



A RESOLUTION FOR A PEACEFUL CLIMATE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

The risk of human suffering is increasing sharply across the world. Stark inequality, shifting demographics, resource scarcity and extreme weather are each providing fertile ground for conflict. But scientific evidence shows that the worst is still to come; the Earth is projected to warm to 2.2°C above pre-industrial levels by the middle of this century.¹ If human societies do not change tack extreme resource scarcity will exacerbate all challenges facing humanity. As these risks gather pace, ongoing crises cannot overwhelm humanity's capacity to prepare and become resilient to rising climate insecurity.

In recent years, faced with growing climate-related risks, the United Nations and its member states have come together to think differently about global governance. The years 2015 and 2016 saw the world's governments come to agreements and pass resolutions that

mark a new future for the UN peace and security architecture. In 2017, as the new UN Secretary-General António Guterres takes office, these agreements will filter through the UN's operating entities and strengthen the UN. The UN Security Council (UNSC) itself will be required to look more holistically at the drivers of conflict, and mobilize the UN system to deliver preventive action to attain peace and security.

Two considerations shape the continuing debate. The first is the common thread shared by recent advances in global governance: a preventive, sustainable and structural pursuit of peace. To manage and contain current crises, concerted investments in conflict prevention and sustainable development are critical. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015, and the Sustaining Peace Resolution jointly approved by the UNSC and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2016 each chart growing global agreement in favour of preventive action.²

² United Nations, General Assembly, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for

¹ Chen, H. et al., *Food, Water, Energy, Climate Outlook, Perspectives from 2016* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change: Cambridge, MA, 2016).

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SUMMARY

● Climate change is increasingly viewed as the world's greatest global security risk. However, the UN Security Council (UNSC) has not consistently or systematically addressed climate-related security risks.

In practice, the UNSC has predominantly focused on crisis management and hard security interventions but more recently the demand for investment in conflict prevention has grown rapidly. Supported by the confidence in global action on climate change generated by the Paris Agreement, there is a window of opportunity for the UNSC to take action on climate security. That is, the management of the direct and indirect consequences of inadequate or mismanaged climate mitigation and adaptation.

The UNSC's modest investments in conflict prevention have generated considerable progress in a few discrete areas. It has established four clear functions for conflict prevention: (a) political elevation of root causes; (b) institution building and reform; (c) coordination of the UN system; and (d) mainstreaming into security operations. In taking action on climate security, the UNSC could help to strengthen climate risk-informed decision making and facilitate a coordination function on climate security across the UN system.



The second consideration is the gap between stated need and actual performance. World leaders have labelled climate change the greatest threat to global security.³ However, engagement by the UNSC has not been commensurate with the scale of the threat; nor has it taken a systematic approach. A series of debates have raised awareness of security impacts posed by climate change but few actions have been mandated. Realizing these transformational policies will require new operating models for the UN institutions and agencies.

Before the Paris Agreement was adopted there were concerns that UNSC interventions would result in prescriptive mitigation measures that would interfere with sovereign development choices. The consensus embodied in the Paris Agreement gives confidence to a managed mitigation approach, without the need for a punitive role for the UNSC. These developments open up opportunities for the UNSC to expand its focus towards managing the impacts of climate change. With or without new approaches, climate impacts will be on the

UNSC's agenda. The consequences of resource scarcity are daily agenda items. However, a preventive approach will require a new practice to enable the UNSC to respond to climate risk information and mobilize response action.

This policy brief offers suggestions for that new practice and specifically for the role of the UNSC in preventive action on climate security as Sweden takes up its membership of the UNSC for the period 2017–18. First, it explores the understanding of climate security following the Paris Agreement. Second, it examines the history of the climate debate in the UNSC. Third, it considers how the UNSC has addressed other conflict prevention approaches in order to understand possible analogues for interventions on climate security. Finally, the policy brief proposes recommendations for actions to be undertaken in the coming period that would enable the UNSC to take a stronger role in ameliorating climate impacts.

