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Concept for

An Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security

Climate Change and Environmental Degradation in

EU's External Action on Peace and Security

16 September 2021

1. Introduction

Climate change together with environmental degradation are challenges that are widely recognized as risks to international peace and security. Their direct and indirect effects represent different types of challenges to human and state security undermining global peace. Acting as risk multipliers, often accelerating or deepening ongoing or latent vulnerabilities and instability, climate change and environmental degradation can also be conflict drivers, particularly when coupled with demographic challenges.

Examples of the interplay between climate change, environmental degradation and security are plenty. The Sahel, with immense climate variability and environmental degradation, has been identified as a region where climate change is very likely to undermine security and trigger conflict[1]. For instance, in the Lake Chad Basin, the varying rainfall and fluctuating water levels of the lake, due to climate change, as well as unsustainable water management, have led to serious water scarcity, food insecurity and resource competition fuelling grievances and heightening levels of instability and conflict in the region[2]. In Central Asia, water management challenges have led to the environmental degradation of the Aral Sea causing severe disputes in the region, and climate change has been recognised as a potential exacerbating factor of conflict influencing water flows into, and around, the Aral Sea.[3] Other examples include Iraq and Afghanistan, where the rising temperatures and extreme weather events have put further pressure on natural resources and undermined livelihood security causing communal tension, displacement and increasing support for terrorist groups[4][5].

Besides the direct biophysical impact of climate change, new geopolitical challenges deriving from climate change and the green transition can exert additional pressure on global, regional and local security. An illustrative example of possible geopolitical tensions stemming from the impacts of climate change is the Arctic, where the melting of the ice creates both economic opportunities and but also new challenges, including in relation to the fragile environment and natural resources. When it comes to the green transition, especially countries and regions with high reliance on fossil fuel industries will be affected along with countries with reserves in minerals which are critical to the green transition.

Given the complexity of the links between climate change, environmental degradation and peace and security, and the impact of these links on different EU policy fields, including crisis response and conflict management, development and humanitarian action, it is paramount that the climate and security nexus is addressed through an integrated approach in EU external action. The EU Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises is the appropriate framework in this regard, urging for a coherent and holistic engagement to external conflicts

[1] The Climate Security Expert Network, Climate-Fragility Risk Factsheet: The Sahel, 2021, https://climate-security-expert-network.org/sites/climate-security-expert-network.org/files/documents/csen_climate_fragility_factsheet_the_sahel.pdf.
[2] Adelphi, Climate Change and Security – the Handbook, 2020, https://climate-diplomacy.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Climate%20Security%20Handbook%20-%20adelphi_0.pdf.
[3] UNEP, The future of the Aral Sea lies in transboundary co–operation, 2014, https://www.unep.org/resources/report/future-aral-sea-lies-transboundary-cooperation-wmo-bulletinbased-unep-global.
[4] The Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risks, Iraq - Climate-related security risk assessment, 2018, https://www.eastwest ngo/sites/default/files/iraq-climate-related-security-risk-assessment.pdf.
[5] The Climate Security Expert Network, Climate-Fragility Risk Brief: Afghanistan, 2019, https://climate-security-expert-network.org/sites/climate-security-expert-network.org/files/documents/csen_climate_fragility_risk_brief_afghanistan.pdf.

and crises fostering human security as outlined by the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy.

1.1 Context in the EU agenda

Over the past decade, the climate and security nexus has gained prominence on the EU agenda and has been the focus of a series of policy documents. The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy[6] identifies climate change and environmental degradation as factors potentially exacerbating conflicts. The European Green Deal[7] highlights that the global climate and environmental challenges are a significant threat multiplier and a source of instability, and commits the EU to working with partners to increase climate and environmental resilience. This ultimately aims to prevent climate and environmental challenges from becoming sources of conflict, food insecurity, population displacement and forced migration, and to support a just transition globally.

Furthermore, the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy[8] highlights the clear link between climate change and security and promotes enhanced climate adaptation measures at a global scale as a key tool to prevent climate related conflicts. The Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action[9] stresses that climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation are interlinked and have a far-reaching impact on the resilience of communities and the ecological support systems upon which life depends. Moreover, the EU Biodiversity Strategy[10] underlines the importance of biodiversity for safeguarding EU and global food security and commits the EU to strengthen the links between biodiversity protection and conflict sensitivity.

