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The EU and Climate Security

What does a warmer world mean for European security? This policy brief first provides an overview of some key challenges facing European policy makers as they seek to take action against climate risks. It then analyses some of the programmes and mechanisms already in place across the Union. Finally, it sets out some practical recommendations on how European institutions can respond to the global security risks of a changing climate.

Climate change as a security risk for the EU¹

As recognised in the 2016 EU Global Strategy, managing climate change risk is essential to Europe’s security and prosperity². Overwhelming scientific evidence shows that a continual rise in greenhouse gas emissions is projected to further warm the

planet, increase the frequency and impact of extreme weather events, and cause long-lasting climactic changes, threatening severe and irreversible consequences for people and ecosystems. These changes will have significant political, economic, and social impacts by undermining the pillars of stability: food, water and other resources. The World Bank estimates that by 2025, 2.4 billion people will face absolute water scarcity³. In 2012, Oxfam estimated that the average price of staple foods such as maize could more than double by 2030⁴. These stressors are in turn likely to disrupt the lives of millions of people, leading to local resource conflicts and higher rates of

1 The authors would particularly like to thank the speakers and participants in the EU Working Group that convened during the Planetary Security Conference on 6 December 2016 in The Hague. The content of the brief represents the views of the authors and not necessarily those of their organisations.
2 European External Action Service, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe - A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” 2016. https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/eugs_review_web.pdf

3 World Bank Group, “At a glance: Water,” 2016. <http://water.worldbank.org/node/84122>
4 OXFAM “Extreme weather, extreme prices - The costs of feeding a warming world,” Oxfam Issue Briefing September 2012. <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/20120905-ib-extreme-weather-extreme-prices-en.pdf>

migration.⁵ European citizens are increasingly aware of these impacts and have begun to rank climate change as one of the biggest threats facing their countries and the continent⁶.

Responses Already Underway

The EU's 2016 Global Strategy states that "Climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate potential conflict, in light of their impact on desertification, land degradation, and water and food scarcity". The Strategy considers climate change to be "a threat multiplier that catalyses water and food scarcity, pandemics and displacement".

Climate security challenges entered the European security discourse nearly a decade ago⁷. However, with the financial crisis and the institutional changes from the Lisbon Treaty, the issue did not rise higher on agendas until the last three years as European policymakers have focused more on the security, stability and migration challenges of its neighbourhood. Building on the EU Global Strategy and climate risk statements from the European Council⁸, there is greater emphasis on translating high level recognition of the problem into effective policy. It is encouraging that the EU

is mainstreaming climate considerations into all relevant policy areas and plans to dedicate 20% of its 2014-20 budget (approximately €180 billion) to climate change-related action.

Internally, the **2013 Adaptation Strategy** provides the framework for 'climate-proofing' EU action, ensuring that Europe's infrastructure is resilient, promoting the use of disaster insurance, funding cross-border water management, and expanding protection for areas with drought or fire risks. In terms of disaster management, the **EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)** is tasked with monitoring emergencies around the world and coordinating responses within and outside the EU. This has been buttressed by the new **Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**, "A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies"⁹, with a strong focus on resilience. These actions help build climate resilience within Europe and also help buttress external action on a range of climate issues, including by helping European credibility in climate talks.

Externally, climate security issues are on the radar at the **European External Action Service (EEAS)** and at the Commission, notably with DGs **DEVCO, ECHO and CLIMA**. A mapping process is underway to determine how the different EU institutions have begun to look at climate security and what initiatives they have in place. Different types of conflict and fragility risk assessments, for example, are undertaken in different DGs within the Commission, with different ways of incorporating climate change impacts.

As conflict prevention is one of the EU's main foreign policy goals, the EU has operationalized its **Conflict Early Warning System (EWS)**. The EWS uses a wide range

5 For a detailed analysis of the range of climate security risks, see "A New Climate for Peace," an independent report commissioned for the G7 by adelphi, International Alert, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2015. <https://www.newclimateforpeace.org/>

6 Pew Research Center, June, 2016, "Europeans Face the World Divided" <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/06/13/europeans-see-isis-climate-change-as-most-serious-threats/>

7 Notably via a joint 2008 paper from Javier Solana and the Commission EU, Climate Change and International Security, S113/08 (followed by a 2009 progress report) and via a 2008 review of the European Security Strategy which identified climate change as a threat to European security interests.