CLIMATE SECURITY POST-PARIS

The adoption of the Paris Agreement in December 2015 at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) marked a watershed moment in multilateral diplomacy. All countries agreed to contribute and increase nationally determined contributions to climate action on a five-year cycle towards phasing out greenhouse gas emissions to net zero in the second half of the 21st century. In addition, the Paris Agreement initiated a rebalancing of the regime across the full spectrum of climate risk management (see box 1). Alongside

Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1, 25 Sep. 2015; Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), opened for signature 22 Apr. 2016, entered into force 4 Nov. 2016; and UN Security Council Resolution 2282, 27 Apr. 2016.

³ See e.g. Rothe, D., *Securitizing Global Warming: A Climate of Complexity* (Routledge: Abingdon and New York, NY, 2016); Remarks by Ban Ki-moon at Climate Leaders Summit, Washington, DC, 11 Apr. 2014, <<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2014-04-11/secretary-generals-remarks-climate-leaders-summit>>; Ghazi, W. G., Muniruzzaman, A. N. M. and Singh, A. K., *Climate Change and Security in South Asia: Cooperating for Peace*, Global Military Advisory Council on Climate Change (GMACCC) Paper no. 2 (GMACCC/Institute for Environmental Security/European Climate Foundation: May 2016); and Goldberg, J., 'The Obama doctrine', *The Atlantic*, Apr. 2016.



the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement moved the international climate regime beyond mitigation and highlighted that adaptation is of equal importance. It stressed the need to (a) improve preparedness for impending climate impacts and (b) put in place contingency plans for high-impact scenarios.

However, current nationally determined climate action contributions put the world on track to warm to 3.7°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century.⁴ That is a trajectory woefully inconsistent with the Paris Agreement commitment to limiting warming to well below 2°C, aiming for 1.5°C. Climatic events during the year since the adoption of the Paris Agreement provide ample evidence to scientists, leaders and citizens alike as to the sensitive nature of the Earth's climatic system. The year 2016 was the hottest year on record, with Arctic winter temperatures recorded to be 20°C warmer than average.⁵ The year also saw the most volatile El Niño ever documented.⁶ The Paris Agreement offers hope for avoiding the worst-case scenarios but only if countries significantly increase their commitments. Based on current mitigation and adaptation action trajectories, high-probability outcomes will include

Box 1. The three pillars of climate change risk management

As the challenge of addressing and living with climate change unfolds, the toolbox of possible responses is expanding. There are now three pillars of climate change risk management: mitigation, adaptation and security.

Mitigation constitutes efforts taken to reduce and avoid the scale of climate change. Traditionally, this has mainly taken the form of limiting global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Adaptation is the effort taken to adjust and accommodate life on Earth within a changing climate. Adaptation encompasses incremental changes such as flood-defence construction, as well as large-scale socioeconomic changes such as altering diets, retraining workforces and in some cases migration.

Climate security reflects the management of the direct and indirect consequences of inadequate or mismanaged climate mitigation and adaptation. This includes managing challenges such as climate-stressed resource scarcity, unmanaged large-scale migration, and conflict in climate-stressed environments. No single approach can fully manage the full spectrum of climate risks. Each approach is taken in continuum, informed by the relative success or failure of other approaches.

breaches of human, community and hard security.⁷

Although the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement changed the international debate to more comprehensively include adaptation and climate security, these fields of climate risk management lack the maturity of the mitigation debate. Adaptation has traditionally been considered a local or developing-country challenge and has not been raised in the international debate at a level commensurate with the risk. There are some institutions, including the UNSC, that are tasked with managing resource security events of international significance. However, these institutions tend to be less accustomed to the preventive approaches needed to address climate security. The challenges caused by climate stresses will take these institutions further into uncharted territory as resource

⁴ There is a 50% likelihood of limiting warming to 3.7°C. (Chen et al. note 1), p. 5.

