



# A REASSESSMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS

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## I. Introduction

International organizations in different parts of the world are paying growing attention to the perceived security risks associated with climate change.<sup>1</sup> In this policy space, the European Union (EU) has become an important actor, together with several of its member states, initiating debate around climate-related security risks (CRSRs, see box 1) in international policy dialogues. For example, through EU member states addressing CSRs in the United Nations Security Council.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, some researchers suggest that the EU is the institutional cradle of the climate security debate globally.<sup>3</sup> However, although a growing body of research has acknowledged the EU's strong leadership role in the international context, researchers have also pointed out that the EU is underperforming when it comes to translating climate-related security policies into practice.<sup>4</sup>

This SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security investigates how CSRs have been framed and responded to by different EU bodies in recent years.<sup>5</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Diez, T., von Lucke, F. and Wellmann, Z., *The Securitisation of Climate Change: Actors, Processes and Consequences* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2016); Dellmuth, L. M. et al., 'Intergovernmental organizations and climate security: Advancing the research agenda', *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Jan. 2018), p. e496; and Krampe, F. and Mobjörk, M., 'Responding to climate-related security risks: Reviewing regional organizations in Asia and Africa', *Current Climate Change Reports*, vol. 20 (Oct. 2018), pp. 1–8.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Brown, O., Le More, A. and Raasteen, J., 'Europe and climate security: Is Europe delivering on its rhetoric?', CSEN Policy Paper, July 2020, Annex 2.

<sup>3</sup> Zwolski, K. and Kaunert, C., 'The EU and climate security: A case of successful norm entrepreneurship?', *European Security*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Mar. 2011), pp. 21–43; and Torres Camprubí, A., 'Securitization of climate change: The inter-regional institutional voyage', *Yearbook of International Environmental Law*, vol. 27 (Jan. 2016), pp. 85–105.

<sup>4</sup> Zwolski and Kaunert (note 3), pp. 21–43; Bremberg, N., Sonnsjö, H. and Mobjörk, M., 'The EU and climate-related security risks: A community of practice in the making?', *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 41, no. 5 (July 2019), pp. 623–39; Brown, Le More and Raasteen (note 2); Fetzek, S. and van Schaik, L., 'Europe's responsibility to prepare: Managing climate security risks in a changing world', the Center for Climate and Security, June 2018; and Dupont, C., 'The EU's collective securitisation of climate change', *West European Politics*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Feb. 2019), pp. 369–90.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'EU bodies' is used in this paper as a shorthand for the various organizations operating under one of the seven principal decision-making institutions of the EU: the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Central Bank and the Court of Auditors.

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## SUMMARY

● This SIPRI Insights paper examines how climate-related security risks (CRSRs) are framed and responded to within different bodies of the European Union (EU). The paper finds that CSRs are framed differently across the EU and that the kinds of actions proposed vary. Although this is not necessarily a problem, a key challenge is that across the EU the prescriptions for addressing CSRs largely focus on long-term prevention in the form of climate mitigation, on the one hand, and reactive crisis responses, on the other. As a result, the substantial climate change that is already locked in and its related security risks are currently not being addressed. Similarly, this focus overlooks the varied and often complex ways in which climate change can increase risks. The paper concludes that the EU needs to broaden its understanding of and response to CSRs if it wants to take—and inspire—more effective action to reduce such risks.

**Box 1.** A comprehensive understanding of climate-related security risks

Climate-related security risks (CRSRs) are risks emerging from climate change to people's wellbeing and livelihoods that may have implications for societal, economic or political stability at local, national, regional or international levels.<sup>a</sup> The concern, in other words, is about the relationship between climate impacts, human security *and* deteriorating societal stability. Whether specific climate change impacts translate into human security risks and further into societal, economic or political instability depends on different intervening factors and political governance structures.<sup>b</sup> Therefore, claims that climate change is a direct cause of insecurity are too narrow and a more comprehensive understanding of CSRs is needed.

Importantly, CSRs can emerge from three sources, and delineating between them introduces more precision to the analysis of CSRs and assists in determining pathways towards better responses. CSRs can emerge:

1. Through *direct* climate impacts from sudden or slow onset climate change (e.g. changes in rainfall in place A affect people in place A, with potential spin-offs for societal, economic or political stability).
2. Through *indirect* climate impacts in places far removed from the direct impacts, even beyond a country's borders, and in interaction with other sociopolitical processes (e.g. changes in rainfall in place A has repercussions on food prices in place B, with potential spin-offs for societal, economic or political stability).<sup>c</sup>
3. As a result of *unintended, adverse* consequences of mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change, as a form of maladaptation or malmitigation.<sup>d</sup> These can be local-level side-effects of climate action, or cross national borders.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Mobjörk, M. et al., *Climate-Related Security Risks: Towards an Integrated Approach* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Oct. 2016).

<sup>b</sup> Mobjörk, M., Krampe, F. and Tarif, K., 'Pathways of climate insecurity: Guidance for policymakers', SIPRI Policy Brief, Nov. 2020.

<sup>c</sup> Oppenheimer, M. et al., 'Emergent risks and key vulnerabilities', eds C. B. Field et al., *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2014), pp. 1039–99.

<sup>d</sup> Barnett, J. and O'Neill, S., 'Maladaptation', *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 20, no. 2 (May 2010); Juhola S. et al., 'Redefining maladaptation', *Environmental Science & Policy*, vol. 55 (Jan. 2016); and Magnan, A. K. et al., 'Addressing the risk of maladaptation to climate change', *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 7, no. 5 (Sep. 2016).

<sup>e</sup> Mirumachi, N., Sawas, A. and Workman, M., 'Unveiling the security concerns of low carbon development: Climate security analysis of the undesirable and unintended effects of mitigation and adaptation', *Climate and Development*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Feb. 2020), pp. 97–109; and Atteridge, A. and Remling, E., 'Is adaptation reducing vulnerability or redistributing it?', *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Jan. 2018), p. e500.

sets out to answer three questions: (a) where in the EU are CSRs talked about (i.e. who are the institutional actors), (b) how do different EU bodies frame CSRs, and (c) what actions are proposed, or taken, in response to CSRs? Analysing such discursive framings is important, as they are part of shaping policymaking and thereby policy responses.<sup>6</sup> The paper adds to earlier analyses of the EU's climate security policy by offering a more systematic examination of recent developments in this policy space and by investigating a broader set of EU bodies than previously considered.<sup>7</sup> As well as considering the European External Action Service (EEAS), this broader coverage includes several European Commission (hereafter 'Commission') services, such as the directorates general for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), Climate Action (DG CLIMA) and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Dalby, S. and O'Lear, S., 'Towards ecological geopolitics: Climate change reframed', eds S. O'Lear and S. Dalby, *Reframing Climate Change: Constructing Ecological Geopolitics* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2015), pp. 203–15.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Bremberg, Sonnsjö and Mobjörk (note 4); Pérez de las Heras, B., 'Climate security in the European Union's foreign policy: Addressing the responsibility to prepare for conflict prevention', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, vol. 28, no 3 (Feb. 2020), pp. 1–13.