In its June 2020 Conclusions on Security and Defence, the Council invited the High Representative (HR) to propose, together with the Commission and the European Defence Agency, and in close dialogue with Member States, a set of concrete short-, medium-, and long-term actions addressing the links between defence and climate change as part of the wider climate and security nexus, notably in the areas of civilian and military Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), capability development, multilateralism and partnerships. This led to the November 2020 Climate Change and Defence Roadmap developed by the EEAS together with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and relevant Commission services, which examines these links and outlines actions in this field.

In its January 2021 conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy, the Foreign Affairs Council recalled that climate change and environmental degradation are a threat to international stability and security, reiterating the need to strengthen and mainstream work on the climate and security nexus, notably in support of UN activities. The EU and Member States agreed that their foreign and security policy would systematically consider climate and environmental factors and risks and work with partners to develop conflict prevention measures, such as early warning systems, and support relevant international instruments. The Council also invited the relevant services to take forward the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap. This request was reiterated in the May 2021 Conclusions on Security and Defence, with the Council calling for the comprehensive implementation of the Roadmap and inviting the HR, acting also in his

[6] Published in June 2016.
[7] Presented in December 2019.
[8] Adopted by the European Commission in February 2021
[9] Published in June 2017.
[10] Adopted by the European Commission in May 2020.

capacity of Vice-President of the Commission and Head of the EDA, to provide a first annual update on the implementation process in the first semester of 2022.

2. Aim and scope

The Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security aims to increase the impact of the EU's external action on peace and security by ensuring that the climate and security nexus, including consideration for environmental degradation, is addressed in all relevant EU activities in this field, in full complementarity and coherence with the aforementioned policies.

The Concept complements the external dimension of the European Green Deal, particularly in the field of crisis and conflict management, and addresses actions set out in the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap. It strives to provide relevant EU actors with a framework for operational approaches and principles when addressing the linkages between climate change, environmental degradation and peace and security in the external action context while applying the EU Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises.

Unless otherwise stated, this document uses the term "climate change" in a broad sense covering also environmental degradation.

3. Conceptual approach

Application of the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises in the context of climate change and security is essential, given the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of climate and environment related security risks. This Concept for an Integrated Approach on Climate Change and Security is based on the fundamental principles of the EU Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises. It provides for a policy framework that is:

- Multidimensional, by mainstreaming the climate and security nexus, including consideration for environmental degradation, into EU instruments and policies underpinning its peace and security approach;
- Multiphased, by addressing different stages of the conflict including elements that touch upon prevention, peacebuilding, crisis response and stabilisation;
- Multi-level, by ensuring that the EU approach to the climate and security nexus encompasses the international, regional, national and local community levels, and
- Multilateral, by elaborating on how to bring together Member States, relevant EU institutions and other international and regional partners as well as civil society organisations when addressing the climate and security nexus.

This concept builds on a human rights based approach (HRBA), and is gender and age-responsive ensuring that those two aspects are mainstreamed into climate change and security related initiatives and policies.

4. Towards an EU integrated approach to climate change and security

4.1 Integrating the climate and security nexus in EU instruments and policies

Promoting peace and security is one of the key foreign policy objectives of the EU[11] and prevention is at the core of its peace endeavours as an efficient and cost-effective approach. In this context, addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, which can act as risk multipliers and contribute to the complexity of conflicts, is essential for building and maintaining sustainable peace. As climate change and environmental degradation are global challenges that know no border, the risks stemming from them often cut across boundaries and affects entire regions.

