

INTRODUCING ENVIRONMENT OF PEACE

The Environment of Peace initiative

The word ‘crisis’ is all around us: crises of hunger, biodiversity, energy, economy, supply chains, mental health, security, migration, cost of living and climate. Each crisis demands to be seen on its own, and traditionally we have looked for solutions in the same narrow way.

Yet in reality these crises are increasingly connected and interacting in ways that can be difficult to understand, let alone respond to. Unpacking and facing up to the complexity of these intertwined challenges is key to addressing them more effectively. Among other things, this means finding new ways to work between traditional silos that persist in policy, practice and academia.

SIPRI launched the Environment of Peace initiative in May 2020, with the principal aim of examining the connections between two of these crises—or sets of crises—that have far-reaching implications for peace and human well-being in the decades ahead: one affecting the natural environment and planetary systems; the other affecting security, and the norms and institutions that are meant to uphold it.¹

In May 2022, SIPRI published *Environment of Peace: Security in a New Era of Risk*, a policy report that synthesizes nearly two years of research.² It details the twin crises, the risks they are creating for peace and the security challenges that must be managed in a green transition. The report highlights the role of governance in these developing crises—and in possible solutions. It concludes with five principles and six recommendations to guide efforts to address the twin crises (see box 1).

SIPRI is now building on the May 2022 report by publishing an in-depth research report in four parts. It sets out the evidence base that provided the foundation for the policy report. This introduction provides background on the Environment of Peace initiative and previews the four parts of the research report.

¹ This project was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

² Black, R. et al., *Environment of Peace: Security in a New Era of Risk* (SIPRI: Stockholm, May 2022).

BOX 1. THE PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF ENVIRONMENT OF PEACE

Principles for an Environment of Peace

- 1 Think fast, think ahead, act now—establishing an Environment of Peace needs both far-sighted vision and immediate action.
- 2 Cooperate to survive and thrive—a new era of risk demands a new mode of cooperation between governments and others.
- 3 Expect the unexpected, be prepared to adapt—the risk landscape will evolve, so responses need to be flexible and adaptive.
- 4 A just and peaceful transition will succeed—moving to environmentally benign models of energy and land use must not exacerbate insecurity.
- 5 By everyone, for everyone—inclusive processes that involve everyone affected will produce better and fairer outcomes.

Recommendations for an Environment of Peace

- 1 Address the linked crises with joint solutions—identify and implement measures that build both peace and environmental integrity.
- 2 Invest in preparedness and resilience—build capacity to detect signs of growing threats and defuse tensions.
- 3 Finance peace, not risk—meet international funding obligations, end conflict subsidies, place funds where they are most needed.
- 4 Deliver a just and peaceful transition—assess possible negative outcomes of pro-environment measures before implementation.
- 5 Be deliberately inclusive—involve marginalized groups fully in decision making and share the benefits.
- 6 Educate, inform, research—understand and communicate the risks, build cooperation through education.

Note: This is a summary; the full text of the principles and recommendations can be found in the Environment of Peace policy report.

Source: Black, R. et al., *Environment of Peace: Security in a New Era of Risk* (SIPRI: Stockholm, May 2022).

Origins and scope

The Environment of Peace initiative arose partly because 2022 marks 50 years since the first high-level warnings were sounded about the links between human security and environmental integrity, at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972.

The initiative was also born out of the realization that a new comprehensive analysis was needed in this field. Much has changed in just seven years since the publication of the last comparable report—*A New Climate for Peace*—not only in the mounting evidence of the impacts of

compounding environmental crises, but also in academic understanding of the relationships between environmental stresses and insecurity.³

The Environment of Peace reports go beyond a climate framing and look across the range of environmental crises, including biodiversity loss, pollution and ocean degradation. They contain detailed analysis of the breadth and complexity of risks at the interface of environment and security.

