



NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2018 National Model United Nations Galápagos Conference (NMUN•Galápagos)! My name is Harald Eisenhauer and I am pleased to serve as the Director of the Security Council. I joined the NMUN Secretariat in 2008. After completing my M.A. in political science at LMU Munich in 2012, I worked for several years as a project manager for a Potsdam-based non-governmental organization, focusing on German-African cooperation. In 2015, I moved to Quito, Ecuador, where I currently work as a consultant in political communication and marketing.

The topics under discussion for the Security Council are:

1. The Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security
2. Environmental Migration as a Concern for Peace and Security

The Security Council is the main United Nations body tasked with ensuring international peace and security. The Council may issue both binding and nonbinding resolutions, authorize humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, request reports from the Secretary-General, release presidential statements, and enact economic sanctions.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. I encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and to use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a [Position Paper](#) by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 December 2017 in accordance with the guidelines in the [NMUN Position Paper Guide](#).

On the [NMUN website](#), you will find two resources that are essential to your preparation for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions.

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#): This document explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism and the prohibition on prewritten working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#): This document includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure in committee.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. I want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact info@nmun.org.

I wish you all the best in your preparations, and I look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Harald Eisenhauer, Director

Table of Contents

Committee Overview	3
Introduction	3
Governance, Structure, and Membership	3
Mandate, Functions, and Powers	5
Recent Sessions and Current Priorities	6
Conclusion	7
Annotated Bibliography	7
Bibliography	8
I. The Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security	12
Introduction	12
International and Regional Framework	12
Role of the International System	14
Adverse Consequences of Climate Change for International Peace and Security	16
Potential Security Council Actions	18
Conclusion	19
Further Research	19
Annotated Bibliography	19
Bibliography	20
II. Environmental Migration as a Concern for Peace and Security	24
Introduction	24
International and Regional Framework	24
Role of the International System	26
Implications of Environmental Migration for Peace and Security	28
Case Study: Climate Change as a Root Cause for the Syrian Refugee Crisis	30
Potential Security Council Actions	31
Conclusion	32
Further Research	32
Annotated Bibliography	32
Bibliography	33

Committee Overview

Introduction

After the devastating effects of two world wars, the international community decided to establish the United Nations (UN) as an intergovernmental organization with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, creating the conditions conducive to economic and social development, while advancing universal respect for human rights.¹ The Security Council was established as one of the UN's six principal organs and was given the primary responsibility to preserve international peace and security.²

The **United Nations Security Council** is one of the six primary organs of the United Nations, mandated by the *Charter of the United Nations* to maintain international peace and security. The Council submits an annual report to the General Assembly.

The Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946 at Church House in London.³ After its first meeting, the Council relocated to its permanent residence at the UN Headquarters in New York City.⁴ At that time, five permanent members and six non-permanent members comprised the membership of the Council.⁵ However, over subsequent years, discussions regarding the structure of the Council began to take place.⁶ In 1965, the number of non-permanent members increased to ten, and although membership has not changed since, discussions regarding a change in configuration take place frequently.⁷

During the Cold War, disagreements between the United States of America and the former Soviet Union blocked the Council from being an effective institution to resolve even the simplest of issues.⁸ However, progress has taken place over the last two decades, especially in the field of peacekeeping missions, which have improved to cover a wider range of issues, including facilitating a political process, protecting human rights, and assisting with disarmament.⁹ At the same time, traditional challenges to international peace and security have shifted, forcing the Council to adapt to new scenarios, such as the challenge of addressing multiple humanitarian crises simultaneously and in different regions of the world.¹⁰ Since 2000, terrorism, extremism, and other thematic issues, rather than country-specific issues, have become priorities of the Council, as demonstrated by the adoption of a range of resolutions and the establishment of several subsidiary bodies on cross-cutting issues.¹¹

Governance, Structure, and Membership

The Security Council is the only UN entity that has the power to adopt resolutions that are binding on Member States.¹² In accordance with Article 25 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), Member States are obliged to accept and carry out the Council's recommendations and decisions.¹³ The Security Council also has a variety of tools to address issues on its agenda.¹⁴ For example, the President of the Security Council may issue press statements or presidential statements to communicate the position of the Council.¹⁵ Although these other tools are not legally binding, they nonetheless bring attention to important issues and compel the members of the Security Council to make recommendations and resolve conflicts.¹⁶

¹ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Preamble.

² UN Security Council, *What is the Security Council?*, 2017.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Hanhimäki, *The United Nations: A Very Short Introduction*, 2008, p. 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Bourantonis, *The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform*, 2005, p. 10.

⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, *United Nations Security Council*, 2014.

⁹ UN Security Council, *Structure*, 2017.

¹⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, *CFR Backgrounders: The UN Security Council*, 2015; Encyclopaedia Britannica, *United Nations Security Council*, 2014.

¹¹ Security Council Report, *September 2014 Monthly Forecast: Counter-Terrorism*, 2014.

¹² UN Security Council, *What is the Security Council?*, 2017.

¹³ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 25.

¹⁴ UN Security Council, *Functions and Powers*, 2017.

¹⁵ NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, *Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the United Nations Security Council: Report of the NGOWG Monthly Action Points, 2009-2010*, 2010, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Membership

The Security Council is comprised of five permanent members and ten non-permanent members.¹⁷ The five permanent members of the Security Council are: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.¹⁸ Every year, the General Assembly elects five of the ten non-permanent members for a two-year term.¹⁹ Elections for non-permanent seats on the Council can be competitive, with countries expressing interest years in advance.²⁰ Countries elected to serve on the Security Council are expected to represent the interests of their region; they usually have an influence at the international level and demonstrate leadership in specific areas of interest to their foreign policy.²¹ Security Council elections for non-permanent members are held in June, six months before the term starts.²² This change allows Member States ample time to prepare for their new role.²³

The ten non-permanent members represent countries from five groups: Africa, the Asia-Pacific Group, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Eastern European Group, Western European and Other.²⁴ For the 2017 calendar year, the non-permanent Member States are Bolivia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, and Uruguay.²⁵ Italy and the Netherlands are sharing one of the Western European and Other seats, with the Netherlands assuming membership for the 2018 calendar year.²⁶ This decision was reached after they both failed to achieve a two-thirds majority after five rounds of voting.²⁷ As is customary in Security Council elections, after multiple rounds of voting, compromise was sought in order to fill the seat.²⁸

On 2 June 2017, the General Assembly elected Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru, and Poland as non-permanent members of the Security Council.²⁹ Their two-year terms will commence on 1 January 2018, and they will replace outgoing Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine, and Uruguay.³⁰

Presidency

Each member of the Security Council holds the presidency of the Council for one month, rotating according to alphabetical order.³¹ Security Council meetings can be convened by the President upon the request of any Member State.³² Under Article 35 of the Charter, the President shall call a meeting if a dispute or situation requires the Council's attention.³³ According to Rule 6 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure, all concerns that are brought to the attention of the Secretary-General are drafted in an agenda that is approved by the President of the Security Council.³⁴

Participation

Any Member State of the UN may attend the Council's meetings upon the invitation of the Council.³⁵ Member States are invited if the Security Council is discussing an issue that directly concerns the interests of the Member

¹⁷ UN Security Council, *Current members*, 2017.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ UN DPI, *Ahead of Security Council elections, General Assembly President explains how a country can get a non-permanent seat*, 2016.

²¹ Bourantonis, *The History and Politics of UN Security Council Reform*, 2005, p. 6.

²² UN General Assembly, *Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/RES/68/307)*, 2014, p. 4.

²³ UN DPI, *Ahead of Security Council elections, General Assembly President explains how a country can get a non-permanent seat*, 2016.

²⁴ UN General Assembly, *Rules of procedure*.

²⁵ UN Security Council, *Current members*, 2017.

²⁶ *Italy, Netherlands ask to share Security Council seat*, Al Jazeera, 2016.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ UN DPI, *Ahead of Security Council elections, General Assembly President explains how a country can get a non-permanent seat*, 2016.

²⁹ UN DPI, *Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru, Poland elected to UN Security Council*, 2017.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UN Security Council, *Provisional Rules of Procedure (S/96/Rev.7)*, 2017.

³² UN Security Council, *Repertoire of the practice of the Security Council*, 2017.

³³ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 35.

³⁴ UN Security Council, *Provisional Rules of Procedure (S/96/Rev.7)*, 2017.

³⁵ Ibid.

State.³⁶ Invited Member States do not have the right to vote, but are allowed to submit proposals and draft resolutions.³⁷ Furthermore, those Member States can inform the Council about a current crisis in their region.³⁸ However, such proposals may be put to a vote only at the request of a member of the Council.³⁹

Subsidiary Organs

The Security Council has many subsidiary bodies established under Article 29 of the Charter, including the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), sanctions committees, and ad hoc committees such as the Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on Namibia.⁴⁰ The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an advisory subsidiary body that reports jointly to the General Assembly and the Security Council.⁴¹ Additionally, Security Council Member States participate in various working groups, which discuss the topics of concern of the Security Council.⁴² These working groups consist of some or all of the Security Council Member States and focus on regional and thematic issues, as well as improving the working methods of the Security Council itself.⁴³ The Security Council is also responsible for determining if, when, and where a peacekeeping operation is needed.⁴⁴ A peacekeeping operation is created through an adopted Security Council resolution, and the Security Council must monitor the operation through reports issued by the Secretary-General, as well as specific Security Council meetings.⁴⁵

Voting

Every Member State of the Security Council has one vote.⁴⁶ Votes on all matters require a majority of nine Member States.⁴⁷ However, if one of the five permanent members of the Security Council votes “no” on a matter of substance, such as a draft resolution, the draft resolution does not pass.⁴⁸ Despite the existence of this veto power, the Council has adopted many resolutions by consensus since the end of the Cold War and has been divided only on a very limited number of issues, a prominent example being the case of Syria.⁴⁹

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The mandate of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security, as specified in the *Charter of the United Nations*.⁵⁰ Chapters VI and VII of the Charter specifically concern the Security Council and the range of actions that can be taken when settling disputes.⁵¹ Chapter VI aims to achieve resolution of disputes by peaceful means, whereas Chapter VII explores further actions that can be taken.⁵² Any Member State is able to report a dispute to the Security Council; the role of the Council is to determine the severity of the dispute brought before the body and the impact of the dispute internationally.⁵³ The Security Council is responsible for making recommendations to broker peace that take into consideration the previously attempted measures by the parties involved.⁵⁴ Under Chapter VII, the Security Council has the authority to implement provisional measures aimed to deescalate the situation.⁵⁵ If the provisional measures are ignored or are unsuccessful, the Security Council may

³⁶ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 31.