Land degradation and desertification, water scarcity, biodiversity loss and the multiplication of extreme and unusual weather events are evidence of the changing climate and the deterioration of the environment. These phenomena have detrimental impacts on livelihoods increasing the risk of insecurity, in particular in already fragile and vulnerable contexts. This may also provoke or increase migratory movements which in turn, can fuel the risk of community-based violence due to social, political and economic factors. Especially in rural areas where people depend on scarce productive land resources, land degradation is a driver of forced migration. Climate and environmental challenges may also affect the dynamics of ongoing hostilities and can be exploited in a tactical manner by armed groups for example to boost recruitment. Poor governance mechanisms often fail to address the direct and indirect effects of climate change and environmental degradation contributing to resource mismanagement and exacerbating the issues around loss of livelihoods, migration and armed groups.

The possible international impacts of the global green transition should also be considered in the context of the climate and security nexus. Global efforts to combat climate change will have economic implications in countries relying on fossil fuel industries. If these countries and regions do not find climate-neutral alternatives to create economic welfare, the decreased demand for fossil fuels due to green transition efforts elsewhere could lead to adverse socio-economic effects and subsequently provoke or increase migration from these countries or regions. At the same time, many of these countries stand to benefit from the green transition given their vulnerabilities to climate related security risks such as extreme weather events and water scarcity.

On the other hand, the required resources for the green transition, including aluminium, copper, cobalt, lithium and rare earths, may pose new risks of competition for access to them and add pressure on the principal reserve countries. While the growing demand for critical minerals could serve as a booster for economic development to the source countries, their extraction may increase local tensions and grievances, triggering new or fuelling existing conflicts.

Placing conflict prevention at the heart of its peace efforts, the EU seeks to address the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, including the possible adverse effects of the green transition, as early as possible. However, climate and environment related security risks must also be considered as part of EU peacebuilding, crisis response, and stabilisation efforts in situations where conflict has already erupted. In this context, the focus should not only be on factors exacerbating vulnerability but also on factors promoting resilience.

[11] Art. 21 TEU.

At the same time, the EU acknowledges that addressing the impacts of climate change and halting resource degradation may give new impetus to bring communities together for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As first experiences already demonstrate, the sustainable management of environmental issues and natural resources before, during or after conflict, especially through cooperative governance and local dispute settlement mechanisms, can build confidence and support peace and stability.

Therefore, to effectively address the climate and security nexus, the EU should ensure this dimension is both integrated and implemented by the relevant policies and instruments of the EU crisis management approach. The EU has already integrated a climate-sensitive focus in its more recent work on conflict prevention and crisis management, namely through mediation support[12] and cultural heritage in conflicts and crises[13]. Actions are ongoing to reduce the environmental footprint of EU-funded humanitarian operations and to evaluate the environmental footprint of CSDP missions and operations. Additionally, the EU is deploying environmental advisors to civilian CSDP missions where appropriate.

Progress has also been made in regards to other instruments such as the analytical tools including the EU conflict Early Warning System, Horizon Scanning, Conflict analysis and Conflict Sensitivity Assessment. For example, the EU recently adapted a methodology for conflict analysis for programming in fragile states and regions incorporating the consideration of climate and environmental factors at an equal level as that of factors related to political, security, socio-economic and rule of law dimensions. In addition, the annually updated Global Conflict Risk Index has been recently revised to include two environment related indicators[14] and the structural risk assessments of the EU Early Warning System have been strengthened with a set of climate change, environment and disasters related questions[15]. Additionally, INFORM, a multi-stakeholder forum for developing shared, quantitative analysis relevant to humanitarian crises and disasters, has developed a suite of quantitative and analytical tools that also include some climate change-related risks and work is on-going to strengthen this dimension.

The following sections outline the way forward in regards to the integration of the climate and security nexus into EU instruments and policies underpinning its peace and security approach.

a. Conflict prevention

While the **EU conflict Early Warning System, Horizon Scanning, Conflict analysis and Conflict Sensitivity Assessment** already include some climate and environment focus, these considerations should be further strengthened. Over the coming 1-2 years, the EEAS in