<sup>8</sup> On 16 Jan. 2021, DG DEVCO became the new Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). The analysis was conducted prior to this change, hence the name DG DEVCO will be used throughout. See European Commission, 'DG International Cooperation and Development becomes DG International Partnerships', News, 15 Jan. 2021.



The paper is based on a qualitative content analysis of EU documents as well as a unique set of semi-structured interviews and personal communications with EU officials and external experts. Published between March 2008 and July 2020, the documents include Commission communications, technical reports, press releases and summaries of debates, as well as events, blog posts, Commission speeches, op-eds and European Parliament reports. They were collected through a broad search on the websites of EU institutions for material that employed the terms ‘climate’ and ‘security’, and through secondary literature.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, the sample was limited to documents that established a connection between climate and security, rather than just mentioning those terms separately. A thorough analysis of 40 documents was conducted with the aid of the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA, from which 31 documents turned out to be most relevant (see annex A).<sup>10</sup> Further, 11 semi-structured interviews and 4 personal communications were carried out with 16 EU officials and external experts (see annex B).<sup>11</sup> These officials and experts were consulted because of the relevance of their work and organization, as well as personal expertise in relation to CRSRs.<sup>12</sup>

The paper is structured as follows. It first provides a brief overview of previous research on climate change and security debates in the EU (section II), before analysing in more detail the frames and responses to CRSRs among various EU bodies (section III). It then continues with a discussion on the limitations of current debates due to their focus on mitigation diplomacy and reactive crisis responses (section IV). The paper concludes by suggesting ways forward through advocating for a need for preventative action specifically on CRSRs (section V).

It is important to point out that this paper does not assess the empirical evidence of climate change and security for the EU, nor does it make any claims that the EU is indeed facing increased insecurity as a result of climate change. Rather, it is intentionally descriptive, analysing how the EEAS and multiple Commission services articulate CRSRs as a concern and what courses of action are proposed, or taken, in response.

<sup>9</sup> The specific search terms were ‘climate security’, ‘climate change’, ‘security’, ‘conflict’, ‘climate-related’ and ‘environment’.

<sup>10</sup> Since finalizing this analysis, the EEAS has published a Climate Change and Defence Roadmap (9 Nov. 2020) and a document on EU peace mediation (2 Dec. 2020), and the Council of the European Union has published the Council conclusions on EU peace mediation (7 Dec. 2020). These 3 documents and the recent institutional changes to DG DEVCO (Jan. 2021) were not included in the analysis. See EEAS, Security and Defence Policy Directorate, ‘Climate Change and Defence Roadmap’, EEAS(2020) 1251, Brussels, 6. Nov. 2020; EEAS, Directorate for an Integrated Approach to Security and Peace (ISPD), ‘Concept on EU peace mediation’, EEAS(2020) 1336, Brussels, 2 Dec. 2020; and Council of the EU, ‘Council conclusions on EU peace mediation’, 13573/20, Brussels, 7 Dec. 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Interviews were conducted to complement the document analysis and provide more insight into the three questions posed in the introduction. The personal communications had a similar aim but were more informal in nature, with the goal of providing broader context to the interviews and additional insights.

<sup>12</sup> All interviews were conducted under the Chatham House Rule, thus no direct references to individuals are provided in this paper. Individuals took part in a personal capacity and do not necessarily represent the official position of their respective organizations.



## II. Backdrop: The advancement of climate security debates in the European Union

The first mention of climate change as a security concern at the highest level of the EU was in 2003 in the European Security Strategy.<sup>13</sup> Yet it was not until March 2008, following the 2007 Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and requests by EU member states, that the Commission jointly with Javier Solana, the high representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and secretary general of the Council of the EU from 1999–2009, submitted a more substantial report to the European Council on ‘Climate Change and International Security’.<sup>14</sup>

This report framed climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ in the sense that climate change exacerbates already existing security risks, an understanding that is common among Western politicians and policymakers, and that has been carried through EU discourse to this day.<sup>15</sup> The same year, in December 2008, the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy dedicated a separate section to climate change.<sup>16</sup> In 2016, climate change also featured prominently in the EU Global Strategy.<sup>17</sup> Since then, the topic has stayed high on the political agenda and the Commission regularly reiterates the threat of climate change as a security concern, as do member states via the Council of the EU (see e.g. the latest 2020 Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on climate diplomacy).<sup>18</sup> The topic gained momentum under Federica Mogherini, the high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy and vice-president of the European Commission during 2014–19, culminating in a high-level event on ‘Climate, Peace and Security: The Time for Action’ in June 2018.<sup>19</sup>

The EU’s engagement with climate-related security debates has been of growing academic interest. While researchers acknowledge the EU’s strong leadership role, they have also pointed to a number of challenges with the EU’s approach, concerning the lack of conceptual clarity, implementation and a clear institutional home. First, they have observed ‘continuing institutional differences over how to frame “climate security” in the EU’ and conceptual confusion with more established concepts such as fragility, resilience and

<sup>13</sup> Council of the EU, ‘European Security Strategy—A secure Europe in a better world’, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Council of the EU and European Commission, *Climate Change and International Security: Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council*, S113/08 (Publications Office of the EU: Luxembourg, June 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Warner, J. and Boas, I., ‘Securitization of climate change: How invoking global dangers for instrumental ends can backfire’, *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, vol. 37, no. 8 (Dec. 2019), pp. 1471–88; and Remling, E., ‘The European Green Deal: A chance to promote a people-centred take on climate security’, SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 17 June 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Council of the EU, ‘Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing security in a changing world’, S407/08, 11 Dec. 2008.

<sup>17</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy* (EEAS: Brussels, June 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Council of the EU, ‘Council conclusions on climate diplomacy’, 5033/20, 20 Jan. 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Mogherini, F., ‘Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the high-level event “Climate, peace and security: the time for action”’, 22 June 2018.

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vulnerability.<sup>20</sup> This is seen as posing a challenge to an effective and shared EU response to these risks.

Second, researchers have found that many of the grand statements made by the EU on the security risks of climate change have not been matched with commensurate action.<sup>21</sup> The EU's use of threat multiplier, for example, seems to have translated into an assumption that climate mitigation—and mitigation alone—is the 'threat minimizer' of choice.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, despite climate security concerns having made it onto the EU's highest agenda, external action remains limited to promoting climate mitigation through diplomatic channels, an approach which has been called 'climate preventive diplomacy'.<sup>23</sup> It has been argued that this approach is unlikely to do much for the prevention of and preparedness for climate-related security issues. This challenge is not unique to the EU, however, as shown by research examining responses to CRSRs in US policy communities, which also finds that awareness of such risks has not translated into practical action.<sup>24</sup>

***It is important to understand how EU bodies, beyond the EEAS, view and address climate related security risks***

Third, researchers have found that the EU's approach to climate security is lacking an institutional home. It has been argued, for instance, that 'Climate security has become one of the clearest examples of an issue that falls into the gaps between ministerial portfolios and institutional mandates'.<sup>25</sup> Based on interviews with EEAS staff, researchers observed that '[while] a comprehensive approach to climate security requires institutional integration and policy coherence between e.g. development, security and climate action, [this] is still lacking'.<sup>26</sup> This body of research identifies a need for increased cooperation between different EU policy areas.

