climate responses and sustaining peace when climate mitigation and adaptation becomes conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding becomes climate-sensitive.

2) Supporting inclusive climate and security programming

The drivers and effects of conflicts, climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation are interlinked and complex in ways that threaten to overwhelm the capabilities of our governance systems to understand and respond with timely and adequate interventions. As highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), these compounding and cascading effects increase vulnerabilities and further exacerbate existing inequalities in the capacity of communities and societies to manage these shocks and stressors.³ These factors have a broad range of effects, including increasing water and food insecurity, livelihood deterioration, competition over scarce natural resources as well as climate-induced displacement. These are often of local, cross-border and regional nature, but there are significant gaps and fragmentation between the global, regional and national efforts to tackle the impacts of climate change and those to advance sustainable peace. The sustaining peace resolutions made the case for inclusivity, coordination and collaboration and could provide guidance in response to climate risks. This will require that the UN conflict prevention, management and response mechanisms are climate-

² A recording of the November 2022 Arria-formula meeting on ‘Climate, Peace and Security: Opportunities for the UN Peace and Security Architecture’ is available here: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k13/k13i83wzan>

³ See the IPCC synthesis reports for policy makers at: <https://www.ipcc.ch>

sensitive to ensure that the impacts of climate change on peace and security are addressed.⁴ For example, in Yemen, the PBF supported an initiative to strengthen the role of women in local conflict resolution mechanisms in water-related conflicts in rural areas. And in Mauritania, the PBF works with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) on projects aimed at managing conflicts related to natural resource sharing with a strong emphasis on consolidating peace, social cohesion and prevention.

From the perspective of climate finance, support for inclusive programming could include financial support for climate response mechanisms that invest in prevention and enhance resilience in ways that increase the capacity of communities, societies and institutions to manage shocks and setbacks, regardless of whether they emanated from conflict- or climate-related causes, or both. Some examples of such work include the partnership between the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNDP in the Pacific where the PBF has financed projects addressing security threats linked to climate change by strengthening the understanding, implementation and coordination of risk management strategies in Tuvalu, the Republic of Marshall Islands and Kiribati. Initiatives like this have addressed climate-related food security, natural resources and conflict while improving the resilience of communities. In these projects in the Pacific, as well as in the “Water for Peace in Yemen” project, the PBF is also incorporating gender and youth dimensions, to ensure that these projects are also promoting inclusion.

3) Encouraging Global South leadership in climate, peace and security

Building on insights from the previous roundtable in this operationalizing sustaining peace series,⁵ the leadership shown by Egypt, Kenya, Niger, as well as several Caribbean and Pacific states on the issue of broadening the climate and security agenda was recognized. For example, the “Climate Responses to Sustaining Peace” initiative moved the narrative beyond discussions on whether climate security is securitizing climate change, to focus instead on how integrating climate responses, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts can contribute to sustaining peace. Engaging local communities can contribute to demystify the interlinkages between climate change, peace and security by tapping into, and learning from, traditional environmental dispute resolution management mechanisms and other forms of local knowledge.

4) Promoting sustainable and inclusive climate financing

Integrating climate responses and sustaining peace create opportunities for stimulating benefits that can emerge when combining, aligning or integrating climate financing and peacebuilding financing. One area that was highlighted in this regard was trans-boundary natural resource-related disputes. The PBF is increasingly investing in efforts to reduce the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on peace and insecurity.⁶ This is not to the result of a

⁴ Cedric de Coning and Hafsa M. Maalim, The Case for an Integrating Sustaining Peace into and Expanded Climate, Peace and Security Concept, IPI Global Observatory, 23 November 2022, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/11/integrating-sustaining-peace-and-climate-peace-and-security/>

⁵ Read the summary of the discussion titled, “At the crossroads of Climate, Gender and Sustaining Peace”, <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/climate-gender-and-sustaining-peace-summary-note.pdf>.

⁶ The PBF has invested \$170 million on 70 projects implemented in 38 countries on climate, peace, and security efforts.

choice to prioritise this stream in the Peacebuilding Fund's portfolio, but due to increasing demand from states where the PBF is present, for the Fund to address climate-related peace and security risks. The PBF can play an important catalytic role in influencing donor behaviour in this area and building on the momentum around climate, peace and security. The example set by the PBF will also be important in galvanising further investment from international financial institutions, private donors and pooled funds.

Recommendations:

- **Member States should take steps in both the Peacebuilding Commission and in the Security Council to further integrate the UN system's work in the areas of climate responses and sustaining peace.** The Peacebuilding Commission has a comparative advantage and key role in advancing the discourse on climate, peace and development nexus, by bringing together local, national and global stakeholders. The Peacebuilding Commission could consider informal, expert-level dialogues initiated at the request of Member States, with participation of local peacebuilding and climate experts. The Group of Friends on Climate and Security could also provide a useful platform for such dialogues. Integrating climate responses and peacebuilding is not meant to add extra tasks, but rather to recognise the increasingly complex environment in which the UN system is operating.
- **The Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund should pay more attention to transboundary natural-resources disputes and encourage and invest in cross-border cooperation and collaboration.** The cross-border nature of many of the challenges posed by climate change calls for increased cooperation between states and the multilateral institutions that have specialised expertise in these areas. For instance, identifying cross-border cooperation on scarce natural resources as a mechanism to reduce conflict has the potential to open new areas for cooperation between states, multilateral organisations and financial institutions. Cross-border cooperation on issues such as water management has successfully formed part of regional cooperation frameworks and treaties.
- **The Peacebuilding Commission can play a leading role in facilitating dialogue and exploration on the possible benefits of integrating climate and peacebuilding financing.** The Peacebuilding Fund's climate, peace and security programming in conflict affected countries such as Yemen and Somalia have the potential to catalyse finance to address climate-related peace and security risks from multilateral donors, international financial institutions and bilateral donors. Most of the countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda are severely affected by climate change which makes integrating financing for climate responses and sustaining peace even more urgent and compelling.