⁵ NASA, '2016 climate trends continue to break records', 19 July 2016, <<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/2016/climate-trends-continue-to-break-records>>; and Clark, P., 'North Pole temperature rise increases climate fears', *Financial Times*, 22 Nov. 2016.

⁶ Earth System Research Laboratory, 'NOAA El Niño rapid response field campaign', Jan.–Mar. 2016, <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/ens0/rapid_response/>.

⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, Summary for Policymakers (IPCC/Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, NY, 2014).



scarcity relating to food, water and energy, as well as disruption to supply chains, pose an ever-growing threat.

Security actors are now faced with the challenge of preparing for multidimensional climate risks that, to be understood, have to be viewed through a comprehensive approach.⁸ First, it is not simply the change in the weather that shapes impact on a community but also that community's adaptive capacity, governance and value choices. Second, security risks resulting from climate stress interact with one another. Water insecurity can cause food insecurity which in turn can lead to social unrest and violence. Third, climate risks are non-linear and impacts develop over time and space in often unpredictable ways. The climate risks associated with breaching a tipping point are particularly troubling given that the impacts of such a breach would be irreversible, with a high potential to induce further cascade impacts. Finally, the risks and impacts of climate change do not affect demographics in the same way. Some are more likely to be negatively impacted than others. This climate-related social inequality further compounds the likelihood of political unrest. As understanding of climate-related security risk concretizes so does its complexity along with the urgency to act.

While the Paris Agreement has added to this complexity, it has clearly transformed the climate regime. Scientists, activists and negotiators who have long campaigned for stronger international coordination have now

⁸ Mobjörk, M., 'Integrated policy responses for addressing climate-related security risks', SIPRI Policy Brief, Oct. 2016.

been joined by real economy actors committed to delivering low carbon economic transformation on the one hand and climate security on the other. Countries and communities across the planet are increasing their infrastructure investments in low carbon transition and benefiting as a result. Although national policies and approaches are in their infancy, more than 100 parties to the Paris Agreement have included adaptation in their nationally determined contributions for climate action and over 70 per cent of parties have included climate in their national security strategies.⁹

The UN could look to build on this momentum. In 2017, as Secretary-General Guterres takes office on a platform of preventive action, sustaining peace and UN reform, there is a clear window of opportunity for change. Guterres experienced the sharp end of climate impacts while in office as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and has voiced his commitment to addressing the root causes. The UN is already dealing with unprecedented levels of crises. Guterres seeks a nexus approach that aims to address interrelated structural risks, such as climate change, on short, medium and long time frames to mobilize preventive action.¹⁰ The coalition for UN reform

⁹ UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Conference of the Parties, 21st session, 'Synthesis report on the aggregate effect of the intended nationally determined contributions', FCC/CP/2015/7, 30 Oct. 2015; and American Security Project, Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change, [n.d.], <<http://www.americansecurityproject.org/climate-energy-and-security/climate-change/gsdicc/>>.

¹⁰ Guterres, A., Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly on taking the oath of office, 71st session, New York, 12 Dec. 2016, <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sg2235.doc.htm>>.