³⁷ UN Security Council, *Provisional Rules of Procedure (S/96/Rev.7)*, 2017.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ UN Security Council, *Structure*, 2017.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² UN Security Council, *Repertoire of the practice of the Security Council*, 2017.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping, *Role of the Security Council*, 2016.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Hanhimäki, *The United Nations: A Very Short Introduction*, 2008, p. 52.

⁴⁹ Security Council Report, *In Hindsight: Consensus in the Security Council*, 2014; Security Council Report, *In Hindsight: The Veto*, 2013.

⁵⁰ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Art. 34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Art. 36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Art. 40.

decide to call upon military forces to act on behalf of the UN.⁵⁶ Non-military actions that can be implemented include blockades or economic interruptions. In aggregate, the Charter provides the Security Council with the following set of powers to fulfill its mandate.

- **Sanctions:** Pursuant to Article 41 of the Charter, the Council can call its members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or end violence.⁵⁷ These include economic sanctions, financial penalties and restrictions, travel bans, severance of diplomatic relations, and blockades, among others.⁵⁸ It may further mandate arms embargos, enforce disarmament, or initiate proceedings in the international justice system.⁵⁹
- **Diplomatic Tools:** The Council has a mandate to investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to aggressions between states or other non-state groups or within states' national territories.⁶⁰ In order to do so, it may “recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement; formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments; determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and recommend what action should be taken.”⁶¹
- **Military Action:** The Council may take military action against a state or other entity threatening international peace and security and may further decide on the deployment of troops or observers.⁶² The Council may decide to initiate peacekeeping operations; it may also modify existing peacekeeping operations through the extension or amendment of their mandates and the additional deployment or withdrawal of troops.⁶³
- **Partnerships:** The Council cooperates with numerous international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to implement its decisions.⁶⁴ The Council works closely with related organizations of the UN, such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Partnerships with independent intergovernmental organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the African Union, are also of paramount importance for addressing a broad range of issues including terrorism, disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation, and extreme violence from non-state actors, among others.⁶⁵

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

2017 began with five new non-permanent members – Bolivia, Ethiopia, Italy, Kazakhstan, and Sweden – taking their seats on the Council, along with incoming Secretary-General António Guterres assuming his leadership of the UN.⁶⁶ At his first Security Council open debate, Secretary-General Guterres emphasized the need for a new approach to maintaining peace and security that prioritizes conflict prevention instead of conflict resolution.⁶⁷

Human rights, as a thematic topic, was discussed for the first time by the Council in April 2017.⁶⁸ The Secretary-General noted at this meeting, “Peace, security, human rights, and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing,” and in recognition of this, the entire UN system should stop dealing with each pillar in isolation.⁶⁹ Many speakers at this meeting encouraged the Council to collaborate more closely with the Human Rights Council

⁵⁶ Ibid., Art. 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Biersteker et al, *The Effectiveness of United Nations Targeted Sanctions*, 2013; UN Security Council, *United Nations Security Council: About*, 2014.

⁵⁹ Cousens & Malone, *Conflict Prevention in The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, 2004, p. 111.

⁶⁰ UN Security Council, *Functions and Powers*, 2017.

⁶¹ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ UN DPKO, *Forming a New Operation*.

⁶⁴ UN Security Council, *Repertoire of the practice of the Security Council*, 2016.

⁶⁵ UN Security Council, *Structure*, 2016; UN Security Council, *Middle East (S/RES/2118 (2013))*, 2013.

⁶⁶ What's In Blue, *Security Council's January Programme of Work*, 2017; Security Council Report, *Monthly Forecasts*, 2017.

⁶⁷ UN Secretary-General, *Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council Open Debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace"*, 2017.

⁶⁸ UN DPI, *Security Council Must Take Human Rights into Account in All Deliberations, Secretary-General Stresses during Thematic Debate (S/12797)*, 2017.

⁶⁹ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/PV.7926)*, p. 2.

and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, but disagreement ensued on the degree to which human rights questions should be addressed by the Security Council.⁷⁰

Throughout the summer of 2017, the Council addressed overall threats to international peace and security, including landmines and terrorism, as well as country-specific situations.⁷¹ On 10 July 2017, the Council decided to establish the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which will begin its work in September to support the implementation of the Final Agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP).⁷² On 5 August 2017, in response to repeated testing of ballistic missiles, the Council strengthened the existing sanctions regime against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), including by prohibiting the export of coal, iron, iron ore, seafood, lead, and lead ore to other countries.⁷³ The Council also called for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks between the DPRK, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States, with the goal of achieving "the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner."⁷⁴

Conclusion

As the international community faces increasing asymmetrical and non-traditional threats to international peace and security, the Security Council has evolved by devising new working methods and holding broader, more open discussions.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the persistence of ongoing threats indicates significant challenges to the Security Council's ability to guarantee peace and security in all regions of the world.⁷⁶ These situations also represent the systemic and political divides between Council members, particularly with respect to the five permanent members.⁷⁷ However, as the Security Council represents the only body within the UN that has the power to adopt binding resolutions, it is still the entity of utmost importance for the maintenance of international peace and security.⁷⁸

Annotated Bibliography

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<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>

As the fundamental principles of the Security Council are written down in the Charter of the UN, this document should be the first resource to consider. Article 23, which sets the membership structure and articles 23 to 26, which discuss its basic functions and powers, are of particular importance for understanding both the structure and function of the Security Council. In addition, articles 27 to 32 explain the Council's voting procedure and its overall structure. The Charter can be particularly helpful for delegates in understanding the powers and limitations of the body. Delegates will find Chapters VI and VII most helpful when researching the mandate of the Security Council, and also while at the conference simulating the body.

Council on Foreign Relations. (2013). *CFR Backgrounders: The UN Security Council* [Website]. Retrieved 26 July 2017 from: <http://www.cfr.org/international-organizations-and-alliances/un-security-council/p31649>

The Council on Foreign Relations provides a comprehensive introduction into the structure and work of the Security Council and therefore constitutes a good starting point for more detailed research. The website discusses the Council's powers and possibilities in taking coercive actions

⁷⁰ UN DPI, *Security Council Must Take Human Rights into Account in All Deliberations, Secretary-General Stresses during Thematic Debate (S/12797)*, 2017.

⁷¹ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security: Mine action (S/RES/2365 (2017))*, 2017; UN Security Council, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (S/RES/2368 (2017))*, 2017; UN Security Council, *Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts – Preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons (S/RES/2370 (2017))*, 2017; UN Security Council, *Meeting Records*, 2017.

⁷² UN Security Council, *Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53) (S/RES/2366 (2017))*, 2017.

⁷³ UN Security Council, *Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea (S/RES/2371 (2017))*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ UN Security Council, *Structure*, 2017; UN Security Council, *1540 Committee*, 2017.

⁷⁶ Security Council Report, *September 2014 Monthly Forecast – Syria*, 2014.

⁷⁷ Security Council Report, *The Permanent Members and the Use of the Veto: An Abridged History*, 2013.

⁷⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, art. 24.

and addresses broadly discussed issues as criticism to the Security Council's structure as well as possible reforms. In addition, the website contains links on further resources on the Security Council and recent international security issues as, for example, the Global Governance Monitor, which evaluates the international regime for armed conflict.

Cousens, E., & Malone, D. (2004). Conflict Prevention, *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

This volume provides readers with a very detailed overview of the Security Council and its past and present challenges. Written on a high academic level, this book touches upon many of the Council's themes, institutions, and operations, while also explaining the Council's structure in depth. As it discusses major operations on four continents, the document can be a useful tool for detailed analysis on various international security crises.

Hanhimäki, J. M. (2008). *The United Nations: A Very Short Introduction*, New York, New York: Oxford University Press.

While giving a brief overview of the history, structure, mandate and perspective of the UN in general, this volume also includes a comprehensive section on the Security Council, as well as a separate chapter on peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The book offers a succinct explanation of the Council's political and operational constraints, including the veto power principle. It further provides delegates with a general overview of the importance of the Security Council for international security from its creation until now. Due to its comprehensive language, this book may serve delegates as a first starting point for further research on the Security Council as well as on international power relations.

Security Council Report. (2017). *Monthly Forecasts* [Website]. Retrieved 28 August 2017 from:

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/>

The Security Council Report website provides monthly forecasts that describe the Security Council's meetings and program of work as expected for the upcoming month. The website is updated regularly to reflect the current agenda of the Security Council. Delegates will also find links to UN source documents on this website, which will be helpful during their research.

