

MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY: CLIMATE AND SECURITY SUMMARY

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Open Video Teleconferencing of the UN Security Council, 24th July 2020

Executive Summary

On July 24th, the UN Security Council met for a keynote debate to discuss the security implications of climate change effects chaired by German foreign minister Heiko Maas. Because these effects can exacerbate, prolong and contribute to conflict and instability around the world, many UN Member States called on the Security Council to address these threats to international peace and security more systematically and comprehensively. The Open Videoconference provided an opportunity for Member States to discuss progress towards a more systematic approach on this issue, especially regarding improved early warning and risk analysis, enhanced UN system capacity to tackle climate-related security risks and an improved operational response. Convened by the German Security Council Presidency, nine other Council members co-sponsored the debate – Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Niger, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and Viet Nam. With nine UN Member States attending at ministerial level, the debate saw the vast majority of speakers advocate for stronger action on climate-related security risks by the Security Council and the UN system. Building on recent progress, the debate proved that there is a clear expectation among Security Council members and within the wider UN membership for the Council to further advance the climate-security agenda in the coming years.



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“Climate change knows no borders and we cause more severe consequences unless we coordinate effectively and efficiently. To address this global challenge, we need a global response in which multilateral cooperation, coordinated by the United Nations, is central.



Pham Binh Minh

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, Viet Nam

“Failure to consider the growing impacts of climate change will undermine our efforts at conflict prevention, peace-making and sustaining peace, and risk trapping vulnerable countries in a vicious cycle of climate disaster and conflict.”



Miroslav Jenča

UN Assistant Secretary-General (DPPA)



Introduction

The open debate on July 24th marked the fifth time that the Security Council systematically considered the impacts of climate change on international peace and security since 2007. Moreover, as of today, 12 resolutions recognise the adverse effects of climate change on security and several resolutions underscore the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies, including for the Lake Chad region (S/RES/2349), Somalia (S/RES/2408), Mali (S/RES/2423) and Darfur (S/RES/2429).

However, despite increasing attention for the continuously growing scale of climate-related security risks, the Council lacks a systematic approach towards them. Over the course of the debate, Security Council members as well as other UN Member States – many of which spoke on behalf of particularly affected regional groups, especially small islands developing states and the Pacific islands – made a number of concrete proposals for how to strengthen the UN system and the Council's response.

Heiko Maas, German Minister for Foreign Affairs, chaired the high-level discussion, in which nine ministers participated. After three initial briefings and statements from Council members, Nauru spoke on behalf of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security; the Foreign Minister of Belize for the Alliance of Small Island States; Fiji for the Pacific Small Island Developing States; the European Union for the Union and its Member States; Denmark for the Nordic States; and the Foreign Ministers of Kenya and Ireland as incoming members of the Council.



“Sooner rather than later, climate change will be a catalyst in almost every conflict we are dealing with.”



Heiko Maas

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany

UNSC Briefings

Three briefings at the outset of the debate underlined the scale and ubiquity of climate-related security risks. **Miroslav Jenča, UN Assistant Secretary-General (DPPA)**, highlighted the diverse impact of climate-related security risks across different regions, and emphasised how they affect vulnerable communities and populations in particular. He stressed the importance of climate-sensitive conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions and the significance of linking long-term climate risk analysis to actionable near-term solutions for countering security challenges.

Colonel Mahamadou Magagi, director of the Centre National d'Études Stratégiques et de Sécurité of Niger, described how climate change contributed to food insecurity and climate-induced migration in the Sahel, changing societal structures and resulting in economic challenges adversely impacting regional and local peace and security, e.g. by boosting recruitment into Boko Haram. He highlighted Niger's initiatives to strengthen resilience and called on the UN to help governments collect authoritative information on climate-related security risks.



“In the Lake Chad region, climate change increases the likelihood of conflict, and conflict undermines the ability of communities to cope and adapt to climate change.”



Colonel Mahamadou Magagi
Director of the Centre National d'Études Stratégiques et de Sécurité of Niger



“To countries that have committed so little to global warming but stand to lose so much it seems a fair ask to have the highest multilateral body ensuring security on earth, the UN Security Council, take the time to understand the scenario and do everything in its power to address it.”