[12] See Council Conclusions on EU Peace Mediation from 7 December 2020, Concept on EU Peace Mediation from 11 December and EEAS Peace Mediation Guidelines from December 2020.
[13] See Concept on Cultural heritage in conflicts and crises from 18 June 2021 and Council Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises from 21 June 2021.
[14] One on water stress, based on WRI data which uses aqueduct country and river basin rankings and a second, combined climate indicator, based on DIGITAL.CSIC data that include 13 environmental topics (Air pollution, Biodiversity – Ecosystems, Climate change adaptation, Climate change mitigation, Energy, Environment and health, Industry, Land use, Resource efficiency and waste, Soil, Sustainability transitions, Transport, Water and marine environment).
[15] The questions related to climate change and disasters relate to: Conflict risks linked to the capacity to respond to natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes; floods; drought; e.g. cyclones; epidemics) and man-made hazards (e.g. industrial accidents, environmental degradation and pollution), management of the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, and investment in natural resources.

coordination and partnership with the EU Commission services, will pilot *climate-enhanced conflict analyses, conflict sensitivity assessments and early warning/early action recommendations*, with a view of revising its methodologies and partnerships with relevant data platforms in the mid-term. Cognizant of the fact that analytics of climate change and environmental degradation are to a high degree data-intensive and of a multi-disciplinary nature, the EU will progressively enhance its *investment in relevant skills of its staff*, to allow for better mainstreaming of climate and environment data and considerations in its conflict preventative responses. Additionally, the EU will aim to include *more climate and environment sensitivity in its various tools for information and data gathering* through, for example, EEAS intelligence analyses, SatCen including Copernicus services, and the EC's Joint Research Centre research, while seeking to enhance the way these data inform the prevention and overall response efforts. With the awareness of climate change and conflict data and analytics rapidly expanding, the EU is committed to *open exchange and consultation with relevant partners*, think tanks and civil society organisations involved in the collection and analysis of these data.

Furthermore, it will be crucial to translate an improved situational awareness, early warning and analysis into action. The revised Early Warning System already enables monitoring of early actions for a period of 2.5 years. Particular attention will be paid to the *follow-up of climate and environment -relevant early actions*. The EU will also work towards *a more coordinated and systematic multi-disciplinary approach to analytics and conflict preventative response*. The implementation of NDICI-Global Europe programming is subject to a quality review of annual action plans and a mid-term review which present an opportunity to monitor follow-up to climate and conflict relevant recommendations. Furthermore, *synergies between the Early Warning System, the conflict analysis tool, and the civilian CSDP Missions Analysis Capability (MAC)* will be enhanced as set out in the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap to strengthen the links between early warning, analysis and actions with respect to climate and environmental implications for CSDP.

b. Crisis response

As climate change may act as an aggravating factor in some already volatile security situations, it is important to specify how both civilian and military **CSDP missions and operations**, within the logic of their respective mandates, could better respond to climate and environment related security risks. *Mainstreaming climate and environmental aspects into the mission's regular strategic and operational planning process* as appropriate, will be taken forward in line with the Roadmap. Moreover, while CSDP missions and operations operate on the basis of the 'do no harm' principle which ensures that they are not unnecessarily contributing to environmental degradation, actions are ongoing to evaluate and better manage the environmental footprint of the missions and operations. The Strategic Compass can also provide further guidance on the issue of climate change and defence/security in particular with respect to resilience and capability development.

Operational requirements covering the delivery of mandates and the environmental footprint of missions and operations are being developed in a joined-up civ-mil effort. The upcoming *operational guidelines for **civilian CSDP** missions and operations* will aim to ensure a structured and timely inclusion of environmental, including climate related, aspects in the implementation of CSDP missions and operations, as appropriate. In this regard, the operational guidelines will focus on: a) situational awareness and awareness raising; b) environmental footprint management as well as, where mandated; c) support to local counterparts' rule of law related climate and environmental capacity building.

At military-strategic and operational levels, **military CSDP** operations and missions will, implement the revised *EU Concept for Environmental Protection and Energy Optimisation for EU-led Military Operations and Missions*. This requires in particular the necessary expertise as laid out in the aforementioned concept.

Managing the environmental footprint of the missions and operations implies as a first step data gathering and establishing baselines. Work in this area should not impact mission's/operation's effectiveness, but rather serve to produce operational benefits, in particular in relation to the sustainability of the logistics chain and vulnerabilities related to supply convoys boosting the resilience of missions/operations.

