

## Synthesis: Climate Security in 3D

### Executive Summary

The three-part adelphi-Wilton Park event series on “[Climate Security in 3D: Diplomacy, Development, and Defence](#)” (16 – 25 March 2021) addressed the roles and remits, opportunities and limits to collaboration of all three sectors with regard to climate-related security risks. The dialogues brought together high-level speakers and foreign policy, development, and defence experts from around the world, including Colombia, Brazil, Germany, Ireland, Kenya, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Over the course of three interactive discussions, participants explored opportunities and challenges of cross-border, cross-government, and cross-sector cooperation and set out concrete areas for priority action. The focus on entry points lead to manifold recommendations for action across the 3Ds. The most relevant include:

1. The value of cross-government **climate and security ‘communities of practice’** or joint committees to share learnings, skills, and experiences to address climate security risks. Such cross-government coordination requires leadership, funding, and enabling institutional mechanisms.
2. Comprehensive analysis, early warning, and early action require access to climate data and an understanding of how to assess them together. Many joint-risk assessment approaches already exist. The priority is not to create new approaches or tools, but to **increase knowledge of how to access and include climate data into existing tools** and analysis alongside conflict, development, and humanitarian data.
3. Even with high quality early warning data, there is a need to prioritise and enable early action to reduce risks based on early warning information. This calls for a political paradigm shift towards **increased investment in prevention**. Investments in education and sustainable livelihoods are central here, given that prosperity is a key element for resilience to climate change and conflict shocks.
4. The need for more geographically specific, contextual, and evidence-based recommendations which can offer more nuanced language on climate security at the international and multilateral level. **Investing in locally led research and expertise** in all activities and solutions are central to this.
5. Establishing a **multilateral space or ‘coalition of the willing’ member states for climate and security**. Here, bilateral diplomatic ties should be leveraged as a means for climate security champions to bring around potentially recalcitrant states.
6. Move the debate from the need to justify causal linkages between climate change and security, or the risk of securitisation, towards a **solutions-oriented discourse to priorities ‘do no harm’ and ‘no regrets’ options. This would enable climate action to advance** alongside sustainable peace and vice versa.

## Report

The first dialogue, “[Climate Security in 3D: Diplomacy](#)”, emphasized the need for interdisciplinary approaches to climate security, the necessity for cross-border solutions, and a granular understanding of local situations in a regional context. The

*“Cross-cutting approaches are both an imperative and an opportunity (...). We can’t cut corners. We have to invest in analytical capacity, conduct assessments, and build partnerships, buy-in and political support.”*

importance of increasing analytical capabilities to address the climate security nexus was the most urgent and concrete priority identified for both bilateral and multilateral action. Participants stressed the value of building on and sharing existing knowledge and creating synergies and support by connecting the climate and security agenda to Agenda 2030 and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. Participants highlighted the opportunities presented by the UK in including the topic as a key theme at COP26. Common foreign policy goals identified in the dialogue included using

cross-border and whole-of-government approaches to address climate security, shared analysis, the need for compelling evidence, and (long-term) timeframes of climate science to better connect to the (immediate) timeframes of politicians and policy-makers. Another aspect concerned common language on climate security, including more geographically specific, contextual, and evidence-based language to reduce opposition against the topic on an international level.

*“Security is not just diplomacy, security is not just development, it is not just defence. (...) It has to be a combination of all three in order to drive solutions.”*

*“Women should not be seen as victims of circumstances. Rather, we need to make efforts to acknowledge their role as agents of change.”*

The second dialogue “[Climate Security in 3D: Development](#)” brought development policy experts from donor agencies, NGOs, and multilateral organisations together to share their experiences and lessons learnt in working towards integrated climate and security programming. Participants included experts from the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, USAID, Sida, GIZ, EEAS, Mercy Corps, and UN agencies. The discussion identified challenges and emerging trends, such as the limitations of current financing instruments, ongoing efforts to integrate gender into climate-security