**Table 1.** UN discussions on climate security, 2007–16

Year	Convener	Summary	Output
2007	UK	First UNSC debate on climate impacts.	No formal outcome (UNSC Document S/PV.5663).
2009	SIDS in the UNGA; SG Ban Ki-moon	UNGA resolution was adopted stipulating that climate was a security issue. This resulted in a SG report delivered to the UNSC urging it to consider its role.	UNGA Resolution 63/281, 11 June 2009; SG Report (UNGA Document A/64/350); no UNSC outcome.
2011	Germany	UNSC debate on sea-level rise and food security failed to reach consensus that climate impacts peace and security. Concept of climate security envoy raised by SIDS.	UNSC Presidential Statement and UNSC request for SG to keep UNSC updated (UNSC Document S/PV.6587).
2013	Pakistan and UK	'Arria-formula' UNSC special meeting on security dimensions of climate change. Reportedly, China and Russia dismissed explicit link.	Private meeting, no transcript available; United Nations, 'Press conference on impact of climate change on Marshall Islands', 15 Dec. 2013.
2015	New Zealand	Open UNSC debate on peace and security threats to SIDS, including climate impacts.	UNSC Presidential Concept Note (UNSC Document S/2015/543); SG Statement (UNSC Document S/PV.7499); Government of New Zealand, 'Peace and security challenges facing small island developing states', Non-paper, [n.d].
2015	Spain and Malaysia	'Arria-formula' UNSC special meeting on climate as a threat-multiplier produced a more dynamic discussion beyond traditional alliances. Role for UNSC rejected by China and Russia.	Presidential Concept Note and disclosed speakers and speeches published by Spain, < http://www.spainun.org/climatechange/ >.
2016	Egypt and Spain	UNSC information session on challenges to the Sahel with a special focus on climate.	EU Special Representative to Sahel Statement (UNSC Document S/PV.7699); Press release published by Spain, Government of Spain, 'Security Council meeting on challenges in Sahel region', Press release, 26 May 2016.
2016	Senegal	'Arria-formula' UNSC special meeting on water, peace and security (April). Open debate on water peace and security (November). Climate was not mentioned in the concept note but was raised by the vast majority of speakers.	UNSC Presidential Concept Note for open debate (UNSC Document S/2012/969); SG Statement and meeting transcript (UNSC Document S/PV.7818).

SIDS = Small island developing states; SG = Secretary-General; UNGA = United Nations General Assembly; UNSC = United Nations Security Council.

is growing and if Guterres can generate the member state support to make good on his promise it bodes well for action on climate security.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

The UNSC hosted its first debate on climate security in 2007 and has since engaged in a number of discussions (see table 1). Climate change has been raised in an

inconsistent, ad hoc manner which, while succeeding in generating some affirmative political statements, has prompted little concrete or systematic progress. No debate has concluded in a resolution that has changed the UNSC's course of action on climate security.

Before 2015 the majority of debate and recommendations from the literature on the role of the UNSC centred on a punitive approach to mitigation action. The broad



perception that the UNFCCC was failing to deliver a consistent mitigation approach saw the UNSC as an institution of last resort to address international climate mitigation.¹¹ In practice, most of the issues the UNSC addresses tally more closely with a discussion concerning the amelioration of climate impacts.¹² Discussions on averting and managing humanitarian disaster and extreme resource scarcity feature daily on the UNSC's agenda.

In recent years, a number of geographic or thematic debates have given rise to more extensive discussion of climate change. Climate change became a prominent issue during discussion of the Sahel region, for example, which prompted the scheduling of a specific information session in May 2016 on the region's climate challenges, including desertification. In November 2016, climate was raised as a central issue by many of the speakers at the UNSC's open debate on water, despite the fact that the term 'climate' was absent from the related concept note. In this way, climate is increasingly a lived reality that the UNSC is addressing implicitly if not explicitly.

Some countries have pushed back against the inclusion of climate in UNSC discussions. Arguments against its inclusion

from countries such as China and some middle-income countries including Venezuela and Saudi Arabia have focused on concerns over the sovereignty of development choices. Nonetheless, progress on mitigation under the Paris Agreement, which specifically prescribes nationally determined actions, has significantly weakened opposition. Moreover, China is increasing its investment in the UN and taking a more proactive role in preventive action. China has, for example, pledged to increase its contribution of peacekeeping troops to 8000.¹³ Some smaller states have questioned the narrow representation of the UNSC. These concerns have been addressed, for the most part, by the adoption of a two-track approach. Such an approach—achieving simultaneous UNGA and UNSC resolutions—has been deployed in similar cases and provides an expedient solution. Moreover, the parallel approaches on climate and conflict prevention have helped to boost the legitimacy of the UNSC more broadly given the mounting pressure for the reform of this body. Other states, including Russia, have typically resisted UNSC debate on issues such as climate change, which in their view do not conform to traditional hard security definitions. However, as more countries, Russia included, add issues such as climate change to their national security strategies the power of this argument is waning.¹⁴ Further, the pivot to conflict prevention prompted by the UNSC's and UNGA's 2016 Sustaining Peace Resolution moves the debate

Climate change became a prominent issue during discussion of the Sahel region

¹¹ Warren, D., 'Climate change and international peace and security: possible roles for the U.N. Security Council in addressing climate change', Paper prepared for Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, Columbia Law School, July 2015.