Much of this earlier research has focused on the EEAS—as the body managing the EU's diplomatic relations with countries beyond European borders and carrying out the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU—and less so on other parts of the EU.<sup>27</sup> While this is understandable given that the EEAS holds the mandate over the EU's security policy, it is also important to understand how other EU bodies, especially those operating under the Commission (including at the operational level), view and address CRSRs. Against this backdrop, this paper provides a unique examination of the frames and responses to CRSRs within a broader set of EU actors.

<sup>20</sup> Stang, G. and Dimsdale, T., 'The EU and climate security', Planetary Security Initiative, Policy Brief, Jan. 2017, p. 4; and Bremberg, Sonnsjö, and Mobjörk (note 4). See also Sonnsjö, H. and Bremberg, N., *Climate Change in an EU Security Context; The Role of the European External Action Service*, Stockholm University Research Report (Stockholm University: Stockholm, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Zwolski and Kaunert (note 3); Bremberg, Sonnsjö, and Mobjörk (note 4); Brown, Le More, and Raasteen, (note 2); and Fetzek and van Schaik (note 4).

<sup>22</sup> Liberatore, A., 'Climate change, security and peace: The role of the European Union', *Review of European Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 2013), p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> Pérez de las Heras (note 7), p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Abrahams, D., 'From discourse to policy: US policy communities' perceptions of and approaches to climate change and security', *Conflict, Security & Development*, vol. 19, no. 4 (July 2019), pp. 323–45.

<sup>25</sup> Youngs, R., *Climate Change and European Security* (Taylor & Francis: London, 2014), p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Sonnsjö and Bremberg (note 20), p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Sonnsjö and Bremberg (note 20) conclude that there is a need for broadening the focus of analysis to include other EU bodies.



### III. Analysis: The frames and responses to climate-related security risks among different European Union bodies

In order to analyse the frames of and responses to CRSRs among different EU bodies, this section considers the three key questions posed at the outset of this paper: (a) where in the EU are CRSRs talked about, (b) how do different EU bodies frame CRSRs, and (c) what actions are proposed, or taken, in response?

#### **Institutional actors: Multiple EU bodies with different mandates**

The responsibility for addressing CRSRs in the EU does not lie solely with one body or within one policy domain. Rather, CRSRs are an issue area that stretches across different domains and has often been closely linked to the European foreign and security policy.<sup>28</sup> The document analysis illustrates that in recent years climate-related security concerns have remained high on the agenda of different EU bodies. CRSRs are regularly discussed in the

Foreign Affairs Council conclusions and in a wide range of documents from the Commission, the EEAS and the European Parliament. It is noteworthy that most documents discussing the relationship between climate and security were issued by the EEAS, the Commission and the Council of the EU. Only a few documents were published by the different Commission

services. While Commission services operate under the Commission and feed into the development of Commission communications, this suggests that when engaging with climate-related security concerns, EU institutions most commonly do so at higher policy levels and in the foreign policy domain, and less so at the operational level in the policy domains of the various directorates general.

Nevertheless, although it may appear from the outside that there are siloes between the Commission services, and between the services and the EEAS, interviewees suggested that both formal and informal collaboration over policy development exists. Among Commission services, formal interactions include inter-service consultations, whereby Commission services collaborate on and feed into policy proposals led by others.<sup>29</sup> Consultations between different Commission services and the EEAS are held in the context of the EU Conflict Early Warning System (EWS), but there are few other formal channels for cooperation.<sup>30</sup> This EWS is run by the EEAS with the aim 'to bring EU-wide awareness of conflict risks and potential for EU preventive actions'.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these formal channels, interviewees

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<sup>28</sup> Dellmuth et al. (note 1); Bremberg, N., 'EU foreign and security policy on climate-related security risks', SIPRI Policy Brief, Nov. 2019; and Brown, Le More and Raasteen (note 2).

<sup>29</sup> DG CLIMA officer 2, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020; and EEAS officer 6, Personal communication via video call, Sep. 2020.

<sup>30</sup> DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29); and EEAS officers 4 and 5, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020.

<sup>31</sup> The EU Conflict EWS consists of four steps: (a) global conflict risk scan, (b) identifying 'at risk' countries, (c) analysis for early preventive action, and (d) reporting on early preventive action. See EEAS, 'EU Conflict Early Warning System', Fact sheet, Sep. 2014. Note that different early warning and information systems are run by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre at DG ECHO,



pointed to the important role that informal interactions play, often based on personal contacts with colleagues across Commission services and between the Commission services and the EEAS.<sup>32</sup>

A recent addition to the mix of institutional actors is the newly established Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS), which interviewees suggested could potentially play a role in the EU's response to CRSRs in the future.<sup>33</sup> In relation to this, interviewees pointed to the then forthcoming Climate Change and Defence Roadmap (November 2020) as one example of defence actors becoming more active in the climate and security policy space.<sup>34</sup> However, one interviewee maintained that this was not a suitable approach to tackling CRSRs as such, as preventative action needed to be taken long before defence actors got involved.<sup>35</sup>

### **Framing climate change and security: Climate security versus broader resilience approaches**

In line with earlier research, this paper finds that there are various ways in which EU documents as well as officers and external experts frame CRSRs.<sup>36</sup> Despite the prominence of climate-related security concerns seen in the document analysis, no document explicitly defines the terms used or elaborates on the relationship between climate and security. This suggests that climate security (how it is often termed in documents as well as in interviews) as a concept is assumed to be universally understood within the EU already.

While there is little to be found in the documents that suggests climate change will directly cause violent conflict, there nevertheless seems to be an assumed causal link between increased environmental pressures as a result of climate change and a decrease in international stability and security. Often, the assumption that climate change leads to greater insecurity is made without any qualification or explanation and taken at face value. For example, the 2020 Council conclusions on climate diplomacy state: 'climate change multiplies threats to international stability and security in particular affecting those in most fragile and vulnerable situations, reinforcing environmental pressures and disaster risk, contributing to the loss of livelihoods and forcing the displacement of people.'<sup>37</sup> In general, in the documents analysed there is very little mention of the root causes or 'pathways' that may lead to insecurity and their linkages to potential conflict, such as inequality, poverty, injustice or grievances,

*Climate-related security risks are framed differently across the EU and the terms used by different bodies are seldom clearly defined*

focusing on disaster response and civil protection; see European Commission, DG ECHO, 'Early warning and information systems'.