Another potential area of CSDP engagement could be *support to the host State's enforcement efforts to fight environmental crime, strengthening compliance with environmental laws and improving security related aspects of environmental governance*. In the framework of crisis management actions, this could be carried out by providing strategic advice and strengthening the host States' operational capacities e.g. through training and planning advice. In line with the Roadmap, *a mini-concept on civilian CSDP and climate change* will develop possible areas for increased engagement and thus provide a conceptual basis for strategic and operational planners when designing or reviewing mission mandates. Additionally, CSDP missions and operations with explicit references to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in their mandate may also focus and promote, within the IHL focus, rules on the protection of the natural environment and seek to limit the damage caused to it by armed conflict.

The deployment of environmental advisors as a standard position in civilian CSDP missions and operations where appropriate, as set out in the Roadmap, will be instrumental in the implementation of EU policy on environment and climate change in crisis response.

c. Conflict resolution, stabilisation and security strategies

The Council Conclusions on EU **Peace Mediation**, Concept on EU Peace Mediation and EEAS Peace Mediation Guidelines embrace the ambition to equip mediators with the technical expertise to respond and engage on climate and environmental issues and the role of natural resources in peace mediation, including as possible entry points to initiate cooperation and to resolve conflicts. Expertise to bring issues related to climate change and environmental degradation into peace negotiations and consequent agreements needs to be curated, cultivated and acted upon – failure to do so will threaten the sustainability of agreements. It is thus imperative to operationalise climate change and environmental considerations of EU Peace mediation approaches.

Over the coming years, the EEAS has committed to build the required capacity on environmental issues with EU Peace Mediation actors such as EU Special Representatives, EU Heads of Delegations and the EU Mediation Pool. Efforts will also be undertaken to *enhance support to environmental peace-making in priority countries*. In the mid-term, *the capacity of inside mediator networks that can address environmental issues will be strengthened*. Beside these elements, *specialised training modules should be shared together with and among Member States*. Building on the existing exchange with Member States and regional organisations on mediation and conflict prevention, *a continued dialogue on the climate and environment focus* is encouraged. *Specific EU expert pools on water conflict and land degradation* could serve as a solicited resource for EU Peace mediation actors or requesting regional organisations, such as the African Union.

The EU will consider in its support to **Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)** processes the challenges related to the access and exploitation of natural resources in conflicts, as well as other climate or environment related security risks. Resource competition, including over green transition minerals, and environmental fragility may provide socio-economic and security-related incentives for conflict, in turn discouraging armed forces and groups' participation in peace processes. Natural resources may be exploited by armed forces or groups and enable the (re)recruitment of combatants, further adding to the challenges of sustainable reintegration. At the same time, in the face of climate change, livelihood opportunities that are central to reintegration processes could be severely impacted. Yet, aside from being a risk for reintegration processes, climate change could also be seen as an opportunity for resilience building, for example through projects with a focus on supporting climate resilient livelihoods in areas heavily reliant on agricultural activities. The EU will take into account these *climate risks and opportunities in its upcoming conceptual developments and involvement in the field of DDR*.

The EU will also ensure that climate and environment related security risks are considered in **disaster risk management policies** given the crucial role of the civil protection and other relevant security actors in managing and implementing disaster risk reduction and preparedness frameworks, including against environmental risk. As climate change related extreme weather events are likely to increase in future, so are the number and scale of disasters. This highlights the need for the EU to address *the linkage between civil protection and climate risks*. Additionally, the EU will take into account *the interlinkages between **Security Sector Reform (SSR)** and climate and environment related security risks*, while also considering conflict sensitivity. In some relevant contexts, countries can be assisted through SSR processes to consolidate good governance and build resilience against these risks.

The Council Conclusions on EU approach in **Cultural Heritage in Conflicts and Crises** and the Concept on EU approach to Cultural Heritage in Conflicts and Crises also highlight the need to *support measures which aim to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change on natural and cultural heritage*. At the same time, the EU acknowledges that communal efforts towards the preservation of cultural and natural heritage from climate change and environmental degradation may also act as a proactive element of building and securing peace. Building on the extensive climate and environmental experience of the EU, it is thus necessary to factor in the interlinkages between the effects of climate change and natural and cultural heritage in the EU's external engagement. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts on Strengthening Cultural Heritage Resilience for Climate Change[16], provides for an opportunity for such reflection including through the exchange of good practices.