United Nations, Security Council. (2017). *What is the Security Council?* [Website]. Retrieved 26 July 2017 from:

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/about>

This website gives an overview of the Security Council's history, its mandate, and its basic functions and powers. It should be considered one of the most important resources and a foundation for delegates' further research, since it provides detailed information on how the Security Council works in practice. The website contains the body's provisional rules of procedure and a section on frequently asked questions. The latter is particularly useful when it comes to understanding the Council's functions and powers. Delegates will find on this website detailed information about the Council's recent sessions as well as other worth noting outputs.

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Security Council Report. (2013). *In Hindsight: The Veto* [Website]. Retrieved 26 July 2017 from: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2013-11/in_hindsight_the_veto.php

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I. The Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security

*“Climate change is real, and it is accelerating in a dangerous manner. It not only exacerbates threats to international peace and security, it is a threat to international peace and security.”*⁷⁹

Introduction

It is widely recognized that events caused by climate change can have global security implications, as they may have consequences that affected states and societies are unable to mitigate.⁸⁰ The United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs recently included a warning in its 2017 *Sustainable Development Goals Report* about the profound global impact of climate change:

“Global temperatures continued to increase in 2016, setting a new record of about 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial period. The extent of global sea ice fell to 4.14 million square [kilometers] in 2016, the second lowest on record. Atmospheric CO₂ levels reached 400 parts per million. Drought conditions predominated across much of the globe... In addition to rising sea levels and global temperatures, extreme weather events are becoming more common and natural habitats such as coral reefs are declining. These changes affect people everywhere, but disproportionately harm the poorest and the most vulnerable.”⁸¹

Since 2007, the UN Security Council has discussed the implications of climate change for peace and security on several occasions.⁸² Nevertheless, it has so far not come to definitive conclusions or decisions to respond directly to climate change as an independent threat to international security.⁸³ Instead, the Council has primarily assumed a position of a “non-response strategy,” meaning that it avoids a direct response to climate change, yet continues to decide upon related phenomena, such as civil war, desertification, or natural disasters.⁸⁴

This Background Guide will provide an overview of the origins and current state of the debate regarding the possibility of the UN Security Council assuming an active stance towards climate change. It will first shed light on the international framework for global climate policy by referring to key international documents and treaties. The next section will then show how key actors on the level of the international system are currently working to tackle the climate change-security nexus. This will include recent historical context on how the Security Council and its Member States have approached the problem. The actual scope of the problem of climate change and its potential implications for peace and security are at the focus of the next section. Finally, to guide delegates in their policy deliberations, there will be a discussion of the Security Council’s opportunities for action.

International and Regional Framework

The following paragraphs will provide background on key international documents and agreements that manifest the linkage of global climate policy with peace and security. The *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) does not make an explicit reference to the protection of the environment or global climate policy; it does, however, state as a fundamental purpose of the organization “to take collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace.”⁸⁵ The supreme organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, according to the Charter, is the Security Council.⁸⁶ The Council “may investigate any dispute, or any situation” that might pose a danger to international peace and security, and can add any traditional and non-traditional topics (including topics related to climate change, for example) to its agenda.⁸⁷ Chapters VI, VII, and VIII of the Charter determine several paths of action the Council may take, including investigation, diplomacy, sanctions, and even military action.⁸⁸

⁷⁹ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in: UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security: Impact of climate change (S/PV.6587)*, 2011, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Mobjörk et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, 2016, pp. 25-55.

⁸¹ UN DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017*, 2017, p. 44.

⁸² Mobjörk et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, 2016, pp. 28-29.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Art. 24.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Art. 34.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapters VI-VIII.

The Charter also served as foundation for the discussions at the groundbreaking 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which sought to enhance international cooperation on global environmental and climate policy.⁸⁹ Principle two of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992) confirms that, while states have the “sovereign right to exploit their own resources,” thanks to the Charter and the principles of international law, they must “ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.”⁹⁰ This no-harm principle, widely considered as the “foundation of international environmental law,” also guided the establishment of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) as the primary international forum for global climate policy in 1992.⁹¹ The UNFCCC’s main objective is the “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”⁹² Through mechanisms enshrined in the *Paris Agreement* (2015), which effectively succeeded the *Kyoto Protocol* (1997) and entered into force in November 2016, the parties to the UNFCCC have committed to nationally determined contributions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as to international financial and technological cooperation, to keep the global temperature rise from exceeding 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.⁹³

At the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the international community underlined in *The Future We Want* that climate change “is a cross-cutting and persistent crisis” that “threaten[s] the viability and survival of nations.”⁹⁴ Rising sea levels, in particular, pose a significant risk to small island developing states (SIDS) and “represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability.”⁹⁵ When it adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the General Assembly reaffirmed in a similar statement that climate change “is one of the greatest challenges of our time” and that “the survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk.”⁹⁶

It was also the General Assembly that prominently recognized climate change as a critical security issue in resolution 63/281 (2009), which invited the “relevant organs... to intensify their efforts in considering and addressing climate change, including its possible security implications.”⁹⁷ Subsequently and as requested in resolution 63/281, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued in 2009 a report on climate change and its possible security implications, which found that climate change acts as a “threat multiplier” for economic, social, and environmental problems, potentially aggravating already fragile situations.⁹⁸

Parallel to the previously listed elements of the international framework that focus on state-level security implications of climate change, there is also “a growing recognition... of the mutual interdependence between the security of individuals and communities and the security of nation States.”⁹⁹ This concept of human security is most influentially defined in the 1994 *Human Development Report* as “freedom from fear and freedom from want,” as well as “safety from such chronic acts as hunger, disease and repression and ... protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, jobs or communities.”¹⁰⁰ A number of international bodies have over recent years worked towards making global security policy considerations more human-centered, and in those approaches the negative effects of climate change on human security play a prominent role.¹⁰¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which serves as a scientific advisory body to the UNFCCC,

⁸⁹ Carlarne et al., *International Climate Change Law: Mapping the Field*, 2016, pp. 21-22.

⁹⁰ UN Conference on Environment and Development, *The Rio Declaration (A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I))*, 1992, principle 2.

⁹¹ Voigt, *Security in a “Warming World”: Competences of the UN Security Council for Preventing Dangerous Climate Change*, 2009, p. 302.

⁹² *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992, art. 2.

⁹³ Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1)*, 2015, art. 2.

⁹⁴ UN General Assembly, *The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288)*, 2012, para 25.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, paras. 25, 187.

⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 5.

⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications (A/RES/63/281)*, 2009, p. 2.

⁹⁸ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*, 2009.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 6.

¹⁰⁰ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, 1994, p. 23.

¹⁰¹ Mason, *Climate change and human security: the international governance architectures, policies and instruments*, 2015.

also bases its risk assessment on the paradigm of human security.¹⁰² In its latest *Fifth Assessment Report* (2014), the IPCC cites evidence that “human security will be progressively threatened as the climate changes.”¹⁰³

Although they do not directly approach climate change as a threat for international peace and security, there are several other noteworthy international agreements. The 1982 *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) provides a “fairly comprehensive regime for the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the prevention, reduction, and control of marine pollution damage to other States.”¹⁰⁴ Its provisions, though subject to varying legal interpretations, may become of increasing relevance for small island states and states with low-lying coastal areas as sea level rise and damage to marine ecosystems are direct threats caused by climate change.¹⁰⁵ The *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (2015) must also be considered as a relevant document.¹⁰⁶ Adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, on March 18, 2015, it serves as an international accord to reduce risks stemming from disasters, “some of which have increased in intensity and have been exacerbated by climate change.”¹⁰⁷ The framework avoids linkages to peace and security, and rather focuses on adaptation and resilience-building.¹⁰⁸

Role of the International System

Despite periodic consideration of the issue, the UN Security Council has yet to make any formal decisions on its role in addressing climate change or to adopt any resolutions that respond directly to climate change as a discrete threat to international peace and security.¹⁰⁹ The topic of climate change was first discussed during a debate convened in 2007 by the United Kingdom.¹¹⁰ At the end of another debate in 2011, initiated by Germany, the Security Council unanimously adopted presidential statement 2011/15, which reaffirmed that the UNFCCC is the key instrument to address climate change, while also expressing the Council’s concern “that possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security.”¹¹¹ Subsequent briefings, debates, and informal meetings on the topic took place in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017; however, they did not result in any formal Council decisions, and “the future of the Council’s engagement with climate change [remains] uncertain.”¹¹²

The Security Council’s lack of action can be attributed to differing policies and standpoints regarding the securitization of climate policy.¹¹³ SIDS argue that a stronger role for the Security Council is both within its mandate and necessary to address the problem.¹¹⁴ Many SIDS face existential and security threats due to rising sea levels, which makes them, for example in the form of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), one of the loudest voices to call for global action against climate change, including in the Security Council.¹¹⁵

Many SIDS are also members of the Group of 77 (G77) coalition of developing countries, which is customarily supported by China.¹¹⁶ In 2007, when the topic was first on Security Council’s agenda, the G77 opposed a formal

¹⁰² Adger et al., *Human security*, 2014.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 758.

¹⁰⁴ *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, 1982; Boyle & Ghaleigh, *Climate Change and International Law beyond the UNFCCC*, 2016, p. 46.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-49.

¹⁰⁶ UN General Assembly, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks*, 2015, p. xii.

¹⁰⁹ Carlarne et al., *International Climate Change Law: Mapping the Field*, 2016, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ UN Security Council, *Letter dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/186)*, 2007; UN Security Council, *Climate change (S/PV.5663)*, 2007.

¹¹¹ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/PRST/2011/15)*, 2011.