*“We need to be mindful of not creating another silo of dealing with climate and conflict, without taking a multi-hazard approach.”*

programming, and increasing regional cooperation. Participants agreed that the present momentum for climate security presents a unique opportunity for progress on the issue. Donor learning and M&E was discussed, emphasizing challenges of aligning programming cycles and funding instruments with cross-sectoral interventions. Participants agreed that the integration of gender and social inclusion requires coherent efforts throughout project cycles,

including targeted financing, conditional disbursement, the use of quotas, and gender-equality markers across programmes. The importance of local ownership and context-specific programmes which involve the experiences of local communities was stressed. Participants also highlighted that better coordination and cooperation between donors and the policy sector were not an end in itself, but a means for improved action, requiring shared language and framings as a baseline. Rather than creating new approaches, existing approaches, e.g. the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, should be supplemented with a climate lens. On the way forward, there was agreement that programming will need to move beyond climate-/conflict sensitivity, towards truly integrated programming, achieving climate, security, and peace benefits. Following the event, the policy paper “[Addressing Climate-related Security Risks: Towards a](#)

[Programme for Action](#)” emerged from the findings, expert interviews, and academic research.

The third of the adelphi-Wilton Park dialogues “**Climate Security in 3D: Defence**” explored practical next steps the defence community could take, complementing diplomatic and development approaches. One critical priority for the military was agreed to be military sustainability and greening their own carbon footprint. As well as being an imperative so that the military do not stand accused of not walking the talk when engaging on climate change, participants emphasized the opportunity for the defence sector to be a role-model and leader, supporting and accelerating the reduction of carbon emission to reach the zero emissions goal. Beyond this, central entry points for the defence community to further the climate and security agenda included sharing tools with development and diplomacy actors for better foresight and scenario planning, offering guidance and advise on risk informed planning and decision making in the face of uncertainty, and offering assistance to decision-makers from all fields to act against complex and multifaceted climate-related security risks on the basis of incomplete information and the importance of joint, cross-government, cross-border, and cross-discipline approaches (decompartmentalization).

*“You will never get off the line of departure if you wait for complete information, you must eventually take the plunge on the basis of the analysis you have.”*

*“How do we build resilience? That is the really big theme of the work the UK is doing in this COP26 presidency.”*

**Throughout all three dialogues**, the importance of community voices and local expertise in all activities and solutions with regard to climate-related security risks were stressed. Equally, participants widely agreed on the momentum for climate security in 2021 and the unique opportunities for progress on the issue. The importance of joint, cross-government, cross-border, and cross-discipline approaches was emphasized in all three dialogues, as well as the need for compelling evidence, and (long-term) timeframes of climate science to better connect to the (immediate) timeframes of politicians and policy-makers.