<sup>32</sup> EEAS officer 2, Interview with authors via video call, Sep. 2020.

<sup>33</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020; EEAS officers 4 and 5 (note 30); and External expert 2, Personal communication with authors via video call, Oct. 2020.

<sup>34</sup> See EEAS, Security and Defence Policy Directorate (note 10).

<sup>35</sup> Member of European Parliament 2, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Zwolski and Kaunert (note 3); Bremberg, Sonnsjö and Mobjörk (note 4); Brown, Le More and Raasteen (note 2); and Fetzek and van Schaik (note 4).

<sup>37</sup> Council of the EU (note 18).



which are known from earlier research to play a role in CRSRs.<sup>38</sup> In other words, how people's livelihoods are negatively affected by climate change and why, and how this in turn affects political stability, is not spelled out clearly even though this is crucial to understand when responding to these risks.

In terms of where CRSRs emerge geographically, one shared view across many EU documents seems to be that the source of insecurity is emerging from outside the EU. Namely, in vulnerable, 'less developed' or conflict-affected regions of the world, mostly in Africa and the Middle

East. Insecurity is seen to be travelling to the EU via—often not further specified—threats to international stability or unregulated migration flows to Europe. Climate change is thereby framed as a source of instability in the Global South, perceived to be resource-scarce, fragile or violent, with repercussions for international stability in general and for the EU in particular. Importantly, in the documents insecurity is

not framed as arising within the EU, nor are the EU's actions discussed much as having potential adverse impacts on others outside the EU. One exception is the 2018 'Evaluation of the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change', which discusses risks arising in Europe through, for instance, the climate-related disruption of international supply chains, trade and financial flows.<sup>39</sup>

It is noteworthy that the main focus of the documents seems to be on integrating CRSRs into the EU's foreign and security policy area. This might be explained by the fact that CRSRs are seen as risks emerging from abroad and that the EU has the mandate over the joint European foreign and security policy agenda but not over domestic policy issues. However, this framing leaves out other important potential sources of CRSRs, such as the unintended, adverse consequences of adaptation and mitigation responses by the EU in Europe or EU-supported measures in beneficiary countries (as discussed in box 1).

Findings from the interviews confirm that different framings and terms relating to CRSRs coexist among different EU bodies. Terms used by the interviewees include threat multiplier, climate security, climate–security nexus, environmental security, climate diplomacy, triple nexus (which is about increasing cooperation between the humanitarian, development and peace sectors), climate defence, natural resources and conflict, resilience, and stability.

While it is not possible to cluster the use of these terms strictly along the lines of different EU bodies, it was evident that some terms were used more by some EU officers than by others. Thematic officers from the EEAS

<sup>38</sup> Buhaug, H., 'Climate–conflict research: Some reflections on the way forward', *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Feb. 2015), p. 272; van Baalen, S. and Mobjörk, M., 'Climate change and violent conflict in East Africa: Integrating qualitative and quantitative research to probe the mechanisms', *International Studies Review*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Dec. 2018); Mobjörk, M., Krampe, F. and Tarif, K., 'Pathways of climate insecurity: Guidance for policymakers', SIPRI Policy Brief, Nov. 2020; and von Uexkull, N. and Buhaug, H., 'Security implications of climate change: A decade of scientific progress', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 58, no. 1 (Jan. 2021).

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, 'Evaluation of the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change', SWD(2018) 461 final, 11 Dec. 2018.

***The focus of the current debate on risks emerging from abroad leaves out other important potential sources of climate-related security risks***



and officers from DG CLIMA often used the term climate security.<sup>40</sup> Officers working at the operational level, tasked with implementing EU development and foreign policy agendas in non-EU countries, including at the EEAS geographical desks, DG DEVCO and DG ECHO, tended to use terms such as resilience and stability. This reflects a broader attention to the complex interlinkages between climate change and other factors. In doing so, they seemed to consider the security challenges of climate change more holistically, in interaction with development and humanitarian aid processes, and not solely as risks stemming from changes in climate.<sup>41</sup>

Understandably, the emphasis placed on the different terms to some extent reflects the different institutional mandates. In the EEAS as a whole, the focus of the debate is mostly on foreign and security policy. For DG CLIMA, one interviewee pointed out that climate security generally falls under the broader umbrella of climate diplomacy and is therefore institutionally placed within their International Relations Unit.<sup>42</sup> At the EEAS geographical desks and in DG DEVCO and DG ECHO, the focus is more on the relation to development and humanitarian aid policy.

Interviewees pointed out that DG DEVCO, generally seen as having the greatest spending power within the Commission, was not as active on the topic as others.<sup>43</sup> One interviewee even suggested that DG DEVCO was not sufficiently aware of the security risks of climate change and could be made more aware.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, the interviewee from DG DEVCO seemed well aware of the compounding risks of climate change and conflict, but was not convinced about the added value of labelling these risks as being about 'climate security'. The DG DEVCO interviewee suggested that the term might be useful in order to 'connect the dots' at the policy level but might not necessarily bring additional avenues for taking preventative action on the ground.<sup>45</sup>

***Understandably, the different ways in which EU bodies frame climate-related security risks to some extent reflects their institutional mandates***

Two interviewees raised concerns that the European climate response, especially in the context of the current Commission's flagship policy, the European Green Deal, will have implications on fossil fuel-exporting countries and shift the geopolitical balance internationally, with potential security implications.<sup>46</sup> This is a concern worth highlighting, as it was the only interview context in which repercussions from the EU's own actions on other geographic locations were raised, something that was not encountered at all in the document analysis.<sup>47</sup> Overall, the observations from the documents and the interviews suggest that as yet there is no shared language

<sup>40</sup> EEAS officer 3, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020; and EEAS officers 4 and 5 (note 30).

<sup>41</sup> DG DEVCO officer 1, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020; and DG ECHO officer 1, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020.

<sup>42</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33).

<sup>43</sup> EEAS officer 2 (note 32); EEAS officer 6 (note 29); and DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33).

<sup>44</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33).

<sup>45</sup> DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>46</sup> EEAS officer 1, Interview with authors via audio call, Sep. 2020; and EEAS officer 3 (note 40).

<sup>47</sup> The Just Transition Mechanism and Just Transition Fund of the European Green Deal, which seek to support workers and citizens of regions most economically impacted by the transition away from fossil fuel-extracting industries, could be interpreted as addressing some of these repercussions. However, these policy instruments are focused on livelihood security not societal

among EU bodies when it comes to talking about CRSRs (see section V on whether this in itself presents a key challenge).

### **Responding to CRSRs: Differing understandings of action**

How CRSRs are understood by EU bodies naturally has implications for how the EU responds to such risks. In both the document analysis and the interviews, the absence of a common understanding on CRSRs within the EU is evident when looking at the suggested responses to the identified risks.