¹² Scott, S. V., 'Implications of climate change for the UN Security Council: mapping the range of potential responses', *International Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 6 (Nov. 2015).

¹³ Hornby, L., 'China expands UN peacekeeping role as US influence wanes', *Financial Times*, 23 Nov. 2016.

¹⁴ Buckholz, Q., 'Russia and climate change: a looming threat', *The Diplomat*, 4 Feb. 2016.



more firmly into the territory of preventive action and opens space for discussions on the amelioration of climate impacts.

Some countries have been consistent advocates for the inclusion of climate in UNSC debate. Small island developing states have long expressed their concerns and advocated UNSC intervention given the impending existential threat of sea-level rise at relatively moderate levels of warming (marginally above 1.5°C).¹⁵ Similarly, other climate-vulnerable countries in Asia and Africa have been vocal in supporting discussions. New Zealand, in support of its small island neighbours, is a notable example of a country spearheading holistic conflict prevention approaches. European countries advocating climate security debate include, on the one hand, some of the more vulnerable countries in Southern Europe such as Italy and Spain, and, on the other, countries whose governments have shown international climate leadership such as Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. While the United States was a vocal and supportive advocate of climate security discussions under the presidency of Barack Obama, it fell short when it came to leading UNSC interventions.

In addition to the talks in the UNSC, regional institutions have discussed climate as a security issue. This is significant as it is not uncommon for UNSC practices to be piloted in regional security institutions before being absorbed at the international level (and vice versa). The African Union

(AU), whose members span many of the conflict areas discussed in the UNSC, cites the inextricable link between climate change and security in Africa. Its multifaceted 2014–17 strategic plan includes security components recognizing climate as a root cause of conflict and a core consideration in post-conflict reconstruction and development.¹⁶ In March 2016 the AU's Peace and Security Council hosted an open session on climate change, state fragility, and peace and security in Africa.¹⁷ The debate, attended by countries, international institutions and non-governmental organizations, concluded with calls to mainstream climate into all AU peace and security activities. Specifically, these calls requested the inclusion of climate impacts in early warning systems and for measures to ensure the delivery of climate-sensitive conflict prevention. The strategic reform plan of the African Peace and Security Architecture 2016–20 also proposes measures to deliver climate mainstreaming.¹⁸ Following the open session, the AU's Peace and Security Council agreed to hold an annual session on climate change. The leadership shown by the AU provides an exemplary approach that could be mirrored by the UNSC.

Some countries have been consistent advocates for the inclusion of climate in UNSC debate

¹⁵ Schaedder, M. et al., 'Long-term sea-level rise implied by 1.5°C and 2°C warming levels', *Nature Climate Change* (24 June 2012).

¹⁶ African Union, *African Strategy on Climate Change*, May 2014.

¹⁷ African Union, Peace and Security Council, 585th meeting, Open Session: Climate Change: State Fragility, Peace and Security in Africa, Addis Ababa, 30 Mar. 2016.

¹⁸ African Union, *African Peace and Security Architecture, APSA Roadmap 2016–2020* (African Union: Addis Ababa, 2015).



CASE STUDIES FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION AND THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Case studies of conflict prevention approaches taken by the UNSC provide analogues for interventions that could be taken on climate security.

Article 1(1) of the UN Charter assigns responsibility to the UN ‘to maintain international peace and security, and to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace’.¹⁹ In practice, however, the UNSC has focused predominantly on crisis management and hard security interventions.

