

POLICY BRIEF – CLIMATE SECURITY

A typology and analysis of climate-related security risks in the first round Nationally Determined Contributions

United Nations Development Programme

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INTRODUCTION

This report shares the results of a desk study of the first round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with contributions from the UNFCCC secretariat. It was developed for informational purposes only. The desk study was intended as a rapid exercise to examine how climate-related security risks are captured in the NDCs. While countries are not required to address climate-related security risks in their NDCs, the ways in which they are articulated may provide a "snapshot" of- and a useful proxy for – the ways in which countries currently understand and address such risks. However, no assumptions were otherwise made with regard to any formal policy position on these issues. Despite the ad hoc methodology, the results of the scan are insightful from a policy perspective, and could inform the work of the Climate Security Mechanism,¹ which was established in 2018 by UNDP, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme to strengthen United Nations' capacity to address climate-related security risks.

How countries have addressed climate-related security risks in their NDCs can also inform the integration or mainstreaming of climate security dimensions into policy, planning, strategy and programming on both climate change and peacebuilding. Several points are noted in this regard:

- Conflict and insecurity are an obstacle to climate action countries grappling with violent/armed conflict face reduced institutional capacity and resources to elaborate and implement climate policy, including the strategic vision articulated in a country's NDC. Conflict can also lead to physical destruction of renewable energy facilities, related infrastructure and productive capacities, and thus impair green growth and resilient recovery.
- 2. Progress towards peace alone is not necessarily conducive to climate action post-conflict economic recovery can put greater pressure on natural resources, alter migration and transhumance patterns (the seasonal movement of livestock), and increase environmental degradation, including deforestation/destruction of carbon sinks, which, in turn, can increase greenhouse gas emissions and negatively impact on coping strategies and resilience. More consideration is needed of the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in post-conflict scenarios.
- 3. Climate-proofing of post-conflict stabilization and peacebuilding efforts is needed - there is a risk that climate-impacts on peace and security are only considered as part of a formal climate change strategy and are not mainstreamed into peacebuilding and post-conflict stabilization efforts. The NDCs themselves and the consideration of climate hazards, exposure and vulnerability as they impact on conflict and insecurity in a systematic conflict analysis can help inform prevention efforts. Choosing renewable energy sources (instead of fossil fuels) and clean technologies in reconstruction efforts strengthens resilience and avoids costlier efforts to retrofit renewable and clean technology solutions at a later stage.

¹The Climate Security Mechanism was established in 2018 to strengthen the UN's capacity address climate related security risks, through a conceptual approach and toolbox for integrated climate-related security risk assessments, the design of early warning, risk prevention and management strategies, and fostering the evidence base. Its work supported by Sweden, Norway, Germany and the UK. For more information on the Climate Security Mechanism, please see <u>here</u>.

- 4. The co-benefits of adaptation for sustaining peace still need to be better understood, but more attention is also needed to the interlinkages between energy security, mitigation and peace much more attention has been devoted to the examination of the co-benefits of adaptation for peacebuilding than mitigation. Both are important. Access to energy, in particular renewable energy solutions, is often overlooked and presents opportunities not only for mitigation-as-adaptation (or the co-benefits of mitigation for adaptation and resilience) but also to reduce competition for natural-capital dependent livelihoods and coping strategies, and relieve pressure on basic services and overburdened infrastructure, including in areas receiving internally displaced persons and refugees.
- 5. Transboundary climate-related security risks need to be better accounted for where relevant – adequate consideration needs to be given to shared risks related to transboundary resources, the spillover effects of climate-related security risks for neighbouring countries and the co-benefits of transboundary adaptation. Examination of direct, indirect and systemic risks and inter-scalar externalities can help identify opportunities for sub-regional/regional cooperation.

The structure of the report is as follows: Section I introduces key concepts relevant to this study; Section II describes the approach employed and introduces the typology developed on the themes observed in the NDCs; Section III presents an overview of the data points compiled on climate-related security risks from the NDCs, according to the typology; and Section IV provides an overall summary of the main findings.

I. CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS

While climate change does not directly or inherently cause violent conflict, its interaction with other social, political and economic factors can exacerbate drivers of conflict and fragility and have negative impacts on peace, stability and security. The United Nations Secretary-General recognized climate change as a "threat multiplier" in his 2009 report, Climate change and its possible security implications (A/64/350). The report identified five mechanisms through which climate change can affect security: (i) vulnerability: threats to food security and human health and increase exposure to extreme events; (ii) development: slowing down or reversal

Box I: The Paris Agreement and National Determined Contributions

The Paris Agreement requires Parties to submit NDCs², documents that formally communicate their emission reduction targets and climate policies to contribute to keeping global warming to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, pursue efforts to limit such warming to 1.5 °C and adapt to climate change. Parties submitted their intended NDCs before the adoption of the Paris Agreement; most then resubmitted their intended NDC as their first NDC when they ratified the Paris Agreement.³

NDCs are updated every five years. The second or updated NDC is due in 2020, although some delays are anticipated owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. A global stocktake⁴ process considers each Party's progress and makes recommendations for the next round of NDCs. The first global stocktake⁴ will take place in 2023. A majority of the first NDCs submitted include an overview of the climate-related risks to socioeconomic development, and a number of countries also provide information on climate-related risks to peace, stability and security in their national contexts.

of development gains, exacerbating vulnerability and undermining State capacity to maintain stability; (iii) coping and security: increased migration, competition over natural resources and other coping strategies, thus increasing the risk of domestic conflict, with international repercussions; (iv) statelessness: loss of rights, security, sovereignty and/or statehood due to the permanent inundation of territories; and (v) international conflict owing to its impacts on shared or undemarcated international resources.⁵

⁴ More information on the UNFCCC global stocktake is available <u>here</u>.

²See the <u>UNFCCC website</u> for more information about the NDCs.

³ Note: 37 of the 41 documents analyzed in this report are officially NDCs, and the remaining four are "intended" NDCs. All NDCs submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat are available in the NDC interim registry <u>here</u>, while all <u>"intended" NDCs are available in the INDC portal</u> <u>here</u>. Note: all documents available in the NDC interim registry have the formal status of NDCs, even if the document itself bears the title "intended" NDC. This difference is due to the fact that the same document was originally submitted as an "intended" NDC, and later automatically converted into an NDC when the Party ratified the Paris Agreement. The dates of submission identified in this document reflect the date on which they were uploaded into the NDC interim registry or the INDC portal.

⁵ United Nations. Secretary-General (2009). Climate change and its possible security implications: report of the Secretary-General.

Box II: Why address climate-related security risks in NDCs and national climate change policies, planning and programming?

- The impact of climate change on conflict, stability and security risks is already evident in many countries and highlights the urgent need to reach net-zero emissions as soon as possible, to raise and accelerate climate ambition, and to enhance NDC commitments and investments in conflict-sensitive mitigation, adaptation and resilience.
- Conflict and other security risks can exacerbate the vulnerability of communities to climate change and undermine the achievement of NDC goals and targets, and thus need to be factored into vulnerability and risk assessments.
- A holistic approach to addressing conflict and security risks of climate change, in addition to socio-economic and disaster risks, can help increase resilience, reduce fragility, and avoid maladaptation. This is particularly salient in areas with a history of conflict and insecurity. It is important to embed approaches to inclusive decisionmaking, conflict resolution and social cohesion to ensure conflict-sensitive adaptation and mitigation.
- Climate change policy and programming is recognized to generate co-benefits for peace, stability and security. Climate-proofing of peacebuilding, stabilization and reconstruction efforts can avoid lock-in into unsustainable high-carbon development pathways while peace-positive adaptation and mitigation can help reduce conflict risk and recurrence, as well as insecurity. Mainstreaming in both directions is necessary and a dual approach to climate action and sustaining peace can be transformative.
- From the desk review of the NDCs, it is not apparent why some do not consider security aspects at all, particularly in the case of conflict-affected and fragile states. There could be a risk that such factors are not considered within the ambit of relevant planning processes. In this regard, policymakers might: draw on any existing conflict analyses (to avoid policy and programming inadvertently affecting inter-communal or existing conflict dynamics), engage peace and security expertise/actors, ensure the participation by relevant stakeholder groups; consider the addition of other relevant non-GHG emission targets, focus on strengthening coping capacity – as affected by conflict and security; and targeting climate and fragility 'hotspots'.

