

Climate, Peace, Security

CLIMATE, PEACE, SECURITY

THREE PILLARS OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY



MINUSMA peacekeeping mission in Kidal, northern Mali. ©UN Photo/Marco Dormino

The climate crisis is highly relevant for the domains of geopolitical and security policy, which is why climate policy occupies a key position in the German Government's foreign policy. It is the Federal Foreign Office that drives, and sets the pace for, Germany's climate policy with a global focus.

The climate crisis is intensifying conflicts

The climate crisis can intensify conflicts, although violent confrontations are rarely the direct result of climate change as such. One well-known example is when conflicts arise between farmers and herders in many regions of the world. In the Sahel region, for example, the effects of increasing heat, drought and irregular rainfall are being felt by both sedentary farmers and nomadic herders. This creates ever fiercer competition for scarce resources such as land and water and fuels violent confrontations. Particularly in regions that are already experiencing instability, this results in a more fragile situation. People who are deprived of their essential resources are more easily recruited by radical groups.

What kinds of conflicts are being affected by climate change? Climate-induced conflicts are violent confrontations between countries, regions or sections of the population in which dormant grievances are ignited by climate change. This is where the holistic approach of the Directorate-General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance and the Directorate-General for Climate Diplomacy and Geo-economics of the Federal Foreign Office comes into play. The integrated peace engagement projects with a climate focus strive for political solutions to ongoing (violent) conflicts. What can help break the cycle of violence? Can the way we deal with the common challenge of climate change also help us find new solutions to old conflicts? With the support of the Federal Foreign Office, scientists and practitioners are looking for answers to these questions, as well as testing what works.

Laying the scientific groundwork

The interdependencies between climate change, human security and a life in peace are complex. A holistic approach is essential for understanding these interrelationships in regions of conflict. Effective, project-based foreign policy in regions affected by climate change therefore requires innovative methods and analysing benchmarks from various domains, including climate research and political and economic science. Climate-sensitive foreign policy is impossible without a solid and interdisciplinary scientific foundation.

Weathering Risk



Collecting brushwood on the outskirts of Dadaab, Somalia. ©Oxfam/Andy Hall

The impacts of climate change on peace and security have not yet been sufficiently examined. How can political decision-makers react at regional, national and international level to defuse climate-induced conflicts? The Weathering Risk initiative delivers evidence-based input to enhance the effectiveness of climate, foreign and security policy. This multilateral initiative, which was initiated by the Federal Foreign Office, has developed a methodology for analysing climate-linked security risks that is also used by the United Nations. The political consultancy firm adelphi, which specialises in providing climate-related political advice, and other partners such as the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK, a partner up to 2023), have since 2020 been developing methodologies to anticipate and assess climate-induced security risks. Another field of activity is the launch and evaluation of initiatives to promote peace in countries and regions that are strongly affected by climate change. Currently, initiatives are under way in Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and the Bay of Bengal.

Nigeria – peace among neighbours

The neighbouring communities of Konshisha and Oju in Benue State in central Nigeria have for many years been fighting over natural resources, and hundreds of lives have been lost as a result. The violent clashes over the use of land, forest and water have grown more severe in recent years due to deforestation and the effects of climate change. Benue State is located south-east of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja and is part of the Middle Belt, which is known as the breadbasket of Nigeria. Unrest in these regions can thus adversely affect food supplies throughout the entire country.

Fighting between these warring communities has flared up time and again since 1997. However, the desire for peace is now gaining the upper hand: thanks to mediation by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and financial support from the Federal Foreign Office, both communities have now declared their willingness to enter into negotiations. In August 2023, they signed a peace agreement regarding the use of natural resources. In both the negotiations and the wording of the agreement, the interests of women, young people and religious and traditional community leaders were taken into account. The jointly developed agreement has the potential to serve as a blueprint for other climate-exacerbated conflicts between neighbouring communities in the same state or all across Nigeria.



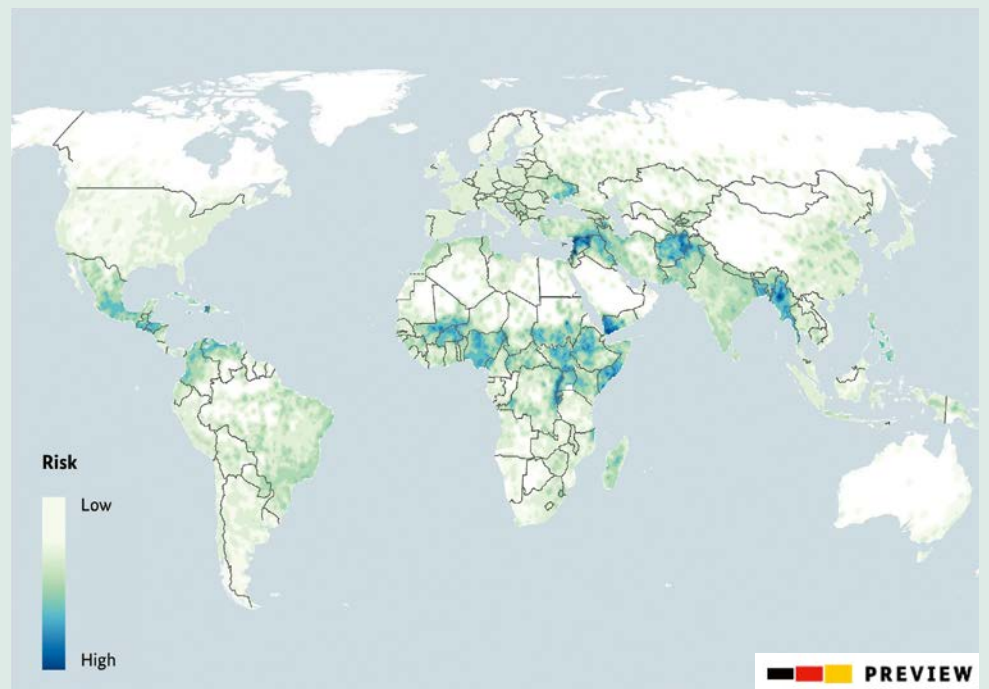
Traditional leaders of the state of Benue after the signing of the peace treaty. ©Center for Humanitarian Dialogue