Countries have been cautious about conflict prevention interventions, expressing concerns that they could infringe sovereignty and produce outcomes too strongly influenced by big power politics. Humanitarian interventions differ only because they occur after the fact. However, in recent years, under the pressure of multiple prolonged crises, the momentum

to pivot towards preventive action has grown rapidly.

As noted above, the

UNGA and UNSC jointly approved the Sustaining Peace Resolution in 2016 and Guterres was nominated for Secretary-General on a platform for prioritizing preventive action. The UNSC itself does not serve to coordinate all renewed approaches to preventive action but is awarded a unique authority to mobilize UN institutions and agencies to undertake strategic operations.

Given the scale of the security risk posed by climate change, the UNSC is poised to take a key role in preventing climate security crises.

Despite the historically marginal nature of conflict prevention, some progress has been made in a few key areas. HIV/AIDS, counterterrorism and gender each provide case studies of UNSC interventions that have helped to strengthen the UN system’s preventive approach.

HIV/AIDS

In 2000 the first ever UNSC resolution on health was passed on HIV/AIDS.²⁰ The resolution formally accepted HIV/AIDS as a security issue and brought international attention to the issue. The resolution (a) recognized the work of other UN institutions on HIV/AIDS and called for their strengthening; (b) requested that countries create long-term domestic strategies; and (c) asked the Secretary-General to ensure peacekeepers were trained to be able to support prevention in the field. There has been some criticism of the approach, with some commentary countering the notion that HIV/AIDS can be considered a security issue at all.²¹ Moreover, while the UNSC’s intervention succeeded in creating an advocacy consensus, resource mobilization and preventive action in the context of hard security situations, some hold the view that these responses do not constitute a security response. By contrast, others deem the UNSC interventions to be consistent with its role among the constellation of other institutions

Countries have been cautious about conflict prevention interventions

¹⁹ Charter of the United Nations, opened for signature 26 June 1945, entered into force 24 Oct. 1945.

²⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 1308, 17 July 2000.

²¹ McInnes, C., ‘HIV/AIDS and security’, *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 2 (Mar. 2006).



in the UN system.²² A further resolution was adopted in 2011 responding to the shifting security context and placing more focus on HIV/AIDS prevention in conflict and post-conflict situations.²³

Counterterrorism

After the terrorist attacks on the USA of 11 September 2001 the UNSC and the UNGA adopted unanimous resolutions condemning the attacks. In the following days, the UNSC approved a resolution that established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and tasked countries with (a) curbing terrorist groups' access to funds; (b) cracking down on safe havens; (c) cooperating and sharing information with other governments; and (d) criminalizing terrorist activities in domestic law.²⁴ Subsequently, the UNSC continued to pursue other legal strategies to reduce terrorism, which were widely adopted, supported by other regional peace and security bodies. The UNSC's approach has been strengthened by (a) the oversight function provided by the CTC's Executive Directorate (CTED) and (b) its counterterrorism research network, which enables research-informed decision making.²⁵ Nonetheless, the UNSC was criticized for focusing on the Global North and for failing to comprehensively address the root causes of radicalization. UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan attempted to resolve these tensions by working with the UNGA to

prepare a counterterrorism strategy adopted in 2006. However, although there was some improvement, criticism has persisted.²⁶ UNSC interventions have made terrorist attacks more difficult to achieve but prevention is relatively shallow and further action is required to address the root causes motivating terrorism such as inequality and youth unemployment.²⁷

The UNSC is poised to take a key role in preventing climate security crises

Women and gender

The first of the seven UNSC resolutions on women, peace and security was issued in 2000.²⁸ The 2000 resolution created foundational approaches that (a) recognized the disproportionate effect of conflict on women; (b) addressed the role of women in conflict prevention and achieving peace; (c) noted the need to collect gender-sensitive peace and security information; and (d) addressed the role of women in decision-making processes on peace and security. The 2000 resolution also established the interagency task force on women, peace and security, which has been able to coordinate across the UN system, generate information and mobilize the UN Secretary-General. Subsequent resolutions have built on this blueprint and have further highlighted the challenges related to sexual violence and

²⁶ Council on Foreign Relations, *The Global Regime for Terrorism* (Council on Foreign Relations: June 2013).