¹¹² For an overview, see Born, *A resolution for a peaceful climate*, 2017, p. 5; Bhatiya, Ukraine, Germany, Sweden Urge UN Security Council to Address Climate Change Threat, *The Center for Climate and Security*, 2017; Security Council Report, *In Hindsight: The Security Council and Climate Change – An Ambivalent Relationship*, 2017.

¹¹³ Born, *A resolution for a peaceful climate*, 2017, pp. 5-7.

¹¹⁴ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, pp. 2-5.

¹¹⁵ de Agueda Corneloup & Mol, *Small island developing states and international climate change negotiations*, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Mobjörk et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, 2016, pp. 28-29.

consideration of climate change by the body to avoid encroachment on the work and mandate of other UN bodies.¹¹⁷ Since then, the position of the G77 has seemed to lose unanimity, as more and more countries and blocs acknowledged the direct linkage of climate change with peace and security, and declared their willingness to consider a stronger role for the Security Council.¹¹⁸

The European Union and its Member States are typically in favor of an increased role for the Security Council.¹¹⁹ It is no coincidence that the topic was first added to the agenda by the United Kingdom and that the only formal position of the Security Council, presidential statement 2011/15, was reached under the German presidency.¹²⁰ While the United States assumed a neutral position in 2007, it became one of the loudest proponents of securitization in the 2011 debate, when its delegate stated that it “is past time for the Security Council to come into the 21st century and assume our core responsibilities.”¹²¹ The recent decision by the United States government to withdraw from the UNFCCC’s *Paris Agreement*, however, makes a continuation of this position doubtful.¹²²

China and Russia, both veto powers, remain strong opponents to Security Council action confronting climate change.¹²³ Although they ratified the *Paris Agreement* and, especially in the case of China, seem to embrace a low-carbon transformation of their economies, they see no added value in involving the Security Council.¹²⁴ Russia fears “a further politicization of the issue and increased disagreements among countries,” while China, regarding climate change as “fundamentally a sustainable development issue,” points out that the Security Council lacks “universal representation” as well as the necessary expertise and capabilities, and therefore should not replace the UNFCCC.¹²⁵

Outside the Security Council, many institutions and organizations have subscribed to the idea that climate change has implications for peace and security. The Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Patricia Espinosa, has recently emphasized that it is “key [to frame] climate change as a security story” and that “[climate] action reduces risk and increases stability.”¹²⁶ The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) recently published a joint strategic report with the International Police Organization (INTERPOL) entitled *Environment, Peace and Security: A Convergence of Threats* (2016), which focuses on environmental crime (which it finds worth up to \$258 billion) and its negative consequences for peace, security, and stability.¹²⁷ In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN University, and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), UNEP also investigated the implications of climate change for livelihoods, conflict, and migration in the Sahel region.¹²⁸ UNEP furthermore contributed to the 2011 UN Security Council’s debate that resulted in presidential statement 2011/15 and provided substantial contributions to the UN Secretary-General’s 2009 report on climate change and its possible security implications.¹²⁹

The G7 group of industrialized countries has recognized that “climate change poses a serious threat to global security” and continues to formulate common climate policies, based on research such as its influential report *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks* (2015).¹³⁰ The Secretary General of the military alliance North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Jens Stoltenberg, affirmed that “[climate] change is also a security threat” – a statement that is flanked by NATO’s growing concern about the topic.¹³¹ Similarly, many states

¹¹⁷ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-5.

¹¹⁹ Warren & Utterback, United Nations Security Council Holds Special Meeting on Climate Change, *Climate Law Blog*, 2015.

¹²⁰ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, pp. 2-5.

¹²¹ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security: Impact of climate change (S/PV.6587)*, 2011, p. 7.

¹²² The White House, *President Trump Announces U.S. Withdrawal From the Paris Climate Accord*, 2017.

¹²³ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, pp. 2-5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security: Impact of climate change (S/PV.6587)*, 2011, pp. 13, 9.

¹²⁶ UNFCCC, *The Climate Change Story is a Security Story. Address at Munich Security Conference by Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa*, 2017.

¹²⁷ INTERPOL & UNEP, *Strategic Report: Environment, Peace and Security – A Convergence of Threats*, 2016.

¹²⁸ UNEP, *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel*, 2011.

¹²⁹ UNEP, *Climate change and Security Risks*.

¹³⁰ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks*, 2015.

¹³¹ Fetzek, *The Alliance in a Changing Climate*, 2017.

include the security implications of climate change in their national security strategies (or equivalent documents), including, for example, Russia and the United States.¹³²

Representatives from civil society and academia contribute to the debate about the security implications of climate change through direct contact with decision-makers, advisory contributions for international organizations and policy forums, public campaigns, and scientific and policy assessments.¹³³ This includes, for example, the publication of the international climate change think tank E3G named *United we stand: Reforming the UN to reduce climate risk*, which argues for an active UN Security Council role in global climate policy.¹³⁴ The Think20 dialogue process, an effort of international think tanks to inform the participants of the G20 Summit in July 2017, produced as a key policy brief *Building Global Governance for 'Climate Refugees'*, which focused on migration and displacement as direct consequences of climate change.¹³⁵ More generally, academic and research institutions, such as the Center for Climate and Security (CCS) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), work as well-informed focal points for researchers, policymakers, and citizens who are interested in the debate.¹³⁶

Adverse Consequences of Climate Change for International Peace and Security

Climate change is advancing rapidly. It is expected that by the year 2100, there will be an increase in global temperature of 2 to 7 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which will “cause more frequent and more severe extreme weather events such as heavy rains, drought, heatwaves and storms.”¹³⁷ Simultaneously, as the extent of global sea ice is receding due to global warming, sea levels will continue to rise, with estimates ranging from 0.36 to 0.58 meters by the year 2100.¹³⁸ Environmental stress caused by climate change will lead to declining agricultural yields in many regions of the world, with adverse effects including food insecurity, poverty, and competition over natural resources.¹³⁹ Droughts will become more common and reduce access to clean drinking water.¹⁴⁰ These negative effects of climate change will be most problematic in regions that are already weak and fragile, further jeopardizing the livelihoods of their inhabitants and increasing “migration that people would rather have avoided.”¹⁴¹

Classification of Security-Related Consequences of Climate Change

Scientific literature and political documents name several key direct and indirect adverse consequences of climate change on international peace and security. An informative summary is provided by the G7-commissioned report *A New Climate for Peace* (2015):

1. “Local resource competition: As the pressure on natural resources increases, competition can lead to instability and even violent conflict in the absence of effective dispute resolution.
2. Livelihood insecurity and migration: Climate [change] will increase the human insecurity of people who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, which could push them to migrate or turn to illegal sources of income.
3. Extreme weather events and disasters: Extreme weather events and disasters will exacerbate fragility challenges and can increase people’s vulnerability and grievances, especially in conflict-affected situations.
4. Volatile food prices and provision: Climate change is highly likely to disrupt food production in many regions, increasing prices and market volatility, and heightening the risk of protests, rioting, and civil conflict.
5. Transboundary water management: Transboundary waters are frequently a source of tension; as demand grows and climate impacts affect availability and quality, competition over water use will likely increase the pressure on existing governance structures.

¹³² Born, *A resolution for a peaceful climate*, 2017, p. 6; UNFCCC, *The Climate Change Story is a Security Story. Address at Munich Security Conference by Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa*, 2017.

¹³³ Carlarne et al., *International Climate Change Law: Mapping the Field*, 2016, pp. 21-22.

¹³⁴ Born & Mabey, *United we Stand: Reforming the United Nations to Reduce Climate Risk*, 2016.

¹³⁵ Kraemer et al., *Forced Migration: Building Global Governance for 'Climate Refugees'*, 2017.

¹³⁶ The Center for Climate & Security, *Exploring the Security Risks of Climate Change*.

¹³⁷ German Advisory Council on Global Change, *Climate Change as a Security Risk*, 2007, p. 15.

¹³⁸ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks*, 2015, p. 12.

¹³⁹ German Advisory Council on Global Change, *Climate Change as a Security Risk*, 2007, p. 15.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Adger et al., *Human security*, 2014, p. 762.

6. Sea level rise and coastal degradation: Rising sea levels will threaten the viability of low-lying areas even before they are submerged, leading to social disruption, displacement, and migration, while disagreements over maritime boundaries and ocean resources may increase.
7. Unintended effects of climate policies: As climate adaptation and mitigation policies are more broadly implemented, the risks of unintended negative effects – particularly in fragile contexts – will also increase.¹⁴²

These key findings are also echoed in the Secretary-General’s report on climate change and its possible security implications (2009), which identifies five channels through which security could be affected:

1. “Vulnerability: climate change threatens food security and human health, and increases human exposure to extreme events;
2. Development: if climate change results in slowing down or reversing the development process, this will exacerbate vulnerability and could undermine the capacity of [s]tates to maintain stability;
3. Coping and security: migration, competition over natural resources, and other coping responses of households and communities faced with climate-related threats could increase the risk of domestic conflict as well as have international repercussions;
4. Statelessness: there are implications for rights, security, and sovereignty [or] the loss of statehood because of the disappearance of territory;
5. International conflict: there may be implications for international cooperation from climate change’s impact on shared or undemarcated international resources.¹⁴³ A significant example is the disappearance of the Arctic’s sea-ice and permafrost due to global warming, which brings new opportunities for more human presence and economic activities, such as shipping lanes, trade passages, and resource exploration.¹⁴⁴ As the strategic importance of the Arctic regions increases, there may be a higher potential for interstate conflict.¹⁴⁵

Case Study: Lake Chad

Insightful evidence of how climate change fuels conflict can be found in the Lake Chad region, which extends to the territories of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In the last 50 years, Lake Chad has lost 90% of its original size of 25,000 square kilometers due to the changing climate, unsustainable use of resources, as well as population growth in the surrounding area (from 13 million in 1960 to around 50 million in 2015, with prospects for further rapid growth).¹⁴⁶ As a consequence, “water scarcity, health issues, food insecurity and poverty have increased dramatically” for populations both directly and indirectly dependent on the lake’s natural resources and economic opportunities.¹⁴⁷

The resulting competition over natural resources, territorial disputes, and migration have led to heightened tensions in the Lake Chad region, increased the occurrence of violent conflicts, and even become “a factor driving recruitment by the terrorist group Boko Haram,” which is very active in the region.¹⁴⁸ Mohammed Ibn Chambas, in his function as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, reported to the Security Council in 2016 that 9.2 million people in the region were in need of humanitarian assistance and 2.4 million people (among them 1.5 million children) had been displaced due to violent conflict, with most of them finding refuge in the region.¹⁴⁹ Chambas concluded that the Lake Chad region is proof that climate change “affects security, development and stability [and] becomes a fundamental threat to human security.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴² Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks*, 2015.