Across the documents, three main actions are proposed in response to CRSRs, the first two of which are closely related. The first suggestion is to raise awareness of the linkages between climate and security in political dialogues, for instance through global leadership or in the UN Security Council. The second common suggestion is to promote climate mitigation action by other states and an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change under the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change, for instance by supporting third countries in the development of their nationally determined contributions.<sup>48</sup> This response,

here termed ‘mitigation diplomacy’, maintains that the best approach to reduce the security risks of climate change is to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. The third suggestion is the only one proposing concrete changes to the way in which the EU operates internally. It calls for improving the various European conflict and disaster EWSs by integrating climate-risk assessments into them, so as to include the monitoring

of near-future conflict and humanitarian disasters related to climatic changes.<sup>49</sup> While EWSs may well play an important role in risk prevention and crisis response, the documents are often vague about which specific EWS they refer to (e.g. the conflict EWS led by the EEAS or the disaster EWS led by DG ECHO), what these EWSs should monitor for and warn about, and who should be warned by them and take action (e.g. security/military actors or civil/humanitarian actors). Besides the call for integrating climate security into the European EWSs, the documents do not lay out other specific proposals for concrete action on CRSRs (in a few instances cooperation in transboundary water resources management is mentioned).<sup>50</sup>

Turning to the interviews, and very much in line with the documents, those EU officers using climate security language suggested that taking action on CRSRs implies externally promoting an ambitious implementation of the

*As of yet there is no shared language among EU bodies when it comes to talking about climate-related security risks*

stability; see European Commission, Communication on the European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640 final (European Commission: Brussels, Nov. 2019).

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. Mogherini, F., ‘Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on behalf of the European Commission in response to Question for written answer E-000974/19 to the Commission from Louis Michel (ALDE)’, 7 May 2019.

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. European Commission, ‘A strategic approach to resilience in the EU’s external action’, JOIN(2017) 21 final, 6 July 2017; Council of the EU, ‘Climate diplomacy—Council conclusions’, 18 Feb. 2019; and Mogherini, (note 48).

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Council of the EU, ‘Negotiating directives for a partnership agreement between the European Union and its member states of the one part, and with countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the other part’, 8094/18 ADD 1, 21 June 2018.



Paris Agreement.<sup>51</sup> They maintained that the EU should take an even more active role in incorporating CRSRs into diplomatic and policy discussions.<sup>52</sup> Integrating climate change into the existing EWSs was also mentioned by a number of interviewees.<sup>53</sup> However, an EEAS officer pointed out that the insights gained by the EU Conflict EWS into which countries were particularly prone to conflict were not particularly novel or surprising.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to discussing what actions are proposed or taken in response to CRSRs, the interviews often considered obstacles to more concrete action and suggestions for improving the EU's current response (see below).

#### *Obstacles to and suggestions for increased action*

The interviewees acknowledged that, despite discussion at a high policy level for over ten years, more work is required by the EU to address CRSRs in practice. Three main reasons were put forward to explain the perceived lack of concrete action on CRSRs by the EU.

First, although political will from the Commission and member states has been increasing over the years, it is still not sufficient.<sup>55</sup> In relation to this, the interviewees pointed out that the EU's foreign affairs community is continuously confronted with more pressing challenges, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and that such long-term, climate-related security concerns are competing with these immediate challenges on an already crowded agenda.<sup>56</sup> This challenge is not unique to the EU and is something that earlier research had already observed in relation to the EU's response to the 2008 economic crisis and the Arab Spring.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, a majority of the interviewees were optimistic that the current Commission under the presidency of Ursula von der Leyen (2019–24), with its European Green Deal, had increased momentum to act on climate change in general and, therefore, on CRSRs implicitly.<sup>58</sup>

Second, the interviewees pointed out that it remains unclear who has the mandate over the agenda on CRSRs. In other words, where in the EU the responsibility for tackling CRSRs resides—or should reside—institutionally. For example, other than two officers, none of the EU officials interviewed has an explicit mandate to work on the combined climate and conflict challenges; and these officers cover a much wider range of policy domains than just CRSRs. In that context, several interviewees explicitly called for increased knowledge of and staff training in CRSRs within existing EU institutions, including in EU delegations.<sup>59</sup>

***Long-term, climate-related security concerns are competing with more immediate challenges on an already crowded agenda***

<sup>51</sup> EEAS officer 1 (note 46); DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); and DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29).

<sup>52</sup> EEAS officer 1 (note 46); DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); and EEAS officer 3 (note 40).

<sup>53</sup> EEAS officer 1 (note 46); DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29); and EEAS officers 4 and 5 (note 30).

<sup>54</sup> EEAS officer 1 (note 46).

<sup>55</sup> DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29).

<sup>56</sup> External expert 1, Interview with authors via video call, Oct. 2020; and EEAS officer 6 (note 29).

<sup>57</sup> Youngs (note 25), p. 133.

<sup>58</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29); EEAS officer 2 (note 32); EEAS officers 4 and 5 (note 30); External expert 2 (note 33); and DG ECHO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>59</sup> DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29); and EEAS officers 4 and 5 (note 30).



As a third reason, some interviewees maintained that there has been no designated budget for action on CRSRs.<sup>60</sup> Most spending power lies with DG DEVCO, whereas DG CLIMA and the EEAS—those bodies most active in driving the climate security debate—have smaller budgets and less project management responsibility in comparison.<sup>61</sup> Whether these three challenges are unique for (in)action on CRSRs or also affect other issue areas that are mainstreamed across the EU (e.g. gender) is an important question for future research.

In terms of suggestions for how the EU might better respond to CRSRs in the future, there were a range of proposals. Some interviewees (especially from the EEAS and DG CLIMA) felt a need to make the climate security debate more prominent in multilateral and bilateral dialogues.<sup>62</sup> Others saw climate security as an important entry point for discussing climate change more broadly in dialogues with partners with whom there is usually little agreement over mitigation action. Climate security is considered a topic that finds a lot of consensus, and two instances involving the League of Arab States were given as examples of this.<sup>63</sup> One suggestion was that a clearer definition of CRSRs within the EU would help.<sup>64</sup> Other interviewees pointed out that leaving the definition somewhat broad has the advantage of allowing engagement with different kinds of stakeholders.<sup>65</sup>

Notably, the interviews with officers from the EEAS geographical desks and DG DEVCO suggested there were very different kinds of challenges to taking more concrete action on CRSRs. First, they pointed out that many different mainstreaming demands are handed down to them and colleagues in the EU delegations from higher policy levels, which can be both overwhelming and unrealistic to integrate into their everyday work.<sup>66</sup> Second, the interviewees saw the simplified and causal relationship between climate change and conflict that the term climate security implies as not helping with the planning of concrete projects or the development of context-sensitive responses to actually manage climate change impacts on human security.<sup>67</sup> One interviewee maintained that, on the ground, issues are usually complex and (local) context dependant, so using the generic term climate security does not necessarily add much to ongoing development aid work.<sup>68</sup> A third and related concern raised by these interviewees was that the term might fail to convene stakeholders who are not working on climate or security as such but on other related policy areas (e.g. agriculture or food security), meaning these stakeholders are not brought ‘to the table’.<sup>69</sup> Finally, it was mentioned by an external expert that climate security is not a very popular term with some governments.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>60</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); External expert 1 (note 56); and EEAS officer 3 (note 40).