The United Nations Security Council, which has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, first discussed climate change in an open debate in 2007. Four other such debates have followed, along with statements by the President of the Council and "Arria-formula" meetings on climate change. The Security Council has also acknowledged climate change impacts in various resolutions and mandates in recent years. These include resolution 2349 (2017) on West Africa and the Sahel, which recognizes that climate change and ecological change affect stability in the region and that there is a "need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations relating to these factors". ⁶ For the purpose of this exercise, "climate-related security risks" are thus understood as the adverse impacts of climate change on human security⁷– the 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' – but also how such impacts relate to the security of the State and the maintenance of international peace and security under the United Nations Charter.⁸ The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stresses that "human security will be progressively threatened as the climate changes (robust evidence, high agreement)", but also emphasizes that "some of the factors that increase the risk of violent conflict within States are sensitive to climate change (medium evidence, medium agreement)".⁹Beyond the direct risks of climate impacts, the Fifth Assessment Report also stresses that "maladaptation or greenhouse gas mitigation efforts at odds with local priorities and property rights may increase the risk of conflict in populations, particularly where institutions' governing access to property are weak, or favor one group over another".¹⁰

⁹ Adger, W.N. et al. (2014).

⁶ United Nations Security Council (2017). <u>S/RES/2349 (2017).</u>

⁷ Adger, W.N. et al. (2014). <u>Human security. In: Climate Change 2014</u>: <u>Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.</u> Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 755-791.

⁸ United Nations (1945). <u>Charter of the United Nations and International Court of Justice.</u>

¹⁰ Noble, I.R. et al. (2014). Adaptation needs and options. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects.

II. APPROACH

With a view to further understanding how climate-related security risks were tackled in the first round of NDCs,¹¹ this quick scan provides a summary and analysis of direct references to conflict, peace, security, stability, war, etc., as proxy indicators in 40 NDCs.¹² To avoid ambiguity and facilitate a more nuanced analysis, general references to food security, livelihood security, energy security and water security, which are too numerous to assess, were excluded from this scan. Observed references to "conflict" thus refer to the physical sense of the term (i.e. violent and/or armed conflict) rather than the abstract sense (e.g. conflicting institutional priorities).¹³ All 186 first NDCs were reviewed for this scan. From the relevant data points, purposive sampling was used to narrow down the analysis to a subset of 40 NDCs examined in this report. The focus of the exercise was to investigate and document how climate-related security risks are addressed in NDCs, rather than to draw conclusions relevant to all NDCs. Countries that referred to climate-related security risks are heterogeneous in terms of their national and development contexts and include low- and middle-income countries, Small Island Developing States and countries affected by conflict and fragility. Mention of climate-related security risks occurs in NDCs from different geographic regions, including the Arab States region, Asia and the Pacific, Latin American and the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa.

To make the information more accessible, the data aggregated through the two scan processes has been organized into a typology of six overarching climate and security risk-related themes. The themes and explanation of their scope are outlined, as follows:

- Climate change as a security/national security issue different connections are made, and aspects of security are referenced in relation to climate change. Climate action is recognized as a national security issue, or as important to ensuring national security. Climate hazards and extreme weather events are regarded as threats to security, and some impacts, in particular sea-level rise, as existential threats. Broader definitions of security are also noted, including the need to preserve human security or cultural security in highly climate-affected contexts.
- 2. Climate change exacerbating extant conflict dynamics and security risks climate change is observed to impact on conflict and security risks in different ways. It affects conflicts through certain pathways including acute ecological scarcities, livelihoods and migration, as well as water and other natural resource-based conflicts. Increased violent conflicts between farmers and herders are noted in several instances. An overlap is noted between regions with high levels of poverty, conflict and social or political instability that are also highly exposed to climate hazards. Conflict is, however, not the only security risk identified.

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