¹⁴³ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*, 2009.

¹⁴⁴ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks*, 2015, p. 70.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁴⁶ UN Security Council, *Peace and security in Africa (S/PV.7699)*, 2016, p. 3; UNEP, *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel*, 2011, p. 61.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Bhatiya, *A Post-Paris Agenda for Climate Security at the UN*, 2016, p. 8; Warren & Utterback, United Nations Security Council Holds Special Meeting on Climate Change, *Climate Law Blog*, 2015.

¹⁴⁹ UN Security Council, *Peace and security in Africa (S/PV.7699)*, 2016, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

With resolution 2349 (2017), the Security Council condemned Boko Haram’s activities in the Lake Chad region and encouraged enhanced regional military cooperation to fight against the terrorist organization.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the Council recognized “the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of the Region, including through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity.”¹⁵² The resolution thus reveals “a growing willingness in the Council to recognize the security implications of climate change,” but it remains to be seen whether this will lead to direct action.¹⁵³

Potential Security Council Actions

With resolution 1625, adopted unanimously at the 2005 World Summit, the Security Council acknowledged “the need to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict and political and social crises.”¹⁵⁴ This exemplified the Council’s intention to assume a more active and preventive stance towards global threats, as resolution 1625 opened the door to focus on non-traditional international peace and security aspects.¹⁵⁵ For this reason, resolution 1625 also represents an important precedent for proponents of an increased role for the Security Council in global climate policy.¹⁵⁶ The Council has moreover proved its capacity and willingness to assume *de facto* global lawmaking competence when it criminalized terrorism with resolution 1373 (2001) and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction with resolution 1540 (2004).¹⁵⁷ Following these precedents, and pursuant to its mandate in the Charter, the Security Council could add climate change to its work agenda and become actively involved.¹⁵⁸ In this case, the Council would have to determine its role in relation to the UNFCCC accords (for example, acting as an enforcement agency) or to establish its own set of norms, objectives, and procedures.¹⁵⁹

Based on the Charter, the Council may assume a role of soft compliance through investigating the issue (Article 34), calling for peaceful settlement of a conflict through arbitration (Article 33 (2)), and making recommendations to the involved conflict parties (Article 38).¹⁶⁰ It may also call upon states to comply with provisional measures to “prevent an aggravation of the situation” (Article 40), such as urging them to ratify certain treaties or conventions, simply resorting to adopting a public resolution condemning certain actions or lack of actions, or calling upon the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue (non-binding) advisory opinions on states’ climate action.¹⁶¹

A hard compliance policy, in the sense of Chapter VII of the Charter, could become manifest in the form of economic and diplomatic sanctions (Article 41), which could even be directed at certain polluting industries or climate-endangering markets.¹⁶² Based on its quasi-lawmaking competence (resolutions 1373 and 1540), the Security Council could also empower itself to investigate, regulate, and impose compliance, or create subsidiary bodies to do so.¹⁶³ However, the use of military force (Article 42) is, even in this theoretical debate, by most commenters rejected on “practical and moral grounds.”¹⁶⁴ These concerns also point towards the limitations associated with the Security Council’s potential actions. Even if the Council were willing to act, it may be limited by its lack of universal and equal representation, and accordingly, a perceived deficit in legitimacy.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵¹ UN Security Council, *Peace and security in Africa (S/RES/2349 (2017))*, 2017.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Security Council Report, *In Hindsight: The Security Council and Climate Change – An Ambivalent Relationship*, 2017.

¹⁵⁴ UN Security Council, *Threats to international peace and security (Security Council Summit 2005) (S/RES/1625 (2005))*, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ UN Security Council, *Peace and security – terrorist acts (S/RES/1373 (2001))*, 2001; UN Security Council, *Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004))*, 2004.

¹⁵⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Art. 34.

¹⁵⁹ Warren & Utterback, *United Nations Security Council Holds Special Meeting on Climate Change*, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Chapter VI; Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, p. 10.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ Boyle & Ghaleigh, *Climate Change and International Law beyond the UNFCCC*, 2016, p. 40.

Conclusion

This Background Guide section has introduced the reader to the debate about climate change and its implications for international peace and security. It has shown that the topic receives great attention from a wide variety of international bodies, and that there are several manifest indicators of the adverse consequences of climate change in the realm of international peace and security. The Security Council has been debating the topic for ten years now; yet – besides a presidential statement – it has not assumed an active role or even been able to formulate a common position.¹⁶⁶ If the Council decides to become more involved in global climate policy, there is a wide range of potential steps it can take that range from soft compliance to hard compliance measures.¹⁶⁷

Further Research

To guide delegates in their research and policy formulations, there are several noteworthy questions to consider: Is there a window of opportunity for a common position among all Member States of the Security Council and, if so, what would it look like? If the Council decides to seize the matter, how would it work alongside relevant international institutions – including, most importantly, the UNFCCC? What potential tools and measures are most likely to succeed?

Annotated Bibliography

Bhatiya, N. (2017, May 2). Ukraine, Germany, Sweden Urge UN Security Council to Address Climate Change Threat. *The Center for Climate and Security*. Retrieved 6 June 2017 from:

<https://climateandsecurity.org/2017/05/02/ukraine-and-germany-urge-un-security-council-to-address-climate-change-threat/>

The author is an eminent researcher in the field of climate change securitization. In this blog article, the author provides an update on the Security Council's latest informal debate on climate change and security, which was convened by Ukraine in April 2017. Since there was no formal resolution, the article introduces the debate and summarizes the statements of its participants and their diverging views. The source is valuable, as it highlights the most recent developments of the Council's ongoing consideration of climate change.

Born, C. (2017, January). *A resolution for a peaceful climate: Opportunities for the UN Security Council*. SIPRI Policy Brief. Retrieved 5 June 2017 from: <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Resolution-for-peaceful-climate.pdf>

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is a government-sponsored research institute on global security based in Sweden. The author, an eminent climate policy analyst and advisor, provides a timely and precise overview of the Security Council's stance vis-à-vis climate change and outlines potential benefits of a more active role of the Council. The source is especially valuable for delegates, as it provides a current, comprehensive, and authoritative analysis of the topic.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-fourth session. (2009). *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*. Retrieved 5 June 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/64/350>

As requested by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 63/281 on "Climate change and its possible security implications" (2009), the Secretary-General presented this comprehensive report. The report outlines key channels how climate change, essentially a "threat multiplier," may affect security and desirable conditions or paths of action that would minimize risks for international peace and security. The report served and still serves as the most comprehensive and defining document produced on the level of the UN on this topic, which is why delegates should not miss it.

¹⁶⁶ Mobjörk et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, 2016, p. 28.

¹⁶⁷ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015.

United Nations, Security Council, 6587th meeting. (2011). *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/PRST/2011/15)* [Presidential Statement]. Retrieved 5 June 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/S/PRST/2011/15>
The Security Council considered in its 6587th meeting the impact of climate change as part of its debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security.” It is the first time that the Council acknowledged possible security implications due to climate change and that this acknowledgment warrants further observation. Although the Council did not adopt a resolution, this presidential statement, made on behalf of the Council, represents the minimum consensus and is regarded a milestone in the securitization of climate change.

Warren, D. (2015). *Climate Change and International Peace and Security: Possible Roles for the U.N. Security Council in Addressing Climate Change*. Sabin Center for Climate Change Law / Columbia Law School. Retrieved 5 June 2017 from: https://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/climate-change/warren_-_cc_and_international_peace_and_security_-_roles_for_the_un_security_council.pdf

Columbia Law School’s Sabin Center for Climate Change is a private research institute with a distinguished reputation for its North American and international climate law and regulation analysis. The author of this paper presents a basic and introductory analysis of the Security Council’s actual and potential role in climate change, as well as an overview of relevant literature and sources. Delegates might consider this source as a first step to gaining a general idea of the topic and its implications.

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II. Environmental Migration as a Concern for Peace and Security

*“The drought made the conflict worse. Some raiders came and took away the little food we had raised on our farm. Now we are in a very hard time: the people at home face conflict and famine. They are starving. If we could go back, we would have only dry land and death to greet us.”*¹⁶⁸

Introduction

Sudden or progressive changes in the environment, often as a consequence of global climate change, are likely to have an adverse effect on existing migration patterns and the number of migrants.¹⁶⁹ It is hard to single out environmental change as one of the many factors in peoples’ decisions to stay or to move.¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, environmental degradation and climate change are increasingly affecting other root causes of migration, such as sociopolitical instability, food insecurity, and conflict.¹⁷¹ Migration and displacement bring opportunities and can serve as a reasonable adaptation mechanism to changing environments, but they also create risks for people, communities, and states.¹⁷² Environmental change and its effects on human migration are therefore of concern for international political stability, peace, and security.¹⁷³

This Background Guide will shed light on how the international community approaches the topic of environmental migration from a peace and security perspective. Migration, its root causes, and its consequences are of concern for the maintenance of international peace and security.¹⁷⁴ The guide will therefore also explore a possible role of the United Nations (UN) Security Council in the debate.