## Policy Recommendations

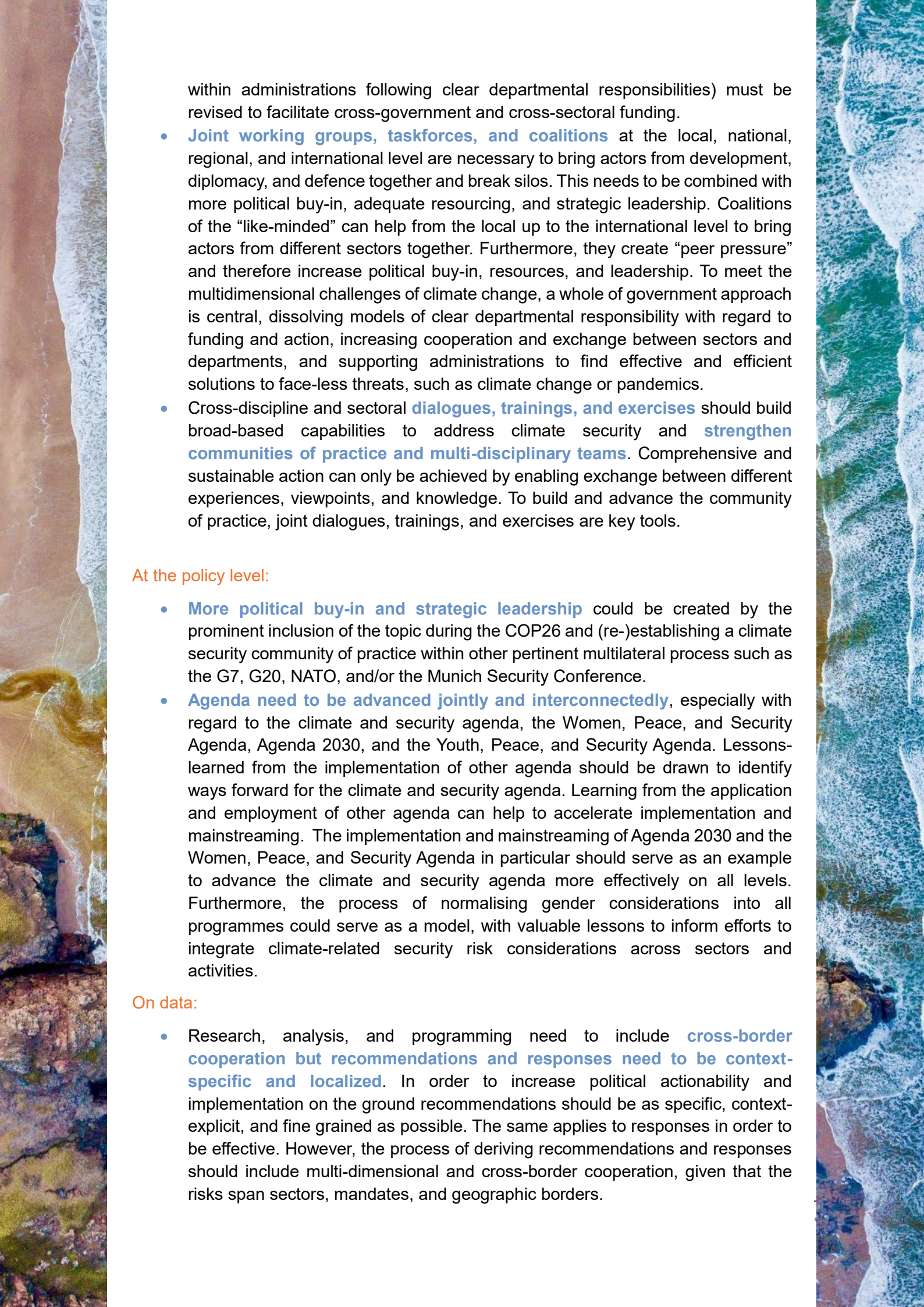
The event series led to **recommendations** for actors across and within the 3Ds working on climate security. First, recommendations relevant across development, diplomacy, and defence are listed. Followed-by by specific recommendations for each sector.

### **Recommendations across the 3Ds (to development, diplomacy, and defence):**

On coordination:

- **Shared frameworks for understanding with regard to donor coordination and cooperation** should be used, wherever possible through **regional bodies** for increased coordination. This would contribute to a shared understanding of climate-related security risks across different donors and implementing agencies, helping to shift the debate from defining and clarifying terminology towards a solutions-oriented discourse which jointly advances climate action and sustainable peace.
- Different **funding streams and mechanisms** must be **combined, or specialised new financing channels are required** to enable climate security to be approached cross-government. Existing funding streams favour activities limited to one sector to avoid overlapping responsibilities with other donors. To counter climate change as a multidimensional risk this pattern (most common





within administrations following clear departmental responsibilities) must be revised to facilitate cross-government and cross-sectoral funding.