8 The European Council, for example, has called for the inclusion of climate vulnerability analysis into fragility/security and disasters risk assessments and for greater collaboration on the resulting risk-mitigation efforts.

9 Commission Staff Working Document, "Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 - A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies" SWD(2016) 205 final/2. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/1_en_document_travail_service_part1_v2.pdf

of inputs from multiple sources to assess potential risks and enable the identification of long-term risks for violent conflict in a given country or region. The system is intended to help the EU pursue early preventive actions and coherent responses for addressing those risks¹⁰. The EWS was first tested for eight Sahel countries in 2013, followed by five Central Asian countries and then a global rollout in late 2014. The conflict index produced by the EWS includes indicators such as water stress and food insecurity that are relevant for climate security. The challenge now is to ensure that the EWS is able to successfully identify evolving climate security risks and to ensure that those working on climate security make use of it.

For the development community, there is a challenge to integrate climate security thinking into established development and humanitarian processes, which are themselves not far removed from debates over the connections between politics, security and their central fields of endeavour¹¹. DEVCO, for example, works with the least developed (and least resilient) countries via the **Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+)** and supports a variety of activities dealing with adaptation, mitigation, disaster risk reduction and desertification. It also contributed to the **New Climate for Peace** project and has launched a joint EU-UNEP initiative on climate and security in fragile states, using funding from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace¹².

At the **EEAS**, climate diplomacy has become a distinct issue area, of which climate security is now a central pillar. The latest **Climate Diplomacy Action Plan** is being developed and, with the blessing of the European Council,¹³ will also prioritise climate security issues for European diplomats to bring to the table at multilateral and bilateral discussions. A focus on resilience is also becoming entrenched, with the resilience of states and societies to the south and east as a key part of the **Global Strategy**. One potential tool for facilitating wider integration of climate security concerns into European diplomatic efforts is via the Green Diplomacy Network, a network of European diplomats focused on environmental and climate issues.¹⁴

In terms of European cooperation, there is broad agreement at the political level of the importance of climate security (see Council decisions mentioned above). Cooperation on climate issues more broadly has also been facilitated by the rejuvenation of the **Green Diplomacy Network** of European diplomats working on climate issues, a potentially important platform for expanding the discussion of climate security issues. And while European policy cooperation is criticized for foundering on the diverse interests of the 28, the existence of 28 potential centres of excellence can also be an advantage. This is the case for climate security, for example, with German leadership on cross-border water sharing initiatives and Dutch support for the Planetary Security Initiative.

Potential areas of focus

As the EU seeks to shape responses to the climate security risks that it sees as priorities, a few related areas are worth special attention.

10 Joint Staff Working Document EU Conflict Early Warning System: Objectives, Process and Guidance for Implementation, 5601/16 <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5601-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

11 See Diane de Gramont and Thomas Carothers, *Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution*, Carnegie, 2013.

12 Details at in ANNEX IV of the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual Action Programme 2015 for the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace - Global and trans-regional threats - Action Document for Climate Change and Security," https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/icsp-aap2015-climate_change_and_security-20151105_en.pdf

13 Council of the European Union, "European climate diplomacy after COP21 - Council conclusions (15 February 2016)". <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6061-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

14 See Balazs Ujvari, "Green Diplomacy Network - What is in a name?" European Policy Centre, Commentary, 29 February 2016. http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=4&pub_id=6355

First, there is no single strategic framework for managing climate risks.

Climate security has been integrated into the new EU Global Strategy, has become part of the EU's diplomatic focus for climate issues, and has become increasingly present in development strategies via increased focus on resilience. However, the EU currently does not have an overarching climate security strategy to help prioritise and facilitate the most effective responses to particular risks. Without such a framework, it can be difficult to choose whether clear climate change risks require new institutions or processes rather than better integration of climate risk into existing development, diplomatic and climate adaptation processes. Addressing this requires a clear understanding of European interests and security priorities, to facilitate the definition of the core objectives of an EU climate risk management strategy. Europe collectively has significant diplomatic, security, technical and financial resources to tackle the challenges of climate and resource security. There is also significant high level political support for stronger climate action, as expressed in multiple EU and international mandates. The challenge is to use this political support to ensure consistent deployment of resources around a politically informed strategy.

Second, there is no formal cooperative process for EU institutions and member states to work together in pursuing appropriate cooperative responses to identified climate risks.