Coral Pasisi
Director of the Sustainable Pacific Consultancy, Niue

Coral Pasisi, director of the Sustainable Pacific Consultancy, Niue, explained the impact of climate change on livelihoods, food security, exclusive economic zones and the blue economy in the Pacific Islands, highlighting risks to the national identity and even existence of many Pacific Small Island Developing States. She stressed that an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement by all countries is essential and that the UN Security Council needs to build adequate risk assessment mechanisms into its work and mobilise the necessary capacities and resources to ensure this.

Debate and Recommendations

The debate showed increasingly converging views within the Security Council. Most delegations underscored the direct and indirect risks to peace and stability emanating from climate change impacts, a message underlined by speakers from the most vulnerable Member States, and focused on concrete next steps to take. A few Member States emphasised that they continue to see climate change effects primarily as a question of sustainable development, and that a general focus on the link between climate change and security threatened to divert resources and attention from the Council's core mandate, while infringing on the mandates of other UN entities.



"It is time to give climate and security a face. We call on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security as soon as possible. He or she could ensure that climate change is placed where it belongs: at the heart of this Council's work, which is to maintain international peace and security in the 21st century."



Heiko Maas

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany



"We need to strengthen those linkages that already exist between the UN Security Council and regional and continental agencies, such as the AU and EGAT. These agencies have early warning mechanisms that can provide timely information and analysis to the UN Security Council to enable the bringing about of the transformation that we need."



Raychelle Awour Omamo

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kenya

Many speakers made proposals for enabling a more comprehensive response by the Security Council and the UN system to manage climate-related security risks more systematically. They emphasised in particular that the Security Council needs more thorough and authoritative information on climate-related security risks as a decision-making basis. For this purpose, many delegations requested context-specific reporting on climate-related security risks in relevant situations on the Council's agenda as well as regular, comprehensive and enhanced reporting on climate-related security risks by the Secretary-General to the Security Council.



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“We have witnessed in recent years a growing awareness about the effects of climate change acting as a threat multiplier and major risk factor for international peace and security.”



Selma Ennaifer
Secretary of State to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tunisia

“The Council needs to be better informed. We need data and improved data management. Analytical and forecasting tools feed into early warning systems and improve conflict prevention capacity.”



Alexander De Croo
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Development Cooperation, Belgium



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Moreover, speakers called for further strengthening of UN in-country resources, including in UN peace operations to enable a better response to requests for information and assessment of climate-related security risks. The important work of the UN Climate Security Mechanism was stressed in this respect. Finally, many speakers highlighted the important role data and forecasting could play in assessing risks early on. In this regard, Germany drew attention to the Global Risk and Foresight Assessment launched during the Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2020, which will provide a basis for evidence-based action on climate and security.

“More effective risk assessment and management strategies will help us to better understand local climate and security contexts, and build early warning systems.”



Simon Coveney
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence, Ireland



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“Time is running out and the required institutional capacities are lagging. All relevant organs of the UN System should be informed and equipped to deal with the worst case scenarios, respecting their respective roles and mandates.”



Wilfred Elrington
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Belize

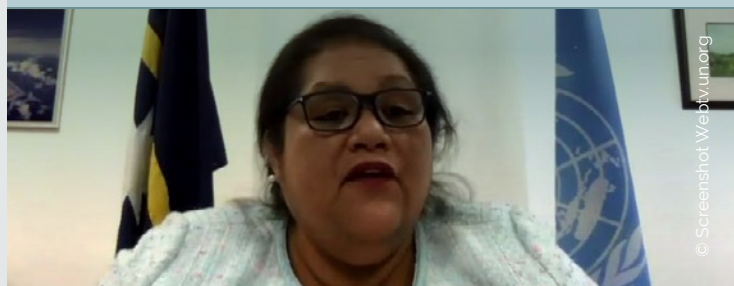


“Addressing the threats of climate change should be an important part of the Council’s work. We need to focus on prevention tools and strategies instead of dealing with consequences later. It is our common responsibility to minimise climate-related security risks and prevent conflicts.”

Rene Kokk
Minister of the Environment, Estonia

“Climate change indeed constitutes an existential threat to societies across the globe. Its impacts are already disrupting the lives and livelihoods of people around the world, destabilizing local economies, social relations and political systems and exacerbating violent conflict.”

Marlene Moses
Permanent Representative to the UN, Nauru



Many delegations also called on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security, to ensure relevant information reaches the attention of decision-makers across the UN system and to co-ordinate the UN response to these challenges. Moreover, they emphasised the need for better training and expertise on climate change within UN missions and mediation teams so that climate-related security risks would be systematically mainstreamed into prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, mediation, and diplomatic efforts.