- **Joint working groups, taskforces, and coalitions** at the local, national, regional, and international level are necessary to bring actors from development, diplomacy, and defence together and break silos. This needs to be combined with more political buy-in, adequate resourcing, and strategic leadership. Coalitions of the “like-minded” can help from the local up to the international level to bring actors from different sectors together. Furthermore, they create “peer pressure” and therefore increase political buy-in, resources, and leadership. To meet the multidimensional challenges of climate change, a whole of government approach is central, dissolving models of clear departmental responsibility with regard to funding and action, increasing cooperation and exchange between sectors and departments, and supporting administrations to find effective and efficient solutions to face-less threats, such as climate change or pandemics.
- Cross-discipline and sectoral **dialogues, trainings, and exercises** should build broad-based capabilities to address climate security and **strengthen communities of practice and multi-disciplinary teams**. Comprehensive and sustainable action can only be achieved by enabling exchange between different experiences, viewpoints, and knowledge. To build and advance the community of practice, joint dialogues, trainings, and exercises are key tools.

#### At the policy level:

- **More political buy-in and strategic leadership** could be created by the prominent inclusion of the topic during the COP26 and (re-)establishing a climate security community of practice within other pertinent multilateral process such as the G7, G20, NATO, and/or the Munich Security Conference.
- **Agenda need to be advanced jointly and interconnectedly**, especially with regard to the climate and security agenda, the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, Agenda 2030, and the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda. Lessons-learned from the implementation of other agenda should be drawn to identify ways forward for the climate and security agenda. Learning from the application and employment of other agenda can help to accelerate implementation and mainstreaming. The implementation and mainstreaming of Agenda 2030 and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in particular should serve as an example to advance the climate and security agenda more effectively on all levels. Furthermore, the process of normalising gender considerations into all programmes could serve as a model, with valuable lessons to inform efforts to integrate climate-related security risk considerations across sectors and activities.

#### On data:

- Research, analysis, and programming need to include **cross-border cooperation but recommendations and responses need to be context-specific and localized**. In order to increase political actionability and implementation on the ground recommendations should be as specific, context-explicit, and fine grained as possible. The same applies to responses in order to be effective. However, the process of deriving recommendations and responses should include multi-dimensional and cross-border cooperation, given that the risks span sectors, mandates, and geographic borders.

- **Local expertise** must be integrated into all stages of programme design, building capacities in affected countries and facilitating local ownership.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** systems across all 3Ds need to be adapted to capture climate security risks to operations and operational risks to climate security resilience of beneficiaries. All monitoring and evaluation processes across the 3Ds need to enhance their forward-looking scope to assess potential impacts of operations in the face of projected climate impacts.
- **Better sharing of unclassified data among different stakeholders** is required, across national and regional security, meteorological, and academic institutions. This data should be accompanied by **fine grained, interdisciplinary, intersectional, and locally informed information**, wherever possible through supporting local institutions best placed to inform and drive solutions to challenges of climate change. Joint fora on all levels and a strengthened community of practice could enable countries, regional organisations, NGOs, and multilateral organisations to share and exchange unclassified information, tools, approaches, and existing analysis, to reduce transaction costs. This would also allow climate security research and the corresponding evidence-base to advance more quickly and comprehensively. Participating in projects like [Weathering Risk](#) supports spaces for organizations and states to share their data and facilitates interdisciplinary, inclusive, and forward-looking climate and security analysis.
- Considerations of climate-related security risks should **be mainstreamed into processes of planning and early warning systems** on an international, regional, national, and local level. This would enable planning and responses to take changes due to climate change into account, ensure a realistic and comprehensive assessment of the situation and identify opportunities for action.
- Climate science should increasingly use **short-term and immediate timeframes** when providing analysis for policy-makers (10 to 15 years maximum). Estimations of climate scientists are oftentimes disregarded by decision- and policy-makers because they focus on long-term consequences of climate change, while political decision-makers are interested in immediate consequences relevant during their political cycle. As well as providing important long-term projections, climate scientists should also seek to align their timeframes with short-term and immediate time-frames of the political cycle to increase the relevance and up-take of scientific climate analysis by decision- and policy-makers.