A pioneer of international climate security policy

For more than 15 years, the Federal Foreign Office has been integrating into its work the international, geopolitical and security-policy aspects of climate change. By now, the

Climate Conflict Vulnerability Index

Where in the world is climate change fanning smouldering conflicts? PREVIEW, the Federal Foreign Office's group of experts on early warning and information management, is developing a Climate Conflict Vulnerability Index (CCVI) in cooperation with the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and the Center for Crisis Early Warning of Bundeswehr University. This involves, among other things, drawing up interactive maps that depict the complicated interrelationships between climate and conflict. By zooming into a 50x50 km square, the Federal Foreign Office and other Ministries will be able to identify local security hotspots and thereby align their peacebuilding activities accordingly.



Climate Conflict Vulnerability Index. ©AA, PREVIEW

climate-peace-security nexus has become a cross-cutting issue for all Directorates-General of the Federal Foreign Office, as well as in many other Federal Government Ministries. Germany is campaigning to have this nexus become a fixture in international organisations, such as the United Nations, the EU, NATO and the OSCE. These efforts also take the form of specific support to institutional climate-security actors in multilateral organisations. Thus, in December 2023, at the COP28 Climate Change Conference, a new initiative involving the United Nations was unveiled. This initiative, implemented by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, further underscores Germany's engagement for climate, peace and feminist foreign policy.

Women, climate and security

The UN WPHF trust fund promotes women-led projects at the local level that seek to resolve conflicts and promote peace. With initial funding from Germany to the tune of 3 million euro, the WPHF was able to launch the Women & Climate Security Initiative at the end of 2023, a project that supports activities in places that are particularly affected by the nexus of climate change and conflict. Starting this year, in Colombia, Nigeria and the Pacific region – specifically in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu – conflict prevention and mitigation projects are being implemented that address, among other things, the effects of climate change. Women are encouraged to

stand up for their rights, join in the search for solutions to political and economic conflicts and make a difference in decision-making and peace processes. This straightforward strategic approach highlights what feminist foreign policy means in real terms.

Women should be made a part of negotiating committees, groups and commissions at the local and regional level – because reaching peace agreements works significantly better when women are among the stakeholders. Likewise, the economy recovers more quickly when women participate in economic processes. For intelligent and sustainable agriculture in regions that are affected by drought, systems that provide advance warning of crises and disasters and the transition to renewable energies to succeed, women must be involved in driving forward the desired changes at the local level. That is precisely what the Women & Climate Security Initiative strives to do, by narrowing the current funding gaps in grass-roots organisations, with the financial support of the Federal Foreign Office.

Practitioners of environmental peacebuilding

For many of those affected by climate change, the efforts of specific individuals can make all the difference. This is the case, for example, in the Horn of Africa: since 2020, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia has included the world's first climate security and environmental advisor.

Efforts to promote peace in Somalia can only have a lasting effect if at the same time the impacts of climate change are mitigated. The country is currently experiencing its worst drought in decades; nearly half of the population is suffering from food scarcity. More than 800,000 people have been internally displaced by the extreme drought. The decades-long civil war and violent political conflicts further worsen the situation, and armed terrorist groups such as al-Shabab or armed clan elites are using the vulnerability of millions to rally people to their causes.



Haiti, consequences of a flood in the Caribbean. ©UN Photo/Logan Abassi

It is the mission of the climate security and environmental advisor to firmly anchor the issue of climate security in all of the analyses, plans and programmes of the various national, international and multilateral peace actors. For example, the advisor works to ensure that the strengthening of the security sector and the rule of law goes hand in hand with the rehabilitation of the ecosystem and a sustainable livestock and agricultural sector. The focus is on the principle of ownership. Civil society, peace activ-

ists, local community leaders, women, young people and marginalised groups are indispensable stakeholders in any successful peace process. The best outcomes are achieved when initiatives make themselves felt at the local level and enhance the adaptive capacity of the respective community.

The successful example of the climate security and environmental advisor in Somalia has meanwhile been applied to five other UN and in further EU missions. Regionally active international peace initiatives, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, have also been following suit.

At the United Nations, expertise on climate, peace and security is pooled in the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM). The CSM – a joint initiative of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme and the UN Department of Peace Operations – supports the work of the climate security and environmental advisors, for example through further training courses.

Conclusion

German foreign policy has determined links between climate and peace policy objectives in a targeted, strategic and anticipatory fashion. Climate change has been identified as a security policy challenge, and environment and climate policy approaches are harnessed in activities and projects that focus on mitigating conflict, promoting peace and building confidence. Despite all of the concerns and frustration regarding fragile security situations and climate change's dramatic impact, there is one genuine hope – namely, that the effects of climate change can be overcome, but only through collective action. When the parties to a conflict recognise this fact, the challenges posed by climate change can even become a catalyst for peaceful local, regional and global cooperation.

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