²⁷ Council on Foreign Relations (note 26).

²⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 1325, 31 Oct. 2000. The 6 other resolutions are as follows: Resolution 1820, 19 June 2008; Resolution 1888, 30 Sep. 2009; Resolution 1889, 5 Oct. 2009; Resolution 1960, 16 Dec. 2010; Resolution 2106, 24 June 2013; and Resolution 2122, 18 Oct. 2013.

²² McInnes (note 21).

²³ UN Security Council Resolution 1983, 7 June 2011.

²⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 1373, 28 Sep. 2001.

²⁵ United Nations, Security Council, 'Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network', Fact sheet, [n.d.].



Women and gender is widely cited as one of the most successful examples of mainstreaming across the UN system

increasing women's participation in peace processes. Criticism of the UNSC's interventions centred predominantly on the portrayal of women as victims; subsequently, efforts have been made to include more empowering solutions-based approaches.²⁹ Critics have also suggested that hosting these discussions in the UNSC negates the need to discuss women's oppression in peacetime.³⁰ Despite the criticism, women and gender is widely cited as one of the most successful examples of mainstreaming across the UN system. The UNSC is able to play its part in mainstreaming gender into its operations while elevating the issue and assigning mainstreaming responsibilities to other institutions with the assistance of the Secretary-General and the UNGA.

The UN Security Council's prevention functions

The above examples demonstrate how the UNSC can serve four conflict prevention functions: (a) political elevation of root causes; (b) institution building and reform; (c) coordination of the UN system; and (d) mainstreaming into security operations.

Successful UNSC interventions are multilayered and draw on a whole spectrum of tools to achieve conflict prevention outcomes. To

maximize impact and efficacy in implementation, the UNSC is most effective when working in tandem with complementary interventions from other UN bodies such as the UNGA and the office of the Secretary-General. Working as part of a coalition, the UNSC is empowered not only to mainstream preventive approaches in its own operations, but also to initiate the construction of institutions and mandates that help to support mainstreaming across the UN system.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

The UNSC has the opportunity to play a catalytic role in strengthening the UN system to help to ameliorate the security impacts of climate change.

The benefits of UNSC intervention on climate security are considerable. The UNSC can strengthen the UNSC institution itself by ensuring that its operations to build peace 'do no harm' and are conflict sensitive to the realities of climate-exacerbated resource scarcities.³¹ In addition, such intervention could construct an iterative approach to deepening understanding of climate security risks, including extreme resource scarcity events.³² This approach can help to forewarn and guide other components of the UN system and so foster investment in

²⁹ Barrow, A., 'UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820: constructing gender in armed conflict and international humanitarian law', *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 92, no. 877 (Mar. 2010).

³⁰ Heathcote, G., 'Gender politics and the United Nations Security Council', OUPblog, 19 Aug. 2013, <<http://blog.oup.com/2013/08/unsc-sexual-violence-armed-conflict-pil/#sthash.YHKmNKWl.dpuf>>.

³¹ Rüttinger, L. et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks* (Adelphi/International Alert/Woodrow Wilson Center/European Union Institute for Security Studies, EUISS: Berlin/London/Washington, DC/Paris, 2015).

³² Born, C. and Mabey, N., *United We Stand: Reforming the UN to Reduce Climate Risk* (E3G: July 2016).



conflict prevention and climate risk mainstreaming.

The four UNSC conflict prevention functions (as detailed in the previous section) would offer considerable scope for progress in ameliorating climate-related security impacts. In response to growing climate insecurity, the author proposes two initial interventions that would improve the UNSC's capacity for conflict prevention.