The reports provide new evidence of how policies designed to address the root causes of environment crises, if not designed well, can increase risks of conflict and insecurity. They show the importance of ensuring that the much-needed transition to more sustainable societies maximizes the opportunities for peace and minimizes the risks of unintended negative social consequences. Finally, they examine what has been done by governments, international organizations and civil society, and what more is needed in terms of policy and mindset shifts.

A new era of risk

The Covid-19 pandemic spread worldwide as work got underway in the Environment of Peace initiative. The pandemic's profound social and economic impacts shed new light on vulnerability, resilience, preparedness and fragility. Areas of the world that were already impacted by conflict, environmental degradation and climate stress were put under even more pressure, not least by the national pandemic responses. The implications for already fragile communities yielded important new insights for research and further reinforced one of the central ideas of Environment of Peace: that there is a single security space influenced by a broad spectrum of interacting factors. Trying to understand or manage any of them in isolation is misguided and dangerous.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin in early 2022 provided stark new evidence of the darkening security horizon, but also of the way risks can cascade and transform across domains. The country with the world's biggest nuclear arsenal and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council was nakedly attempting to subsume a sovereign state. The implications for European and global security were plain enough. Less immediately apparent were the cascading human security risks, as reduced food and fertilizer exports from Russia and Ukraine combined with poor harvests in other parts of the world to affect the availability and price of food in some of the poorest, most environmentally vulnerable and most politically volatile regions.

The immediate causes of both the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine did not lie in the environmental sphere. Nevertheless, both events have environmental links. As environmental degradation raises the risk of disease spreading from wild animals to humans, pandemics are

³ Rüttinger, L. et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks* (Adelphi/International Alert/Wilson Center/ISS: Berlin, 2015).

likely to become more frequent. In the case of Russia's war in Ukraine, the compounding and cascading effects of the invasion on food security in climate-vulnerable regions, as well as the consequences of dependence on fossil fuels, are clear to see. Furthermore, the responses to both events have raised important questions about the governance challenges of securing a peaceful future in a world of increasing risks.

The Environment of Peace research report

The Environment of Peace reports are the output of a process involving leading experts and practitioners in the fields of environment and security. The research and analysis were carried out by a team of more than 30 researchers based in SIPRI and other institutes. An international expert panel, chaired by former Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, guided the work.⁴ This panel included prominent figures from the worlds of policy, research and civil society, who are working at the interface of environment, security and human rights.

Throughout the development of the reports, civil society representatives, youth experts, policy makers, researchers and practitioners have generously given their time and input, helping to shape the research agenda and providing indispensable feedback as the work evolved.

The research report is published in four parts—Elements of a Planetary Emergency (part 1); Security Risks of Environmental Crises (part 2); Navigating a Just and Peaceful Transition (part 3); and Enabling an Environment of Peace (part 4)—as outlined below.

Elements of a Planetary Emergency

Part 1 lays out the conceptual and evidential landscape for Environment of Peace. Led by Dan Smith, SIPRI Director, it brings together data on a wide range of indicators, showing that both security and environmental stresses are increasing. These include markers of decline in the natural environment: pollution, climate change, species loss and associated issues. On the security side, part 1 provides data on 'hard' security questions such as militarization, the collapse of international arms controls and military spending, and on 'human' security concerns such as hunger and development. It considers the failures of governance to address these pressing crises and argues that the

⁴ The International Expert Panel consisted of Margot Wallström (Chair), former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, European Commissioner for the Environment and UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Jörg Balsiger, Director, Institute and Hub for Environmental Governance and Territorial Development at the University of Geneva; Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Administrator of the UN Development Programme; Ilwad Elman, Chief Operating Officer, Elman Peace, Somalia; Chibeze Ezekiel, National Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Champion for Ghana and Coordinator, Strategic Youth Network for Development; Arunabha Ghosh, Chief Executive Officer, Council on Energy, Environment and Water, India; Hindou Ibrahim, SDG advocate and environmental activist, Chad; Ma Jun, Director, Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, China; Johan Rockström, Co-director, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research; Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General, Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, and Minister Responsible for Climate Change, Fiji; Dan Smith, Director, SIPRI; Isabel Studer, Founding Director, Sostenibilidad Global, Mexico; and Ulf Sverdrup, Director, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

health of the global biosphere should be recognized as a core national security interest.