International and Regional Framework

The *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) establish the principle that humans enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination.¹⁷⁵ They form the basis for the *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951) and its amending *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1967), which are considered the centerpiece of international refugee policy.¹⁷⁶ According to the Convention, no state “shall expel or return” a refugee to their original state if their life would be threatened as a consequence.¹⁷⁷ The Convention defines a refugee as a person who,

“owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside of the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”¹⁷⁸

The linkage of refugee policy with environmental or climate policy, on the international level, is quite recent.¹⁷⁹ *Agenda 21* (1992), adopted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, mentioned for the first time that “[r]esearch should be conducted on how environmental factors interact with socio-economic factors as a cause of migration.”¹⁸⁰ In 2010, the Conference of the Parties to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) (1992), the most important international forum for global climate policy, acknowledged the linkage through the establishment of the *Cancun Adaptation Framework*, which invites all

¹⁶⁸ Pastoralist from Somalia, Shedr Camp, Ethiopia. In: UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*, 2017, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ Warren, *Forced Migration After Paris COP21*, 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Adger et al., *Human security*, 2014.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 762.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 770-771.

¹⁷³ Scott, *Implications of climate change for the UN Security Council*, 2015, pp. 1325-1326.

¹⁷⁴ Mobjörk et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks*, 2016, p. 28.

¹⁷⁵ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

¹⁷⁶ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967.

¹⁷⁷ *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951, arts. 33, 1.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, art. 1A (2).

¹⁷⁹ Burrows & Kinney, *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus*, 2016, p. 4.

¹⁸⁰ UN Conference on Environment and Development, *Agenda 21*, 1992, para. 5 (20).

parties to “enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at the national, regional and international levels.”¹⁸¹ In 2015, the Conference of the Parties decided in the *Paris Agreement* to establish a task force to develop integrated approaches to “avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.”¹⁸²

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as one of the advisory bodies to the UNFCCC, is the most authoritative international scientific reference point on climate change.¹⁸³ Its latest flagship *5th Assessment Report* (2014), it focused for the first time on the concept of human security, defined as a “condition that exists when the vital core of human lives is protected, and when people have the freedom and capacity to live with dignity.”¹⁸⁴ Climate change, it is argued, “threatens human security because it undermines livelihoods, compromises culture and individual identity, increases migration that people would have rather avoided, and because it can undermine the ability of states to provide the conditions necessary for human security.”¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the IPCC found that “climate change will have significant impacts on forms of migration that compromise human security.”¹⁸⁶

The UN General Assembly has addressed environmental migration and climate change in several ways. As an outcome of the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the General Assembly recognized that “international migration is a multidimensional reality [and] cross-cutting phenomenon [with] social, economic and environmental dimensions.”¹⁸⁷ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, identified forced displacement of people as an eminent threat that is a challenge for humanity, in addition to “[n]atural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity and loss of biodiversity.”¹⁸⁸ The 2030 Agenda also described climate change as “one of the greatest challenges of our time” that puts the “survival of many societies ... at risk.”¹⁸⁹ With the 2030 Agenda, the international community pledged to realize the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 10, which is to reduce inequality within and among countries and states, includes migration in its seventh target: “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration [through] planned and well-managed migration policies.”¹⁹⁰ Goal 13 is to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, while acknowledging the UNFCCC as the main policy forum.¹⁹¹

The 2016 *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, adopted by the General Assembly, acknowledged that, while humanity has been on the move since earliest times, for which there are many root causes, some people move “in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters (some of which may be linked to climate change), or other environmental factors.”¹⁹² Furthermore, it called for global approaches and solutions to deal with “political, economic, social, developmental, humanitarian and human rights ramifications” caused by large movements of refugees and migrants.¹⁹³ Through the New York Declaration, UN Member States committed to “addressing the drivers that create or exacerbate large movements” through, *inter alia*, “combating environmental degradation and ensuring effective responses to natural disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁸¹ *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992; Cancun Adaptation Framework*, in: Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its sixteenth session, held in Cancun from 29 November to 10 December 2010 (FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1)*, 2010, pp. 4-19.

¹⁸² Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1)*, 2015, p. 8.

¹⁸³ Born & Mabey, *United we Stand: Reforming the United Nations to Reduce Climate Risk*, 2016, pp. 23-25.

¹⁸⁴ Adger et al., *Human security*, 2014, p. 759.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 762.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 758.

¹⁸⁷ UN General Assembly, *Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (A/RES/68/4)*, 2014, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, para. 14.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁹² UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016, para. 1.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, para. 7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 43.

It was also the General Assembly that sought to intensify the UN's efforts to approach climate change as an issue of international peace and security in resolution 63/281 (2009).¹⁹⁵ In his report *Climate change and its possible security implications* (2009), which was requested in resolution 63/281, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon found that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier" for economic, social, and environmental problems.¹⁹⁶ As one key threat identified in the report, migration, on which "climate change is...having a detectable impact...could increase the risk of domestic conflict as well as have international repercussions."¹⁹⁷ The UN Secretary-General, again prompted by the General Assembly, issued another report entitled *In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants* (2016), which noted that "[l]arge movements of people will continue or possibly increase as a result of violent conflict, poverty, inequality, climate change, disasters and environmental degradation."¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the report lamented that many people become refugees "for reasons that do not fall within the refugee definition in the 1951 Convention, including disasters or the erosion of livelihoods as a result of the adverse impacts of climate change and food insecurity."¹⁹⁹

Finally, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (2015), which was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, is noteworthy as it identifies climate change "as one of the drivers" of risks caused by disasters.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, the effects of some of those disasters "have increased in intensity and have been exacerbated by climate change."²⁰¹ In the Sendai Framework, UN Member States lament that, "between 2008 and 2012, 144 million people were displaced by disasters" and pledge to "build resilience and reduce disaster risk, including...displacement risk."²⁰²

Role of the International System

With resolution 1625 (2005), the UN Security Council acknowledged "the need to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict and political and social crises," expressing its intention to move beyond a merely reactive approach towards global threats.²⁰³ Resolution 1625 is regarded a "launching point" by proponents of an increased role for the Security Council in global climate policy, as it allows for a focus on non-traditional international peace and security aspects.²⁰⁴

Climate change and its potential adverse impacts on international peace and security became a topic for the Security Council for the first time in 2007.²⁰⁵ The United Kingdom, as initiator of the debate, argued in a letter to the President of the Security Council (2007), which served as basis for the discussions, that "substantial parts of the world risk being left uninhabitable by rising sea levels, reduced freshwater availability or declining agricultural capacity [which] will exacerbate existing migratory pressures."²⁰⁶ Moreover, while the United Kingdom acknowledged that migration does not directly lead to conflict, it noted that migration can increase the potential for instability and conflict.²⁰⁷ In the ensuing debate, the UN Secretary-General argued that environmental migration is a threat to "human security, as well as to international peace and security," and that the phenomenon will intensify "as deserts advance, forests are felled and sea-levels rise."²⁰⁸

The Security Council discussed climate change several times in 2007, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2017, yet avoided producing any formal Council decisions or resolutions, with the only exception of presidential statement

¹⁹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/RES/63/281)*, 2009, para. 1.

¹⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*, 2009, p. 6.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 1.

¹⁹⁸ UN General Assembly, *In safety and dignity: Addressing large movements of refugees and migrants (A/70/59)*, 2016, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁰⁰ UN General Assembly, *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*, 2015, para. 13.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, para. 42.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, paras. 4, 28.

²⁰³ UN Security Council, *Threats to international peace and security (Security Council Summit 2005) (S/RES/1625 (2005))*, 2005.

²⁰⁴ Warren, *Climate Change and International Peace and Security*, 2015, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ Mobjörk et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach*, 2016, pp. 28-29.

²⁰⁶ UN Security Council, *Letter dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/186)*, 2007, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security: Impact of climate change (S/PV.6587)*, 2011, p. 2.

2011/15 (2011).²⁰⁹ While identifying the UNFCCC as the key instrument for global climate policy, the presidential statement expressed the Council’s concern “that possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security.”²¹⁰ The Council also noted that “conflict analysis and contextual information” of the “possible security implications of climate change” are important when climate issues drive conflict, challenge the implementation of Council mandates, or endanger peace processes.²¹¹

Security implications as an effect partially caused by migration flows were the subject of Security Council resolutions 2240 (2015) and 2312 (2016). In resolution 2240 (2015), acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council authorized UN Member States to seize vessels that are used for smuggling of migrants and human trafficking off the Libyan coast; and the authorization was extended in resolution 2312 (2016).²¹² Without mentioning implications stemming from environmental degradation or climate change, the Council emphasized the need “to strengthen an effective multidimensional response” to smuggling of migrants and human trafficking and “to tackle their root causes.”²¹³

The UN General Assembly announced in its New York Declaration an international conference in 2018 with the objective of adopting a “global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.”²¹⁴ As input for the conference, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been requested to include a proposal for such a compact in its annual report to the General Assembly for consideration at its 73rd session in 2018.²¹⁵ The New York Declaration also established that UNHCR will develop and initiate a comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) as a multi-stakeholder approach, which aims to “ease pressure on the host countries involved, to enhance refugee self-reliance, to expand access to third-country solutions and to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.”²¹⁶ UNHCR is also a member of the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) Task Team to develop a UN System Wide Strategic Approach on Climate Change, whose objective is to make the UN system’s climate change policy coherent and to link climate action with the Sustainable Development Goals.²¹⁷ UNHCR’s main work therein is focused on the “Peace and Security and Humanitarian Climate Nexus.”²¹⁸

The Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC decided in the *Paris Agreement* to establish a task force on displacement, which held its first meeting in May 2017.²¹⁹ Its work plan includes, in an effort to enhance international recognition of adverse impacts of climate change, “[m]apping of how climate and displacement is included in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national communications, and in other relevant policy agendas.”²²⁰ Contributors to the task force include the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), among others.²²¹

The IOM is the eminent international reference point for research and statistics on migration and displacement, in addition to its operational activities.²²² The IOM also collaborates with the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), which works to improve the protection of people displaced across borders as a result of climate change and disasters.²²³ The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which is contributing to the PDD as well, is also involved in

²⁰⁹ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/PRST/2011/15)*, 2011.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/RES/2240 (2015))*; UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/RES/2312 (2016))*, 2016.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016, para. 63.

