



Responding to the effects of climate change in institution-building efforts in fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict*

Summary

Fragile and conflict-affected countries are particularly affected by the impacts of climate change, which amplifies already existing drivers of conflict, such as extreme poverty and lack of access to basic services. There is therefore value in linking institution-building and environmental management in the context of peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries. Policy approaches to environmental peacebuilding should be enhanced through different measures, including a better analysis of underlying causes and mechanisms; coordinated thinking on policy through an environmental peacebuilding approach; adoption of a climate-sensitive lens; greater weight in environmental peacebuilding efforts given to the needs and challenges of vulnerable groups; enhanced international environmental collaboration and support; and strengthened efforts to apply the principles of effective governance for sustainable development.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the Council welcome the continuing work of the Committee on building strong institutions for sustainable development in fragile and conflict-affected countries, note that peacebuilding and sustaining peace depend on long-term engagement in institution-building involving all stakeholders that is consistent with local norms and political realities,

and look forward to the Committee's further engagement in promoting effective governance for sustainable development in such situations and its contribution to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. (Paragraph 9)

► See [ECOSOC resolution 2022/9](#)

* Excerpt from Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Report on the twenty-second session. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2023, Supplement No. 24 ([E/2023/44-E/C.16/2023/9](#))

Discussion

Issues in environmental peacebuilding

The Committee noted that there was a close link between climate change, environmental impacts and conflict. Fragile and conflict-affected countries were particularly affected by the impacts of climate change, such as increased natural disasters and sea level rise, which amplified already existing drivers of conflict, such as extreme poverty and lack of access to basic services. Four potential pathways increased the risk of conflict as a direct result of climate change: livelihoods; migration; behaviour of armed groups; and exploitation by political elites. The consequences of climate change and the risks of conflict depended on local context and interacted

with factors on the ground, resulting in unpredictable outcomes.

Many conflicts were driven or sustained by, or in some cases even resulted in, environmental degradation and, as such, conflict resolution and long-term sustainable development required a form of environmental peacebuilding. The role of local, traditional and informal institutions in managing natural resources and contributing to environmental peacebuilding needed to be recognized.

Approaches to environmental peacebuilding

The Committee observed that there were three fundamental approaches to environmental peacebuilding based on: security; livelihoods; and politics. The security approach was focused on the potential of environmental cooperation to reduce conflict over natural resources and increase stability; the livelihoods approach was focused on the potential of environmental cooperation to improve the well-being of communities affected by conflict; and the politics approach was focused on the

potential of environmental cooperation to build trust and understanding between different parties.

Strong institutions and effective governance underpinned physical security, economic well-being and cooperative social relations and supported political stability and public trust. Conflicting narratives that did not reflect the realities on the ground should be avoided to prevent the further fuelling of conflicts.

Strengthening environmental peacebuilding

The Committee suggested enhancing policy approaches to environmental peacebuilding through:

(a) Better analysis of underlying causes and mechanisms that would allow countries experiencing climate change and an increased risk of conflict to improve their programming and reporting and thereby mitigate risks more effectively. Having information that was more accurate might also help

countries to differentiate between the short- and long-term goals of institutional peacebuilding efforts and support evidence-based climate action;

(b) Coordinated thinking on policy through an environmental peacebuilding approach that encompassed the entire socioecological system as well as challenges that transect traditional governance boundaries, such as local and national boundaries. Transparency and accountability were

to be increased, and the private sector and other actors were to be more involved in climate action and environmental peacebuilding efforts in order to strengthen cohesion and trust. It was also noted that picking a tangible issue to which different groups could relate could be useful in peacebuilding situations;

(c) Adoption of a climate-sensitive lens through which to recognize that climate change impacts and natural resource issues were at the core of conflicts and that efforts to tackle these challenges were a means of addressing underlying injustice. At the same time, the root causes of conflict should be identified and investments in conflict prevention increased to minimize the risk of future conflicts;

Greater weight being given in environmental peacebuilding efforts to the needs and challenges of groups most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and conflict, such as women, young people and trapped populations (those willing to move but unable to do so). Governments should prevent injustice, ensure respect for human rights and strengthen environmental rule of law;

(e) Enhanced international environmental collaboration and support, given the ongoing climate crisis, including through increased engagement within the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. A special focus should be on capacity-building and supporting projects that promote climate resilience and adaptation, especially in developing countries. That approach could also offer enhanced opportunities for engagement with regional and subregional organizations to help developing countries better cope with the transnational effects of climate change. There was also a need for better collaboration across United Nations entities to ensure adequate and effective support for countries;

(f) Strengthened efforts to apply the principles of effective governance for sustainable development as they were particularly important in cases of government failure or countries in conflict. Application of the principles could help to mitigate the long-term effects of climate change and reduce the risks of serious conflict arising from its environmental impacts.

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