**At the operational level:**

- The **connection between resilience and governance** should be **better understood** across defence, diplomacy, and development. The importance of governance and its different dimensions must be understood across the 3Ds to enable a universal approach to resilience building. Governance is a decisive factor, determining the environment in which political action takes place. Therefore, it is central to enable resilience building and should include considerations of inter alia, climate-affected issues such as natural resources.





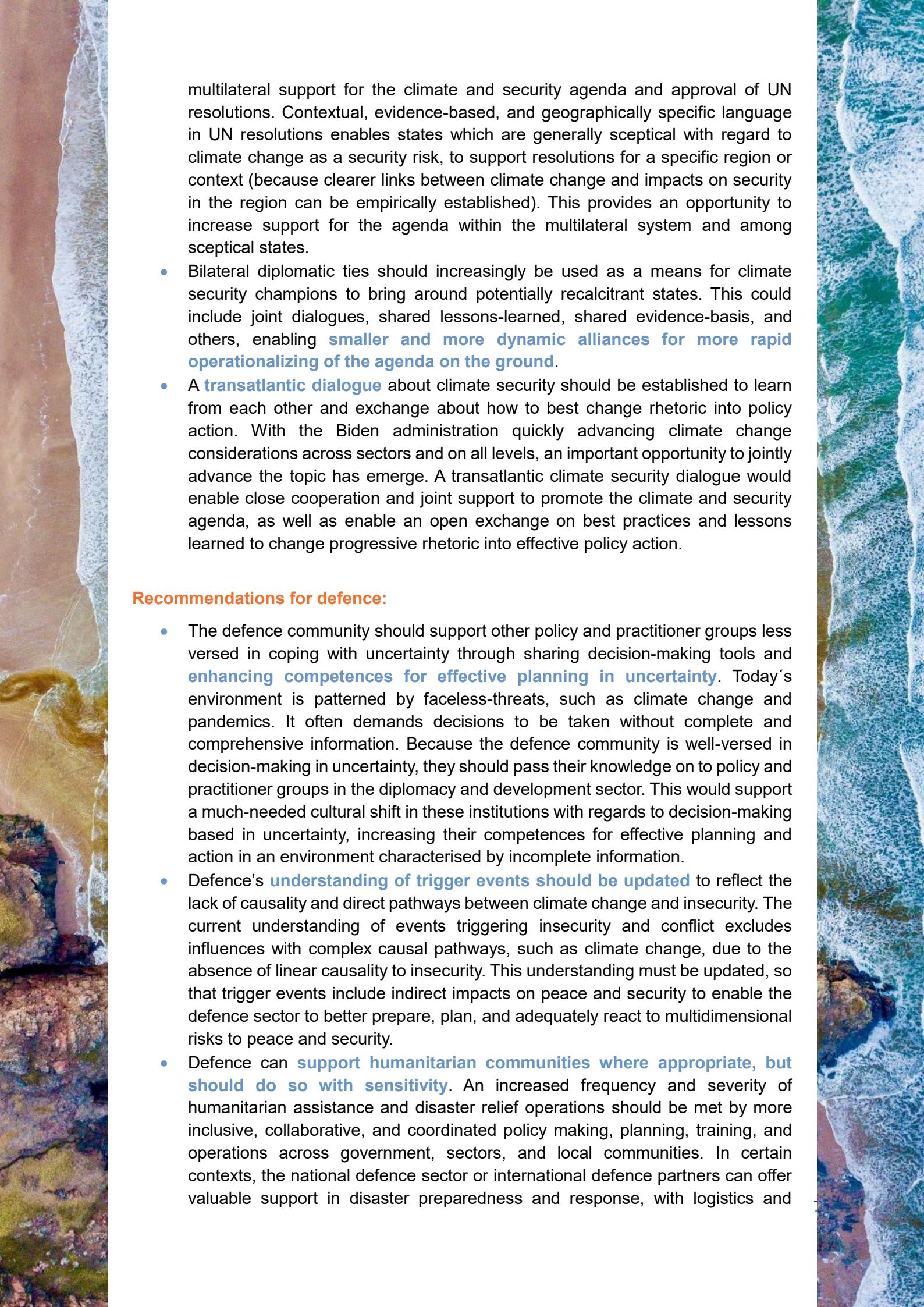
- **Peacebuilding and conflict reduction should enable protection of biodiversity and natural resources.** Diplomacy, development, and defence must coordinate to address and link the local and international aspects of protecting biodiversity and natural resources. Solutions should be rooted in **community and local approaches**, sensitive to land rights and governance issues and supported by building capacity across regions and supporting individual countries.