²¹⁵ UNHCR, *Towards a global compact on refugees*, 2017.

²¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016, Annex 1, para. 18; UNHCR, *Towards a global compact on refugees*, 2017.

²¹⁷ UNHCR, *Contribution to the fifteenth coordination meeting on international migration (UN/POP/MIG-15/CM/2017/14)*, p. 4.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ UNFCCC, *Summary of proceedings of the first meeting of the Task Force on Displacement*, 2017.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² IOM, *Migration, Climate Change and the Environment: Operational Activities*, 2017; IOM, *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence*, 2009.

²²³ The Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Our Response*.

international efforts to address migration and displacement.²²⁴ Along with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN University, the IOM, and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), UNEP co-authored the noteworthy report *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel* (2011), which investigated the implications of climate change for livelihoods, conflict, and migration in the Sahel region.²²⁵ This report explains the interlinkage between environmental migration and international peace and security.²²⁶ For the 2017 version of its flagship report *Frontiers*, UNEP has announced that it will feature environmental displacement as one of the “emerging issues.”²²⁷

Warning that “UN migration agencies are only just beginning to understand the climate change implications on their operations”, E3G, a civil society coalition, has contributed to the international debate of the topic.²²⁸ In *United we stand: Reforming the UN to reduce climate risk*, it calls for stronger UN involvement in global climate and migration policy, such as through an active UN Security Council role.²²⁹ Other civil society organizations involved in the debate include the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, as well as the Global Forum on Migration & Development.²³⁰

Implications of Environmental Migration for Peace and Security

The term “environmental refugee” was first coined in a UNEP publication written in 1985.²³¹ However, the “multidirectional associations between environmental change, human security, conflict and migration” complicate the task of finding a unified explanation for the exact causes and effects of environmental migration, as well as its definition.²³² Nevertheless, the IOM works with the following definition:

“Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad.”²³³

This definition is not universally accepted; for example, the UN Secretary-General notes in his report *Climate change and its possible security implications* (2009): “Presently, no internationally accepted term or legal framework exists for people who migrate voluntarily or are forced to move for environmental reasons. Although terms such as ‘environmental refugee’ or ‘climate change refugee’ are commonly used, they have no legal basis.”²³⁴ The scientific debate has noted and expanded upon this problem. Mayer (2016), for example, finds that it is “highly problematic to attribute an individual migrant to climate change,” as “climate change can have virtually any consequence on any form of migration.”²³⁵ Rüttinger et al. (2015) state that “[m]ethodologically, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the different drivers and triggers of migration.”²³⁶ It is also noteworthy that environmental migration is not solely linked to the impacts of climate change, although it may play an important factor. Migration can also be triggered or affected by man-made environmental degradation and the destruction of

²²⁴ UNEP, *Contribution to the fifteenth coordination meeting on international migration (UN/POP/MIG-15CM/2017/2)*, 2017, p. 3.

²²⁵ UNEP, *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel*, 2011.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ UNEP, *Contribution to the fifteenth coordination meeting on international migration (UN/POP/MIG-15CM/2017/2)*, 2017, p. 4.

²²⁸ Born & Mabey, *United we Stand: Reforming the United Nations to Reduce Climate Risk*, 2016, p. 35.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, *Peace and Migration: Realising the links*, 2016; Global Forum on Migration & Development, *Link with the Civil Society*, 2017.

²³¹ UNEP, *Contribution to the fifteenth coordination meeting on international migration (UN/POP/MIG-15CM/2017/2)*, 2017, p. 2.

²³² IOM, *Discussion Note: Migration and the Environment (MC/INF/288)*, 2007, p. 2.

²³³ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

²³⁴ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*, 2009, p. 16.

²³⁵ Mayer, *The Concept of Climate Migration: Advocacy and its Prospects*, 2016, pp. 17, 24.

²³⁶ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risk*, 2015, p. 29.

natural ecosystems, for example through pollution or the “misuse of resources, poor planning, poor infrastructure and poor governance and monitoring.”²³⁷

Because of the lack of a definition and methodological precision, there are no reliable estimates of the number of people who qualify as environmental migrants.²³⁸ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that “since 2008, an average of 26.4 million people per year have been displaced from their homes by disasters brought on by natural hazards.”²³⁹ The IOM states that in 2008, 20 million persons have been “displaced by extreme weather events,” and refers to forecasts that “vary from 25 million to 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050.”²⁴⁰

Scientific research lists five scenarios, or archetypes, of displacement induced by climate change:

1. “Sudden-onset disasters causing mostly internal, but sometimes cross-border displacements: Flooding or cyclones, for instance, can induce populations to move away from affected territories, generally on a temporary basis.
2. Slow-onset environmental degradation deteriorating the conditions of life and inducing both internal and international economic migration: Sea-level rise and the consequences of increasing average temperatures (drought, desertification, land degradation) can generally be conceived as a migration “push,” in particular through affecting economic conditions at the place of origin.
3. The specific case of “sinking” small island states, causing international economic migration and, possibly, evacuation: Absent innovative measures of adaptation, low-lying islands or archipelagos such as the Maldives, Kiribati and Tuvalu will become unable to accommodate their population, in the long term, as a consequence of sea-level rise.
4. The designation of certain areas as high-risk zones too dangerous for human habitation, leading to the evacuation of the resident population: Such measures are often taken, in particular, in flood plains or in the vicinity of rivers.
5. Unrest, violence or conflicts exacerbated by an increased competition for natural resources leading to flows of refugees or internally displaced persons: Resource-scarce regions are most likely to be affected, when tensions are already in place in respect of access to limited natural resources.”²⁴¹

This list could be continued with more ambiguous scenarios, and include “pull” factors towards regions with new economic opportunities thanks to positive impacts of climate change, displacements and resettlements due to projects that are intended to mitigate or adapt to climate change, or changes in human settlement patterns because of changing economic opportunities resulting from climate change mitigation policies (for example, people moving away from regions specialized in coal mining, as other forms of energy production become more dominant).²⁴²

The linkage between migration and international peace and security is, similarly, not entirely unambiguous:

- Citing acts of extremism, violence, crime, or international terrorism committed by migrants and members of minority groups, there are some groups that claim international migration is a threat to peace and security.²⁴³
- Irregular cross-border migration (movements “outside of the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, or receiving countries”) can be regarded as a threat to state sovereignty and security.²⁴⁴
- Migration can be the result or side effect of the activities of organized criminal networks.²⁴⁵

²³⁷ Renaud et al., *Environmental Degradation and Migration*, 2008, pp. 2-3.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-4.

²³⁹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters*, 2015, p. 11.

²⁴⁰ IOM, *Migration, Climate Change and the Environment: A Complex Nexus*, 2017.

²⁴¹ IOM, *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence*, 2009; Kälin, *Conceptualizing Climate-Induced Displacement*, 2010, quoted in Mayer, *The Concept of Climate Migration: Advocacy and its Prospects*, 2016, pp. 21-22.

²⁴² Mayer, *The Concept of Climate Migration: Advocacy and its Prospects*, 2016, pp. 22-23.

²⁴³ Global Commission on International Migration, *Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action*, 2005, p. 8.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; IOM, *Key Migration Terms*.

²⁴⁵ INTERPOL & UNEP, *Strategic Report: Environment, Peace and Security – A Convergence of Threats*, 2016, p. 28.