The EU will also reflect on *operational actions under **Article 28*** of the Treaty of the European Union which could have a specific CFSP focus on the linkage between climate change and security.

[16] Established following to a discussion in the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Council of the EU in October 2020.

d. External action on development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and humanitarian aid

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe), as the unified financing instrument aimed to address EU's foreign policy priorities, plays a key role in addressing the climate and security nexus. It includes a *30 % spending target for climate*, focusing on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. All actions taken under the new instrument should be coherent with the objective to increase the ability to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change and foster climate resilience. NDICI-Global Europe will also contribute to deliver on the overall Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 *biodiversity spending target*[17]. These measures as such represent an opportunity for peace and security as they may contribute to trust building and cooperation between communities and/or conflicting groups and can address some of the different structures and dynamics that play a role in mediating the link between climate change, environmental degradation and insecurity. Conflict sensitive approaches, especially in fragile and vulnerable contexts, are an important element of NDICI-Global Europe programming, and explicitly referred to actions concerning natural resources.

Environment and climate change action are a priority under the NDICI-Global Europe *geographic pillar*. Additionally, this pillar also allows for funding actions contributing to strengthening good governance and disaster risk reduction and preparedness which contribute positively to the climate and security nexus by building resilience. Climate change and environment are also considered under the *thematic pillar* of NDICI-Global Europe, a) as part of the Global Challenges thematic programme, allowing for actions regarding the consequences of climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, and are b) a cross-cutting issue in the Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention thematic programme and a priority under its intervention area related to addressing global, trans-regional and emerging threats. In addition, the *Rapid Response pillar* provides also for an opportunity to fund actions related to climate change and security.

The key performance indicators developed to *monitor progress under NDICI-Global Europe* include several climate related elements i.e. number of countries and cities with climate change and/or disaster risk reduction strategies developed or under implementation with EU support. Impact will be further monitored through specific indicators to be included in relevant programming documents.

The climate and security nexus also has a strong role in EU **humanitarian aid**. *Mainstreaming of disaster preparedness in all humanitarian actions* is a priority of the recently endorsed Disaster Preparedness approach[18] due to the growing impact of climate change and environmental degradation on humanitarian needs. A commitment to increased support for anticipatory action, preparedness and flexibility to tackle effects of climate change on humanitarian crises as well as climate-related disasters feature prominently in the Disaster Preparedness approach and lately in the Communication on Humanitarian Aid. Additionally, *conflict and climate sensitivity is ensured in humanitarian aid funding and will be monitored* across project proposals through the Resilience Marker. Actions in support of conflict and climate/environment sensitivity can include generating foresight and evidence of

[17] The annual biodiversity spending target in the MFF from 2024 is 7.5%, and 10% from 2026.
[18] See DG ECHO Guidance Note on Disaster Preparedness, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/default/files/dg_echo_guidance_note_-_disaster_preparedness.pdf.

environmental degradation in fragile and conflict areas and its impact on humanitarian needs and testing anticipatory action approaches in conflict settings, while ensuring climate sensitivity.

The Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action also commits the European Commission to support humanitarian partners' efforts to reduce their environmental footprint. To this end, the European Commission will prepare *guidelines and training for the EU's humanitarian partners on greening humanitarian aid*. Efforts will also continue towards the *'greening' of the Commission's humanitarian field network (ECHOField) and its headquarters*, first by setting a baseline of the environmental footprint, and then developing reduction targets.

4.2 Applying a human rights based approach to climate change and security

The EU must ensure a principled, human rights based approach (HRBA) to climate change and security to ensure that principles of equal participation, non-discrimination, accountability, empowerment and legality are upheld and benefit all people equally. This is particularly important with the understanding that structural inequality, poverty and social norms can considerably increase the vulnerability of different groups of people to climate change and environmental degradation. In this context, gender is an important factor. Additionally, the EU will also pay special attention to the risks of climate change to children and youth, and to the risks brought to already vulnerable people, such as refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).