<sup>61</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); and EEAS officer 3 (note 40).

<sup>62</sup> EEAS officer 2 (note 32).

<sup>63</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); and EEAS officer 3 (note 40).

<sup>64</sup> DG CLIMA officer 1 (note 33); and EEAS officers 4 and 5 (note 30).

<sup>65</sup> DG CLIMA officer 2 (note 29); and DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>66</sup> EEAS officer 2 (note 32); and DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>67</sup> EEAS officer 2 (note 32); and DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>68</sup> DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>69</sup> DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>70</sup> External expert 2 (note 33).



Interviewees from the EEAS geographical desks, DG DEVCO and DG ECHO did not necessarily see a need to formalize European responses to CRSRs further, but rather felt that the work on the ground with more holistic approaches (e.g. resilience) is a more suitable way to tackle the root causes and thereby prevent climate-related conflicts from arising in the medium and long term.<sup>71</sup> Another interviewee did not see a problem per se with having different understandings of CRSRs and concepts coexisting among different EU bodies.<sup>72</sup> While understanding climate–conflict linkages was seen by them as important in principle, this awareness did not automatically translate into a need for changing how these bodies already work with other countries and external partners, aiming to build long-term resilience and local capacity in developing or fragile contexts. The suggestions for responses by interviewees employing broader terms to describe CRSRs placed more emphasis on the need for building long-term stability in fragile and vulnerable communities.

In summary, while some officers suggested there were institutional hurdles to taking more action on CRSRs, others questioned the added value of climate security as a concept for achieving action and change in developing countries affected by the compounding risks of climate and conflict.

***The focus of the debate on climate-related security risks is on risks that arise outside of the EU, not in the EU or through EU action***

#### IV. Discussion: Why mitigation diplomacy and reactive crisis responses do not address the emerging climate-related security risks

There are two important reflections from the analysis of documents and interviews relating to the identified source of CRSRs and the proposed responses to them. First, reflecting on the definition of CRSRs and the three potential sources from which they can emerge—from direct climate impacts, indirect climate impacts and adverse effects of climate action (see box 1)—it is evident that the focus of the CRSR debate in the EU is very much on risks that arise elsewhere. In other words, at present the debate is largely based on an understanding of such risks arising outside the EU, with implications for the EU through indirect climate impacts (e.g. migration and supply chains). There is little mention of direct (i.e. domestic) climate impacts causing potential security problems for the EU, such as desertification, water stress, food security, or lack of or poorly planned adaptation. The analysis found only one example where attention was paid to the potential of CRSRs arising as a result of unintended, adverse effects of climate action cascading from EU action. This was mentioned by a few interviewees from the EEAS, in the context of concerns over the shifting geopolitical landscape as a result of the EU's decarbonization.<sup>73</sup>

Second, there are two main suggestions for action on CRSRs, a *preventative* response and a *reactive* response (see table 1). The main approach called for by those who employ climate security language in documents and interviews is

<sup>71</sup> EEAS officer 2 (note 32); DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41); and DG ECHO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>72</sup> DG DEVCO officer 1 (note 41).

<sup>73</sup> EEAS officer 1 (note 46); and EEAS officer 3 (note 40).

**Table 1.** Summary of four identified EU climate change and security frames categorized by type of response

	Preventative response		Reactive response	
	Mitigation diplomacy	Systemic risk prevention	Emergency crisis response and disaster preparedness	Climate change and defence <sup>a</sup>
Key concern	Mitigating climate change (stay below the 2°C target)	Tackling emerging insecurities by taking preventative measures	Addressing humanitarian emergencies	Reducing the immediate risk of conflict
Proposed response	Implement an ambitious Paris Agreement, mitigation as precautionary risk management	Strengthen long-term resilience to different kinds of insecurities and risks (incl. CRSRs) and building stability in developing countries	Improve the pan-European disaster EWS and the EU Conflict EWS	Address the links between defence and climate change in civilian and military CSDP missions and operations
Broader policy area	Climate diplomacy	Development	Disaster risk reduction	Security and defence
Focus of response	External	External	Internal and external	External
Governance level targeted by response	Multilateral level/high politics (e.g. UN Security Council, European Council, European Foreign Affairs Council, multilateral negotiations)	Operational level on the ground in non-EU countries (e.g. in African countries)	Government and operational level in the EU	Outside the EU
EU bodies employing the frame	EEAS (thematic officers), DG CLIMA	DG DEVCO, EEAS (geographical desks), DG ECHO (to some degree)	DG ECHO, EEAS	EEAS Security and Defence Policy Directorate, DG DEFIS, European Defence Agency
Specific terms used	Climate security, climate–security nexus, climate diplomacy, threat multiplier	Resilience, stability, triple nexus, humanitarian–development nexus	Triple nexus, humanitarian protection, civil protection, disaster preparedness	Climate–defence nexus, climate–security nexus, threat multiplier, climate defence

CRSR = Climate-related security risk; CSDP = Common Security and Defence Policy; DG CLIMA = Directorate General for Climate Action; DG DEFIS = Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space; DG DEVCO = Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development; DG ECHO = Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; EEAS = European External Action Service; EU = European Union; EWS = Early warning system; UN = United Nations

<sup>a</sup> The information in this column is based on interview comments about the then forthcoming Climate Change and Defence Roadmap (Nov. 2020). The summary provided is limited to those comments. The authors have not analysed the document in detail or spoken to officers from the EEAS Security and Defence Policy Directorate, the European Defence Agency (EDA) or DG DEFIS.

Source: Authors' own summary based on the document analysis and interviews.



a preventative response through mitigation diplomacy, meaning preventing CRSRs in the long run by encouraging an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement. This framing equates action on climate mitigation with action on CRSRs. In doing so, CRSRs are evoked as a motivator for mitigation action and strengthening multilateral cooperation, an approach which is in line with the EU's general conception of international security, rather than as a call for taking action on preventing CRSRs in their own right.<sup>74</sup> To a certain extent, talking about climate security in this way then becomes a means to an end, as the response called for does not address or prevent the security impacts of climate change—except for in half a century or so, at best. The other common proposal suggested by the documents and interviews is a reactive response, which proposes the monitoring of near-future conflict and humanitarian disasters, through EWSs. A novel, but equally reactive proposal (possibly gaining more importance in the future) is the call for engaging more defence actors, for example in the context of the aforementioned Climate Change and Defence Roadmap.<sup>75</sup>

***There is an action gap when it comes to preventing the adverse security implications of climate change heads-on***

While such approaches are valuable and important in addressing related challenges, they do not address the security issues that are likely to arise in the foreseeable future and, indeed, are already arising in some places. This is concerning because the world is not on track to meet the Paris Agreement's 2° Celsius goal; and as there is so much heat already baked into the climate system, even halting all emissions tomorrow would not prevent CRSRs from emerging and responses would still be required to support communities in managing the emerging challenges.<sup>76</sup> In other words, there is an action gap when it comes to preventing the adverse security implications of climate change. Strategies are needed to address the root causes and consequences of climate-related impacts on human security and the potential pathways for emerging societal instability.