Engagement in climate risk-informed decision making

The UNSC does not consistently receive climate-related information in situational, mission or peacekeeping reports. Nor does it receive risk assessments on climate-related resource scarcity, despite the proven impact of climate-related resource scarcity on social and political stability and therefore on conflict. Four interrelated issues are at the core: food insecurity, water insecurity, changes in the world energy economy, and disruptions to key commodity supply chains. Improved risk assessment can provide the basis for risk management of UNSC operations and for strengthening management of these risks throughout the UN system.

To facilitate climate risk-informed decision making, capacity building within the UN Secretariat would be required to create the competencies and information system to supply the most applicable data and analysis. The UNSC receives information through a number of channels that could be mandated to provide appropriate climate risk information on short-, medium- and long-term horizons as required.

The UNSC's current information channels include: (a) Secretary-

General briefings, reports and letters; (b) briefings requested from experts and institutions; (c) situational reports; (d) mission reports; (e) presidential notes and press statements; (f) membership interjections; and (g) information sessions. The UN Secretariat can also provide ad hoc briefings, informal consultations, fact sheets, presentations and reference materials.

Coordination on climate security across the UN system

There is no institutional home for climate security issues in the UN. The effects of climate change will have disruptive consequences for food, water and energy security, and supply chains. Undoubtedly, it will be the task of the UNSC, the UNGA and the Secretary-General to try to deal with these disruptive consequences. In common with other UNSC interventions on conflict prevention, action should be taken in tandem with other UN bodies, building the strongest coalition for implementation and helping to mobilize the appropriate scale of resources.

The UNSC can intervene to establish this institutional home in a number of ways. A working group or task force could be established on climate security. Alternatively, given the injection of energy provided by the appointment of a new Secretary-General, there is an opportunity to further mandate him to take the lead on climate security. In any case, the structure should be mandated with the task of providing consistent, structural risk information on climate change and resource scarcity to the UNSC and UN system

There is no institutional home for climate security issues in the UN

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on short-, medium- and long-term climate risks.

Another option would be to appoint a climate security envoy or special representative to the Secretary-General on climate security. However, to provide the functions required to support the UNSC and UN system, further capacity would be needed to support their undertakings.

CONCLUSIONS

The case for UNSC intervention on climate change has never been as feasible, nor as urgent, as it is now. The uptick in commitment to global climate action, pivot to preventive action and accelerating, multidimensional climate impacts each make the case for UNSC intervention.

The Paris Agreement cemented the understanding that mitigation action by all is inevitable. But the current challenge is to accelerate implementation while ameliorating climate impacts. Every institution will be affected by climate change; the UNSC is no exception. In the spirit of preventive action, the UNSC is uniquely positioned to address climate security challenges and mobilize response across the UN system.

Historically, UNSC conflict prevention interventions have succeeded by drawing on a broad spectrum of tools and effective mobilization of the Secretary-General as well as by making best use of complementary approaches in other bodies, notably the UNGA. The UNSC has had success when it has been able to serve the four functions that aid conflict

prevention: political elevation of root causes, institution building and reform, coordination of the UN system, and mainstreaming into security operations.

To act on climate security and mobilize a preventive approach, the author suggests two initial recommendations. The first is to create the capacity inside the UN system to craft the information gathering structures and information channels needed for climate risk-informed decision making. The second is to locate an institutional home for climate security issues, which would foster coordination and provide support across the UN system. These recommendations would serve to build the tools and systems to enable more effective preventive action to ameliorate climate-related security impacts.

The demand from citizens for action on climate change is stronger than ever before. A 2016 Pew Research Center poll lists climate change as the top global threat in the minds of citizens, with more than 50 per cent of citizens polled considering climate impacts a present or imminent threat.³³ Currently, the scale of the climate security threat is not being met with the scale of resources needed to manage it. As impacts worsen, the demand for action from citizens will only grow stronger; the security community should be poised to pick up the baton.

³³ Pew Research Center, 'What the world thinks about climate change in 7 charts', 18 Apr. 2016, <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/18/what-the-world-thinks-about-climate-change-in-7-charts/>>.