Gender norms and structures play a critical role in determining how women and men, girls and boys of different backgrounds are impacted by, and respond to, climate and environment related security risks. Gender-related roles and expectations, and unequal access to resources can often deepen pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and make women and girls disproportionately vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation[19]. It is thus important to ensure that the EU approach towards *the climate and security nexus systematically includes gender analysis and integrates a gender perspective*, not only to enhance the understanding of particular vulnerabilities, but also to identify *opportunities for leadership and inclusion of women in decision-making processes*. The Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda provides for opportunities to improve action on climate and environment related security risks and enhance women's participation in these processes strengthening their contributions to peace.

Children and youth are often the most vulnerable to extreme weather events. For example, they adjust more slowly than adults to changes in environmental heat being more susceptible to heat-related health risks. Beyond the immediate risks, extreme weather events, particularly floods, can contribute to the increased spread of diarrhoea and other disease outbreaks, which ca be particularly difficult for children, and also impact children's access to education. In contexts where exploitation of natural resources fuels conflicts and armed groups, children are more likely to be forcibly recruited. Bearing in mind that countries and regions most affected by climate change and its adverse security effects have a very young population, the EU will ensure *the inclusion of the child and youth dimension in its approach to climate change and security*. Furthermore, young people have shown particular interest in climate change and

[19] See also December 2018 Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf.

environmental protection related action and could also play an active role in activities addressing climate change and security.

4.3 Supporting context-specific approaches and local ownership

The impacts of climate change on peace and security depend on context-specific and geographic vulnerabilities, which are often of transboundary nature. Livelihood patterns such as transhumance practices, migration, armed group tactics, and formal and informal governance structures are key elements of *an analysis on the context-specific pathways*. The assessment of these factors could support the EU in coordination across policy areas and in the identification of more holistic policy responses to climate and environment related security risks. This approach could also help identify the most vulnerable populations and support the EU in the selection of the best fit approaches in a context-specific manner.

As the linkages between climate change, natural resources and conflict have different characteristics in each context, local knowledge systems will play a central role in identifying the adequate solutions. Furthermore, traditional knowledge of local communities should be explored and supported as a resource for climate strategies building resilience. *Community engagement and community ownership will be central* in any EU engagement as they are a key determinant in making any activity addressing climate and environment related security risks sustainable.

4.4 Ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach at EU level

The interplay between climate change and security signifies that failure to take into account environmental and climate change related factors can significantly hamper the effectiveness of EU conflict prevention, crisis response and conflict management, development and humanitarian action. On the other hand, maladaptation – when adaptation initiatives result in unintended negative effects – may even further exacerbate existing tensions and inequalities between different parts of society. This highlights the need for more climate sensitivity in EU peace and security work but also the importance of more conflict sensitivity in climate change risk mitigation and adaptation.

To ensure a coherent and integrated approach to climate change and security between the different EU policy fields, systematic exchange, knowledge sharing and cooperation on climate action, conflict prevention, crisis response and peacebuilding is crucial. This implies the EU *seeking cross-cutting approaches and synergies between the different instruments and policies* relevant for this topic. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is relevant in this context and may provide entry-points for such cross-cutting approaches. The EU will also seek to draw experiences of similar processes from its partners, including the UN and its Climate Security Mechanism.

In addition, the EU will foster *collaboration with Member States*, building on their expertise and engagements on the climate and security nexus. This could include cooperation through the "Team Europe" approach, especially through its commitment to human development, which provides for an opportunity to enhance communities' reliance towards climate change and environment related security risks.

4.5 Supporting multilateralism and partnerships

The Paris Agreement is the main multilateral framework to mitigate the impact of climate change. The Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UNECE Water Convention and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements provide the framework to address a range of global environmental challenges. *Further international cooperation, both with multilateral organisations and partner countries*, is nevertheless key to manage climate and environment related security risks, including the geopolitical dimension of the green transition, in a strategic manner. The UN, AU, NATO and OSCE are key partners for the EU in the field of climate change, environment and security/defence and while cooperation is already ongoing, new areas of collaboration are being explored, including through the actions set out in the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap. *Closer and more systematic cooperation and coordination, especially on a regional and transboundary basis*, including through possible monitoring mechanisms, will increase complementarity and decrease overlaps.