Nevertheless, it also became evident from the interviews that there are several EU bodies engaging in preventative measures that may contribute towards addressing some of these emerging CRSRs. The core work of DG DEVCO, DG ECHO and other EU bodies might not be currently labelled as being about climate security, but in strengthening local resilience in vulnerable communities it does address some of the root causes of and potential pathways to climate-related insecurity. These policy domains of development, adaptation, natural resource management and disaster risk reduction lie outside the focus of the current debate, but need to be brought on board in order to take a more comprehensive approach to CRSRs in the EU.<sup>77</sup> Growing awareness of CRSRs in these bodies can be further supported

<sup>74</sup> Bremberg, N., 'European regional organizations and climate-related security risks: EU, OSCE and NATO', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2018/1, Feb. 2018.

<sup>75</sup> EEAS, Security and Defence Policy Directorate (note 10).

<sup>76</sup> Climate Action Tracker, 'CAT Climate Target Update Tracker', accessed on 18 Dec. 2020.

<sup>77</sup> Given that this paper only examines the EEAS and some of the many different Commission services, future studies may want to broaden the focus even further to include the Directorates General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiation (DG NEAR), Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), Environment (DG ENV), Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS), and the Joint Research Centre of the Commission.



by capacity-building initiatives and the provision of relevant and targeted information material with concrete examples from the field.

## V. Ways forward: The need for preventative action on climate-related security risks

At the level of international debate, the EU remains a vocal and leading actor in addressing CRSRs, with several member states also advancing the agenda individually. Nonetheless, despite CRSRs being advanced through the most influential ministerial councils in the EU (e.g. the Foreign Affairs Council), the analysis of documents together with interviews and personal communications finds that as yet there is no clear and decisive process for EU action on CRSRs in their own right. There is little to indicate that increased debate about climate security at the level of high policy has given way to a broader focus on comprehensive or integrated strategies to address such risks at the level of operations, for instance, across the European development, humanitarian aid or environmental policy communities. Nor does awareness of CRSRs appear to have translated into increased understanding of the potential adverse implications of the EU's own work for others, for instance, in the context of development cooperation, climate adaptation planning or disaster risk reduction.

Some interviewees called for a need to have a shared definition of CRSRs, and it seems evident that conceptual clarity might help the EU as a whole in communicating consistently across Commission services, with other EU entities, and beyond. Yet whether streamlining the current climate security debate would lead to the planning of effective programmes that can contribute to addressing the emerging CRSRs already locked into the climate system and help with work on the ground remains to be seen. Indeed, some interviewees questioned whether climate security as a term manages to convene all the relevant stakeholders. Advocates of the climate security framing, therefore, need to articulate more clearly how this particular framing can help to prepare for these risks and take preventative measures in practice. It may be that the framing is particularly useful in high-level political discussions in order to strengthen the case for long-term climate mitigation, but serves less purpose among bodies working at the operational level addressing more immediate risks. In turn, advocates of a broader risk or resilience framing need to ensure that the emerging risks of climate change for security are considered systematically in their ongoing activities and are not just dissolved into business as usual.

One key challenge of the current climate security debate is the focus on mitigation diplomacy and reactive crisis responses, and the absence of a more comprehensive understanding of CRSRs that addresses emerging risks and the multifaceted factors that may lead to instability in the long run.<sup>78</sup> Preventing climate change beyond the 2°C target and tackling immediate conflict and humanitarian crises are doubtless important policy responses, but they cannot be the only responses to CRSRs. If indeed a central concern for the EU is about CRSRs emerging in non-EU countries, as suggested by the document analysis, interviews and personal communications, then

<sup>78</sup> See van Baalen and Mobjörk (note 38).



this awareness could be expected to result in a preventative approach—one that seeks not only to prevent further climate change, but also to tackle the different pathways that might translate climate change impacts elsewhere into increased security risks for the EU. Although this does not currently seem to be in focus, seeking to understand and address these pathways would provide an additional dimension to the current thinking on CRSRs in the EU and promote a more holistic approach across the organization. At the same time, it is not sufficient for the EU to only focus on CRSRs emerging abroad; the EU should also consider the potential for risks emerging domestically, as well as the risks that EU action may pose to others.

If the EU wishes to further deepen the integration of security risks emerging from climate change in its policy, this needs to be complemented with a broader perspective on responses to climate-related instability that considers other relevant areas of the EU's work, including on environment, adaptation to climate change, natural resource management, peace, security and conflict, and disaster risk reduction. One of the EU documents analysed, the 'Strategic Approach to Resilience', integrates climate security concerns into a broader development agenda.<sup>79</sup> This approach might offer a fruitful entry point to a more holistic way of addressing the underlying drivers of instability through the EU's external engagements. By drawing on a broader spectrum of interventions, it may therefore mitigate the potential for climate-related insecurity.

Three areas stand out where this could be done in the context of EU climate and development policy: (a) by considering the possibility of CRSRs arising from within the EU, for instance, as a form of maladaptation or malmitigation by the EU in Europe; (b) by considering the possible repercussions of the EU's own policies on stability elsewhere; and (c) through developing conflict-sensitive development, climate adaptation and mitigation interventions by the EU in beneficiary countries, led by EU delegations. As the EU, together with its individual member states, is the largest donor of development aid worldwide, there is a significant potential to support concrete, preventative action on CRSRs in developing countries.<sup>80</sup>

***There is a significant potential for the EU and its member states to support concrete, preventative action on climate-related security risks***

<sup>79</sup> European Commission (note 49). There are also other instances where similar suggestions have been made, albeit as side notes, see e.g. the 2018 EEAS high-level event 'Climate, Peace and Security: The Time for Action'.

<sup>80</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Aid by DAC members increases in 2019 with more aid to the poorest countries', 16 Apr. 2020.