- Of 103 ethnic conflicts between 1945 and 2005, 32 were characterized by violence between members of ethnic groups who consider themselves indigenous on one side and recent migrants on the other side.²⁴⁶

On the other hand, migration can have positive effects on political and economic security where it helps economic development, increasing life quality and human security, for example by mitigating shortages in the labor force of receiving societies.²⁴⁷ Diaspora groups, as a direct result of migration, can also have positive effects on their regions of origin, most prominently in the form of transfer of capital (remittances) or knowledge.²⁴⁸ A more critical perspective, however, points out that diaspora migrants can play an important role in initiating, escalating, or prolonging conflicts in their regions of origin, or even export those conflicts to other regions.²⁴⁹

Case Study: Climate Change as a Root Cause for the Syrian Refugee Crisis

In Syria, global warming played a key role in generating the conditions that precipitated the civil war behind the refugee crisis.²⁵⁰ Between 2006 and 2011, up to 60% of Syria's land suffered the worst long-term drought ever recorded in the region, combined with a widespread phenomenon of crop failures.²⁵¹ In the northeast of the country, herders lost an average of "85% of their livestock, affecting 1.3 million people."²⁵² According to a study included in the 2011 *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, 75% of Syrian families dependent on agriculture suffered total crop failure, and one million Syrians were left food-insecure.²⁵³ In 2010, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, reported that, overall, the drought drove two to three million people into extreme poverty.²⁵⁴

The loss of livelihoods forced farmers and agriculture-dependent families to migrate to urban centers, putting pressure on cities' basic services and infrastructure, while also increasing unemployment.²⁵⁵ This posed a serious economic concern and a growing security challenge for the Syrian population, especially when some cities were already coping with large influxes of Iraqi refugees who fled their country since the 2003 military invasion led by the United States of America.²⁵⁶ The situation worsened as the government heavily subsidized "water-intensive wheat and cotton farming, encouraging inefficient irrigation techniques."²⁵⁷ The consequences of the drought were therefore aggravated by government resource mismanagement.²⁵⁸

Evidence suggests that along with other socioeconomic and political factors, the Syrian uprising was prompted by "the impact of climate change on water and crop production."²⁵⁹ A report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the United States Department of Commerce advised that the drought in Syria was clearly linked to climate change, and that if the present rates of global greenhouse gas emissions remain, "yields of rainfed crops in the country may decline between 20 and 57 percent from 2010 to 2050."²⁶⁰ Roughly 1.5 million Syrians were displaced to urban centers as a result of the five-year drought.²⁶¹ In turn, this massive and

²⁴⁶ UN General Assembly, *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*, 2009, p. 17.

²⁴⁷ Global Commission on International Migration, *Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action*, 2005, p. 8.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁴⁹ German Advisory Council on Global Change, *Climate Change as a Security Risk*, 2008, p. 121.

²⁵⁰ Bawden, Refugee crisis: Is climate change affecting mass migration, *The Independent*, 2015.

²⁵¹ Femia & Werrell, Syria: Climate Change, Drought and Social Unrest, *The Center for Climate & Security*, 2012.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Worth, Earth Is Parched Where Syrian Farms Thrived, *The New York Times*, 2010.

²⁵⁵ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risk*, 2015, p. 30.

²⁵⁶ Femia & Werrell, Syria: Climate Change, Drought and Social Unrest, *The Center for Climate & Security*, 2012.

²⁵⁷ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risk*, 2015, p. 30.

²⁵⁸ Born & Mabey, *United We Stand, Reforming the United Nations to Reduce Climate Risk*, 2016, p. 14.

²⁵⁹ Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risk*, 2015, p. 30.

²⁶⁰ Femia & Werrell, Syria: Climate Change, Drought and Social Unrest, *The Center for Climate & Security*, 2012.

²⁶¹ Stokes, The Drought That Preceded Syria's Civil War Was Likely the Worst in 900 Years, *VICE News*, 2016.

involuntary rural-to-urban migration led to the outbreak of conflict in Syria, suggesting a clear climate-migration-conflict pathway in the country.²⁶²

Potential Security Council Actions

In topic I, “The Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security,” it was shown how the Security Council could hypothetically recognize climate change and its adverse consequences, such as migration and displacement, as a threat to international peace and security, and subsequently become active based on its mandate granted in the *Charter of the United Nations*. It has also been shown that some negative consequences of migration have led to action by the Security Council, for example in the form of resolutions 2240 (2015) and 2312 (2016).²⁶³ Similarly, if the Council decides to recognize and act upon environmental migration, based on Article 39 of the *Charter*, it could:

- Decide to investigate the issue, potentially establishing an internationally accepted understanding of root causes, manifestations, consequences, and action against negative effects of environmental migration (Article 34);
- Make declarations, recommendations, or condemnations to raise awareness of the issue (Article 38);
- Call upon states to comply with any provisional measures to prevent a situation from becoming worse, such as, for example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the main driver of global warming (Article 40); or
- Intervene with economic and diplomatic sanctions or even the use of military force (Articles 41 and 42).²⁶⁴

To put these potential actions into context, the Security Council could request in-depth and regular analysis and reporting from authoritative international institutions in migration, climate, and security policy, such as the IOM or the UN Secretary-General (Article 34). It could furthermore pass resolutions or declarations that clearly describe the problem and outline potential avenues for overcoming it, with the intent of spearheading global discussions and actions related to environmental migration (Article 38). Based on its *de facto* competence as an international law-making body, the Council could also establish a binding legal framework for all UN Member States, based on existing or new norms, that regulates environmental migration, if there is a clear connection to the maintenance of peace and security (Article 40).

A hard compliance policy, through economic and diplomatic sanctions (Article 41), could see the Council imposing sanctions against products, practices, organizations, or even governments to prevent, control, or undo environmental degradation that would otherwise lead to negative effects on migration patterns and international security.²⁶⁵ The ultimate possible action is, in accordance with Article 42 of the Charter, the use of military force.²⁶⁶ One possible precedent could be the concept of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), unanimously endorsed by Member States as part of the *2005 World Summit Outcome*, which justifies military interventions by the United Nations to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.²⁶⁷ Environmental crimes with adverse effects on the climate, human migration, or international peace and security more generally could be potentially included in R2P and open the door to military action.²⁶⁸ There are, however, widely-accepted limits in terms of feasibility and acceptance of military interventions: They are typically themselves environmentally harmful and an obvious push factor for migration and, moreover, require to a very high degree the international community’s acceptance and perceived legitimacy of the Council’s actions.²⁶⁹ Ultimately, military escalation of global environmental and migration policy by the UN Security Council would very likely do considerable harm to the general spirit of cooperation and peaceful settlement based on international law.²⁷⁰

²⁶² Burrows & Kinney, *Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus*, 2016, p. 1; Bhatiya, *A Post-Paris Agenda for Climate Security at the UN*, 2016, p. 5.

²⁶³ UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/RES/2240 (2015))*; UN Security Council, *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/RES/2312 (2016))*, 2016.

²⁶⁴ Warren, *Forced Migration After Paris COP21*, 2016, pp. 42-45.

²⁶⁵ Voigt, *Security in a “Warming World”*, 2009, pp. 307-308.

²⁶⁶ Warren, *Forced Migration After Paris COP21*, 2016, pp. 42-45.

²⁶⁷ UN General Assembly, *2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1)*, 2005, paras. 138-140.

²⁶⁸ Scott, *Implications of climate change for the UN Security Council*, 2015, p. 1322.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Voigt, *Security in a “Warming World”*, 2009, p. 306.

Conclusion

Sudden or progressive changes in the environment, often because of global climate change, are affecting human migration patterns and increasing the number of migrants. This results in growing concerns regarding adverse consequences for international peace and security.²⁷¹ A wide variety of international organizations deal with climate change or migration or security policy; yet, rarely are these topics considered as one interconnected problem nexus.²⁷² The Security Council has so far remained a bystander in the debate of environmental migration, even though evidence in international studies and cases, such as Syria, suggests that there is a need to act.²⁷³

Further Research

It is advisable for delegates to focus their research and policy formulation on the following key questions: How can the phenomenon “environmental migration” best be defined and integrated into the international refugee and migration policy framework? In what forms can migration become a tangible concern for international peace and security? How could the Security Council become active to manage migration and mitigate involuntary displacement? How can the Security Council cooperate with key international organizations and Member States with a stake in the environmental migration-security nexus?

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The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the UN's scientific advisory body on climate change and can be regarded as the most widely accepted international authority in its field. The IPCC compiles and analyzes relevant scientific findings as basis for its periodical reports, most importantly the flagship Assessment Reports. This chapter, part of the latest 5th Assessment Report, explores in depth the impacts of climate change on human security and is thus recommended as an excellent source for researching the climate change-migration nexus.

Burrows, K., & P. L. Kinney. (2016). Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 13 (4): 443. Retrieved 7 June 2017 from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4847105/>

The authors of this journal article are researchers based at the private Columbia University in New York, United States of America. In their article, they discuss the uncertainties surrounding the nexus between climate change, migration, and conflict. This source will serve delegates as an up-to-date compact analysis for the scope of the topic at hand as well as an overview of existing literature.

German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU). (2008). *Climate Change as a Security Risk*. London, United Kingdom, and Sterling, United States of America: Earthscan. Retrieved 8 June 2017 from: http://www.wbgu.de/fileadmin/user_upload/wbgu.de/templates/dateien/veroeffentlichungen/hauptgutachten/jg2007/wbgu_jg2007_engl.pdf

The WBGU is an independent, scientific advisory body to the German government, and regularly publishes flagship reports on changes in the global environment. This flagship report explores the security implications of climate change, and has been widely cited in relevant academic publications. This source is recommended as an eminent and comprehensive platform for researching and formulating policy.

²⁷¹ Scott, *Implications of climate change for the UN Security Council*, 2015, pp. 1325-1326.

²⁷² Rüttinger et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risk*, 2015, pp. 77-79.

²⁷³ Bhatiya, *A Post-Paris Agenda for Climate Security at the UN*, 2016, p. 5.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-fourth session. (2009). *Climate change and its possible security implications: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/350)*. Retrieved 5 June 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/64/350>
Based on the General Assembly's resolution 63/281 on "Climate change and its possible security implications" (2009), the Secretary-General published this comprehensive report. It outlines key channels how climate change, essentially a "threat multiplier," may affect security – among them is environmental migration. The report is worth investigating, as it serves as a summary of the collective knowledge and policies of the UN at the highest level.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session. (2016). *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. Retrieved 8 June 2017 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/1>
The New York Declaration is a landmark commitment by the international community to assume common responsibility, reduce human suffering, and outline cooperative action to cope with large movements of refugees and migrants. Adopted by all UN Member States, it serves as a guiding document for all future measures and policies regarding human mobility. Delegates for the Security Council should make sure to refer to this declaration to guide their research and policy-making.

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