Climate and environment related risks as well as their implications for the EU's operational engagement and capability development will be taken into account in the formulation of the *next set of joint EU-UN priorities on crisis management and peace operations 2022-2024* with possibilities of establishing a structured dialogue and providing a platform for building more joined-up climate risk assessment in the mission settings. Additionally, the EU will *support the Member States on the UN Security Council to engage on climate change and security*, notably in putting forward and passing a UN Security Council resolution recognising this link. Furthermore, the security and defence implications of climate change have been identified as one of the cross-cutting issues within the scope of the common set of proposals that are emerging as key drivers of relevance to both the EU and NATO.

In addition to the multilateral partners, *the transatlantic dimension* may provide new opportunities for collaboration in the field of climate change and security. *National Determined Contributions (NDCs)* coming out from the Paris Agreement could also offer opportunities to enhance cooperation on the climate and security nexus. In regards to partnerships with developing countries, NDCs but also the *National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Disaster Risk Reduction Plans under the Sendai Framework* could provide additional entry points for tackling the climate-security nexus. This dimension could be a basis for the EU to support measures meant to increase resilience and mitigate climate risks with a high level of ownership from partner countries. The EU has substantive expertise in implementing adaptation policies and should make use of the knowledge stemming from programmes such as Horizon Europe and Digital Europe in this context. Additionally, partnerships with developing countries should also consider the possible negative impacts of the green transition and offer assistance on how to execute the green transition in a just manner.

Partnerships will not be limited to international organizations and third countries. *Cooperation with research bodies and think tanks as well as with different local and civil society actors* will be strengthened in order to deepen the understanding of the climate and security nexus and to identify the best approaches. *Engaging more with the private sector*, especially at a local level, will also be considered.

4.6 Enhancing expertise and monitoring progress on climate change and security

Addressing climate and environmental security risks effectively must build on a profound understanding of the contextual factors and their interlinkages. *Further knowledge gathering and sharing* is thus needed, within the EU but also in collaboration with partners as outlined

above, through already existing resources and possible new knowledge enhancing projects. Knowledge gathering in the EU context should not be limited to actors responsible for the different elements of the crisis management toolbox. EU delegations and EU Special Representatives will be included in this work more systematically to encourage more reporting on the climate and security nexus in their respective countries and regions.

Furthermore, *climate change, conflict prevention and security related trainings* are crucial in enhancing awareness and knowledge of the topic among EU actors and partners engaged in peace and security work. On top of actions elaborated in the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap to this end, the EEAS will look into developing further internal training opportunities and seek fruitful collaborations with partners, civil society actors to this end.

Finally, the EEAS will *monitor on a regular basis the results of actions and initiatives* undertaken on climate change and security, as outlined in this Concept, with a view to track progress but also to draw lessons and identify good practices. To ensure complementarity, this process will be merged, in a gradual manner, within the annual reporting on the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap in follow-up to the May 2021 Conclusions on Security and Defence.

Annex: Definitions

The paper is based on the following definitions and general considerations:

a) The term *climate* refers to the usual condition of the temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, rainfall pattern, and other meteorological elements in an area of the earth's surface for a long time, while *weather* reflects short-term conditions of the atmosphere.

b) *Climate change* refers to a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

c) *Environment* refers to the surroundings in which an organisation operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans and their interrelations.

d) *Environmental degradation* refers to a process through which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and the general health of the environment.

e) *Biological diversity (biodiversity)* refers to the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

f) *Ecosystem* refers to a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

g) *Climate resilience* refers to the capacity of human and natural systems to learn, adapt and transform in response to risks that are induced or exacerbated by climate change.

h) *Adaptation* refers to the action taken to increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience.

i) *Mitigation* refers to actions taken that reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.