**Annex A.** Overview of European Union documents analysed in detail (by year and publishing agency).

Year	Document
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and European Commission, <i>Climate Change and International Security: Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council</i>, S/113/08 (European Commission: Brussels, Mar. 2008).</li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS), <i>EU Climate Diplomacy for 2015 and beyond</i>, Reflection Paper (European Commission: Brussels, Jan. 2013).</li> </ul>
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European External Action Service (EEAS), <i>Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy</i> (EEAS: Brussels, June 2016).</li> </ul>
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, <i>A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council</i>, JOIN(2017) 21 final (European Commission: Brussels, July 2017).</li> <li>European Parliament, Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services and Oxford Analytica, <i>Global Trends to 2035: Geo-Politics and International Power</i> (European Parliament: Brussels, Sep. 2017).</li> <li>General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Council Conclusions on Implementing the EU Global Strategy—Strengthening Synergies between EU Climate and Energy Diplomacies and Elements for Priorities for 2017</i>, Council conclusions 6981/17 (Council of the European Union: Brussels, June 2017).</li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>African Union and European Union, <i>Memorandum of Understanding between the Africa Union and the European Union on Peace, Security and Governance</i> (European Union: Brussels, May 2018).</li> <li>European Commission, Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), <i>Environment and Climate Change Mainstreaming in EU Development Cooperation, Briefing note for the OECD DAC peer-learning visit</i> (DG DEVCO: Brussels, Sep. 2018).</li> <li>European Commission, <i>A Clean Planet for All: A European Strategic Long-Term Vision for a Prosperous, Modern, Competitive and Climate Neutral Economy</i>, Communication from the Commission, COM(2018) 773 final (European Commission: Brussels, Nov. 2018).</li> <li>European Commission, <i>Evaluation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change</i>, Commission Staff Working Document, SWD(2018) 461 final (European Commission: Brussels, Dec. 2018).</li> <li>European Commission, <i>Report on the Implementation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change</i>, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM(2018) 738 final (European Commission: Brussels, Dec. 2018).</li> <li>European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, <i>Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for and EU Strategy</i>, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank, JOIN(2018) 31 final (European Commission: Brussels, Sep. 2018).</li> <li>European External Action Service (EEAS), <i>Climate, Peace and Security: The Time for Action, Meeting summary of high-level event hosted by High Representative Federica Mogherini</i> (EEAS: Brussels, June 2018).</li> <li>European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, <i>Report on Climate Diplomacy</i>, 2017/2272(INI), A8-0221/2018 (June 2018).</li> <li>General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy</i>, Council conclusions 6125/18 (Council of the European Union: Brussels, Feb. 2018).</li> <li>General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Negotiating Directives for a Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Its Member States of the One Part, and with Countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the Other Part</i>, 8094/18 ADD 1 (Council of the European Union: Brussels, June 2018).</li> <li>Mogherini, F., <i>Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the High-Level Event 'Climate, Peace and Security: The Time for Action'</i> (EEAS: Brussels, 22 June 2018).</li> </ul>



Year	Document
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Commission, Directorate General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA), <i>Going Climate-Neutral by 2050: A Strategic Long-Term Vision for a Prosperous, Modern, Competitive and Climate-Neutral EU Economy</i> (European Union: Strasbourg, 2019).</li> <li>• European Commission, <i>European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: Joining Forces for a Common Future</i>, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council (European Commission: Brussels, Apr. 2019).</li> <li>• European External Action Service (EEAS), <i>EU's Call to Raise Global Ambition on Climate Change</i> (EEAS: Brussels, 15 Feb. 2019).</li> <li>• European External Action Service (EEAS), <i>The European Union's Global Strategy Three Years On, Looking Forward</i> (EEAS: Brussels, June 2019).</li> <li>• General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy</i>, Council conclusions 6152/19 (Council of the European Union: Brussels, Feb. 2019).</li> <li>• General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Council Conclusions on Security and Defence in the Context of the EU Global Strategy</i>, Council conclusions 10048/19 (Council of the European Union: Strasbourg, June 2019).</li> <li>• Mogherini, F., <i>Answer given by Vice-President Mogherini on Behalf of the European Commission in Response to Question for Written Answer E-000974/19 to the Commission from Louis Michel (ALDE)</i> (European Commission: Brussels, May 2019).</li> <li>• Parenti, A., <i>Statement on Behalf of the European Union and Its Member States by Mr. Antonio Parenti, Minister Counsellor, Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, at the Security Council Open Debate on Addressing the Impacts of Climate Related Disasters on International Peace and Security</i>, Statement on behalf of the EU (EEAS: New York, 25 Jan. 2019).</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Commission, Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, <i>RescEU</i> (European Commission: Brussels, Mar. 2020).</li> <li>• European Commission, <i>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing the Framework for Achieving Climate Neutrality and Amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 (European Climate Law)</i>, COM(2020) 80 final (European Commission: Brussels, Apr. 2020).</li> <li>• European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, <i>Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa</i>, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council JOIN(2020) 4 final (European Commission: Brussels, Mar. 2020).</li> <li>• General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy</i>, Council conclusions 5033/20 (Council of the European Union: Brussels, Jan. 2020).</li> <li>• General Secretariat of the Council, <i>Council Conclusions on Security and Defence</i>, Council conclusions 8910/20 (Council of the European Union: Brussels, June 2020).</li> <li>• European Parliament, <i>Annual Report on the Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. European Parliament Resolution of 15 January 2020 on the Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy—Annual Report (2019/2136(INI))</i>, P9_TA(2020)0008 (European Parliament: Strasbourg, Jan. 2020).</li> </ul>

**Annex B. Overview of interviews and personal communications with European Union officials and external experts**

Interview/Personal communication	EU officials and external experts	Format	Date
Interview 1	Member of European Parliament 1	Video call	15 Sep. 2020
Interview 2	EEAS officer 1	Audio call	23 Sep. 2020
Interview 3	EEAS officer 2	Video call	29 Sep. 2020
Interview 4	DG CLIMA officer 1	Video call	5 Oct. 2020
Interview 5	External expert 1	Video call	6 Oct. 2020
Interview 6	DG CLIMA officer 2	Video call	6 Oct. 2020
Interview 7	DG DEVCO officer 1 <sup>a</sup>	Video call	12 Oct. 2020
Interview 8	EEAS officer 3	Video call	13 Oct. 2020
Interview 9	EEAS officer 4 and 5	Video call	14 Oct. 2020
Interview 10	Member of European Parliament 2	Video call	20 Oct. 2020
Interview 11	DG ECHO officer 1	Video call	20 Oct. 2020
Personal communication A	EEAS officer 6	Video call	24 Sep. 2020
Personal communication B	External expert 2	Video call	15 Oct. 2020
Personal communication C	DG ECHO officer 2	Audio call	19 Oct. 2020
Personal communication D	DG ECHO officer 3	Video call	3 Nov. 2020

DG CLIMA = Directorate General for Climate Action; DG DEVCO = Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development; DG ECHO = Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; EEAS = European External Action Service; EU = European Union.

<sup>a</sup> Several other officials from DG DEVCO were contacted but did not respond to a request for an interview.



## Abbreviations

CRSR	Climate-related security risk
DG CLIMA	Directorate General for Climate Action
DG DEFIS	Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space
DG DEVCO	Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development
DG ECHO	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
EWS	Early warning system
UN	United Nations



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# A REASSESSMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE- RELATED SECURITY RISKS

ELISE REMLING AND ANNIEK BARNHOORN

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