Security Risks of Environmental Crises

Part 2 shows how combinations of environmental and security phenomena are generating complex risks. Through a theoretical framework informed by the literature, Cedric de Coning, Research Professor at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), and his team explore different pathways from environmental stress to conflict and how the darkening security horizon and environmental crises are interacting to generate different types of risk: compound, cascading, emergent, systemic and existential. The analysis is supported by numerous case studies, spanning a variety of social-ecological systems and different types of risks. Part 2 also discusses options for responding to these complex risks.

Navigating a Just and Peaceful Transition

Part 3 focuses on needed transitions towards sustainability and climate resilience, with special attention given to areas such as land use, energy and climate response. Geoffrey D. Dabelko, Professor at Ohio University, and his colleagues argue these transitions must happen quickly and will inevitably meet opposition. Policymakers must prioritize both just and peaceful approaches to achieve sustained success. The authors analyse evidence from the major climate mitigation, adaptation and conservation approaches to illustrate the downsides of ill-considered interventions, while highlighting the opportunities and best practices. The green technology transition promises to remain mineral-intensive, creating familiar peace and justice challenges at a larger scale. Part 3 explores the potential for climate adaptation to help build and sustain peace, while documenting the main pitfalls of maladaptation. Finally, it looks at the need to manage the risks of transition in petrostates, as countries highly dependent on income from fossil fuels move away from this carbon-intensive energy source.

Enabling an Environment of Peace

Part 4 examines the legal and institutional landscape within which the twin crises—and humanity's responses to them—play out. Lead authors Hafsa Maalim, SIPRI Associate Senior Researcher, and Melvis Ndiloseh, CEO of the Foundation for Peace and Solidarity and Senior Lecturer at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon, identify policy options for change. Part 4 surveys the various international, regional and national-level agreements that link environmental safeguards to security concerns and identifies critical gaps. It looks at the many initiatives among UN agencies and civil society that aim to reduce security risks and environmental stressors in tandem, from the

UN Mission in Somalia to educational non-governmental organizations in the Middle East.

A number of in-depth case studies and other input papers that were commissioned to inform the research and analysis are included in the report's annexes.

Creating an Environment of Peace

Much has changed for the better since the 1972 Stockholm Conference. Efforts to address environmental and climate challenges permeate the entire UN system. Hundreds of multilateral environmental treaties have been signed. Hundreds of businesses have acknowledged the need to reach net zero carbon emissions before mid-century, and several militaries and military alliances now recognize climate change as one of the factors amplifying conflict and security risks.

And yet the world we inhabit today is very much the world that Stockholm 1972 warned about. In the intervening decades, decision makers across the world have not acted on the science or for the greater good, they have not built resilience adequately and they have not prioritized cooperation over competition.

The Environment of Peace research report reiterates many of the same concerns raised in 1972, but it is grounded in the realities of 2022. It reveals how the environmental and development issues identified 50 years ago have grown and evolved; and how developments in science, technology, politics and globalization have transformed the challenges, as well as the range of solutions we can call on. Above all, it highlights the urgency and sensitivity of managing the twin crises and working to build an Environment of Peace.

Environment of Peace: Security in a New Era of Risk was not designed to sit on shelves; it was designed to be used—to spark action and greater understanding. In the months since its launch, it has been shared and discussed with governments, diplomats, national development agencies, international organizations, civil society leaders, multilateral development banks and more. The research team hopes that it will lead to institutional change, new policies and more effective implementation, inspired by the report's principles and recommendations. By publishing this research report, SIPRI hopes that Environment of Peace will not only inform but also be a catalyst for new research and new or improved collaboration across disciplines.