This can be especially difficult considering the continuing institutional differences over how to frame 'climate security' in the EU and insufficient strategic capacity to prioritise among the various risks and threats. Because of the wide range of climate risk mechanisms and geographies affected, actors working across many themes and regions are involved in shaping appropriate responses. Much of the work being done in development, diplomatic and climate adaptation spheres is undertaken separately, with each actor using their own risk assessments and operational responses. A particular challenge has been the integration of such a complex and cross-cutting issue into an institutional and policy environment that is itself undergoing considerable change. Just as climate security

experts are beginning to identify the most important nodes for effective action, the mechanisms to affect those nodes are themselves evolving. This is particularly true for EU external policy, which has been slower to achieve cohesion in setting common priorities and shaping common institutions. A key component of this challenge will be to identify the best opportunities for investment in resilience-building.

Third, effective prevention of climate-related security challenges (from increased fragility to open conflict) requires both the integration of climate security into existing early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms, as well as the more effective use of these mechanisms by European development, diplomatic and security actors.

The topic of conflict and crisis prevention has risen quickly on the EU's political agendas. However, the EU now faces the challenge of integrating climate security concerns into systems for conflict prevention and early warning that are themselves just being put into place. Unlike the development arena, which has many important programmes and initiatives into which climate security concerns can be mainstreamed, there is an underdevelopment of the existing conflict assessment, conflict prevention, and crisis management fields within European governments. While the EU has gradually expanded the applicability of its Early Warning System, it is relatively new and its usage not yet widely integrated in the work of other actors. At the same time, only a few member states have early warning systems, not all of which integrate climate security questions to the same degree. There is also the challenge of time scales, with different mechanisms focused on different time frames, often primarily on the short term. A proper balance in resource allocation between crisis response and conflict prevention processes is important to avoid a mismatch between identified risks and potential tools for response. For example, while some crises may be resolvable with only a few months or years of diplomatic effort, work on resilience and infrastructure issues can take many years, and challenges requiring significant improvements to governance institutions

can take a generation to see significant progress. It will be important to build more capacity in this area throughout the EU agencies and member state ministries dedicated to external affairs and international development, most notably within the embassies and field offices abroad.

Fourth, European responses will be greatly enhanced by strengthening regional and local partners. One way to do this would be to integrate climate and resource security issues into EU regional stabilisation strategies and regional investment by European institutions. For example, the EU plans to boost investments in Africa and EU Neighbourhood countries through the EUR 88 billion EU External Investment Plan (EIP), including through work with the European Investment Bank's Resilience Initiative in the Southern Neighbourhood and Western Balkans. Though the plan has not explicitly targeted climate security, much of its work can be important in addressing climate security risks. In principle, the Fund will support sustainable development, but past support packages have largely focused on incentivizing democratic reforms, building civil society and supporting SMEs. These are important, but it is also important to systematically address other potential instability drivers such as exposure to energy and water shocks. The Italian and German presidencies of the G7 and G20, respectively, can provide venues to reach out beyond the European community to include other

leading global powers in these efforts. The G7 Working Group on Climate and Fragility, for example, is discussing climate-related security risks in a number of regions that may also be strategically relevant for the EU as it continues to develop its own strategy.

Fifth, following the success of COP21 in Paris, there is an opportunity to build a robust "below 2C" climate diplomacy strategy and capacity. In the wake of Brexit and the US election, the politics of increasing climate ambition in 2020 has become extremely difficult. The departure of the UK from Europe could shift the balance of EU politics towards lower climate ambition, and the assumption that stronger "bottom up" activity would be complemented by international political momentum generated by an activist US administration is very unlikely to prove to be true. However, the fundamental political economy factors underpinning the EU's potential for climate leadership remain strong, particularly if the work is guided by a coherent strategy which makes the case for enhanced mitigation, improved adaptation, and increased focus on climate security risks. One important way that the EU can lead is by working with its member states to reform the UN to make it fit for purpose in a climate changed world. EU efforts should include consistent support for delivering the 2030 and Paris commitments to integrate climate change across the UN, including a clear role for the UN Security Council in monitoring climate security risks.

About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative aims to help increase awareness, to deepen knowledge, and to develop and promote policies and good practice guidance to help governments, the private sector and international institutions better secure peace and cooperation in times of climate change and global environmental challenges. The Initiative was launched by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and is currently operated by a consortium of leading think tanks headed by the Clingendael Institute.

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