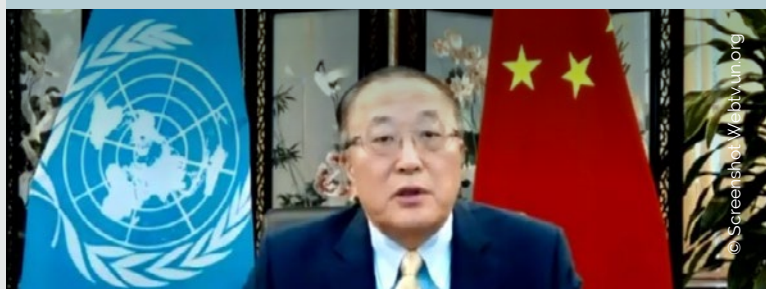


“We agree that the security and stability of individual countries and regions may be affected by adverse impacts of climate change as one of the multiple factors. But the root-causes of conflict are much more complex. Where climate change may be one of the factors country or region specific, we strongly disagree that climate is a generic security issue.”

Vassily Nebenzia
Permanent Representative to the UN, Russia

“Climate change is in essence a development issue rather than a security issue. There is no direct linkage between the two. Solution of climate change rests on sustainable development. Progress on the development front is conducive to effectively addressing climate change and the security risks exacerbated by climate change.”

Zhang Jun
Permanent Representative to the UN, China





“A world in a state of climate emergency, like ours, is an endangered world exposed to increased security risks and new threats.”

Nicolas de Rivière
Permanent Representative to the UN, France

“We must move from a conjectural approach to an integral approach, incorporating climate security risk in our deliberations and by way of a greater flow of systematic and contextualised reporting by the Secretary General.”

Jose Singer
Representative to the UN, Dominican Republic



In the context of the debate, the ten co-conveners and three incoming Council members – Ireland, Kenya and Norway – announced the convening of an Informal Group of Experts of the Security Council to support it in achieving a more comprehensive and systematic approach.



“We must put people in the centre and learn from daily experience in addressing the consequences of climate change and security.”

Dian Triansyah Djani,
Permanent Representative to the UN, Indonesia

“Combatting climate change is indeed of the utter most importance to us in view of the immense and multiple challenges that my country Niger, the continent of Africa and the world in general face.”

Aougui Niandou
Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Niger

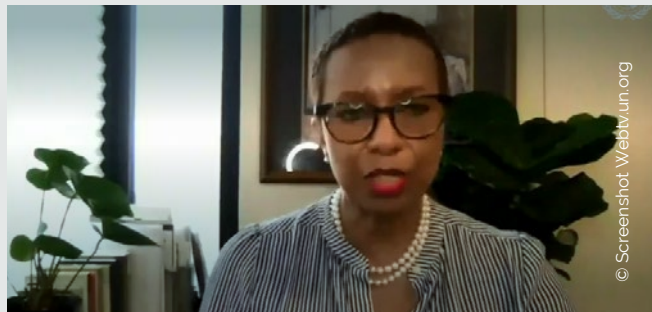


“Ask any Fijian Peacekeeper on the ground across the world, they will tell you that water scarcity, droughts, desertification and other phenomena are directly related to climate change compound conflicts.”

Satyendra Prasad
Permanent Representative to the UN, Fiji

Conclusion: Climate-Related Security Risks in the UN Security Council

The high-level debate on July 24th demonstrated that the vast majority of Security Council members and UN Member States expect the Security Council to address the security dimension of climate change effects more comprehensively and systematically, in order to safeguard international peace and security in a changing climate. The widespread support for the climate security agenda – encapsulated in an ambitious joint statement by the 51 member states of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security delivered by Nauru – and the formation of the Informal Expert Group testify to the determination of a vast majority of Council and UN Member States to enhance the Council's response to climate-related security risks. They point towards continued and increasing attention to these risks within the UN Security Council and across the UN system.



“It is clear that the Security Council must work within its mandate to address the grave consequences of the climate crisis for international peace and security.”



Inga Rhonda King
Permanent Representative to the UN, St. Vincent and the Grenadines



“The time for diplomatic patience is over. This Council cannot negotiate with the realities of nature. Action is all that counts.”



Heiko Maas
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany



“Today's threats to prosperity are tomorrow's geopolitical problems.”



Tariq Mahmood Ahmad
Minister of State for the Commonwealth, UN and South Africa, UK

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