#### Recommendations for development:

- **Donor learning and monitoring and evaluation** should include and focus on **institutional learning** by combining monitoring climate security resilience building outcomes across projects and investing into capacity building to further these efforts. Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of projects enables donors to increase and transfer learnings from past experiences/ projects to build fitting capabilities and capacities for the future. This also helps to avoid the dissipation of resources (tangible and intangible), increases the share of successful projects, and advances overall performance.
- **Gender norms** should be integrated across **all stages** of the programming cycle, focusing on differentiated climate-related security impacts as well as the capacities of **all genders** to act as agents of change. The experiences of the peacebuilding community (evolved from the mainstreaming and implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda starting with UN Resolution 1325 in 2000) can facilitate progress in the climate-security sphere.
- Investments in **education and sustainable livelihoods are central**, given that prosperity is a key element, enabling communities to adapt and mitigate. In many regions across the world, climate change threatens people’s livelihoods, leading to potentially negative coping mechanisms, for example joining of armed opposition groups, and/ or turning to adverse livelihood strategies. This in turn decreases prosperity and further abates capabilities to adapt and mitigate. To avoid this vicious cycle, education (especially for women and girls) and sustainable livelihoods that can withstand climatic uncertainty and consequently ensure prosperity are key.
- On the ground, following the example of Somalia, additional **Climate Security Advisors** could be appointed, situated in UN country teams or political/peacekeeping missions, with a view to link diplomatic, development, and defence efforts. Their work should be informed by local inclusion and ownership, to support communities to be self-reliant and less vulnerable. A Climate Security Advisor would be responsible for connecting and exchanging with local, national, regional, and international partners across the 3Ds to inform solutions with cross-sectoral and cross-border knowledge. The work of a Climate Security Advisor would increase the effectiveness and success of climate security efforts in a national or regional context, and ensure a 3D approach on the ground.

#### Recommendations for diplomacy:

- To move forward on an international and multilateral level, more **geographically specific, contextual, and evidence-based language** on climate security is needed. Generic language around the topic should be obviated to avoid spaces for pushback. This recommendation is especially important with regard to



multilateral support for the climate and security agenda and approval of UN resolutions. Contextual, evidence-based, and geographically specific language in UN resolutions enables states which are generally sceptical with regard to climate change as a security risk, to support resolutions for a specific region or context (because clearer links between climate change and impacts on security in the region can be empirically established). This provides an opportunity to increase support for the agenda within the multilateral system and among sceptical states.

- Bilateral diplomatic ties should increasingly be used as a means for climate security champions to bring around potentially recalcitrant states. This could include joint dialogues, shared lessons-learned, shared evidence-basis, and others, enabling **smaller and more dynamic alliances for more rapid operationalizing of the agenda on the ground**.
- A **transatlantic dialogue** about climate security should be established to learn from each other and exchange about how to best change rhetoric into policy action. With the Biden administration quickly advancing climate change considerations across sectors and on all levels, an important opportunity to jointly advance the topic has emerge. A transatlantic climate security dialogue would enable close cooperation and joint support to promote the climate and security agenda, as well as enable an open exchange on best practices and lessons learned to change progressive rhetoric into effective policy action.

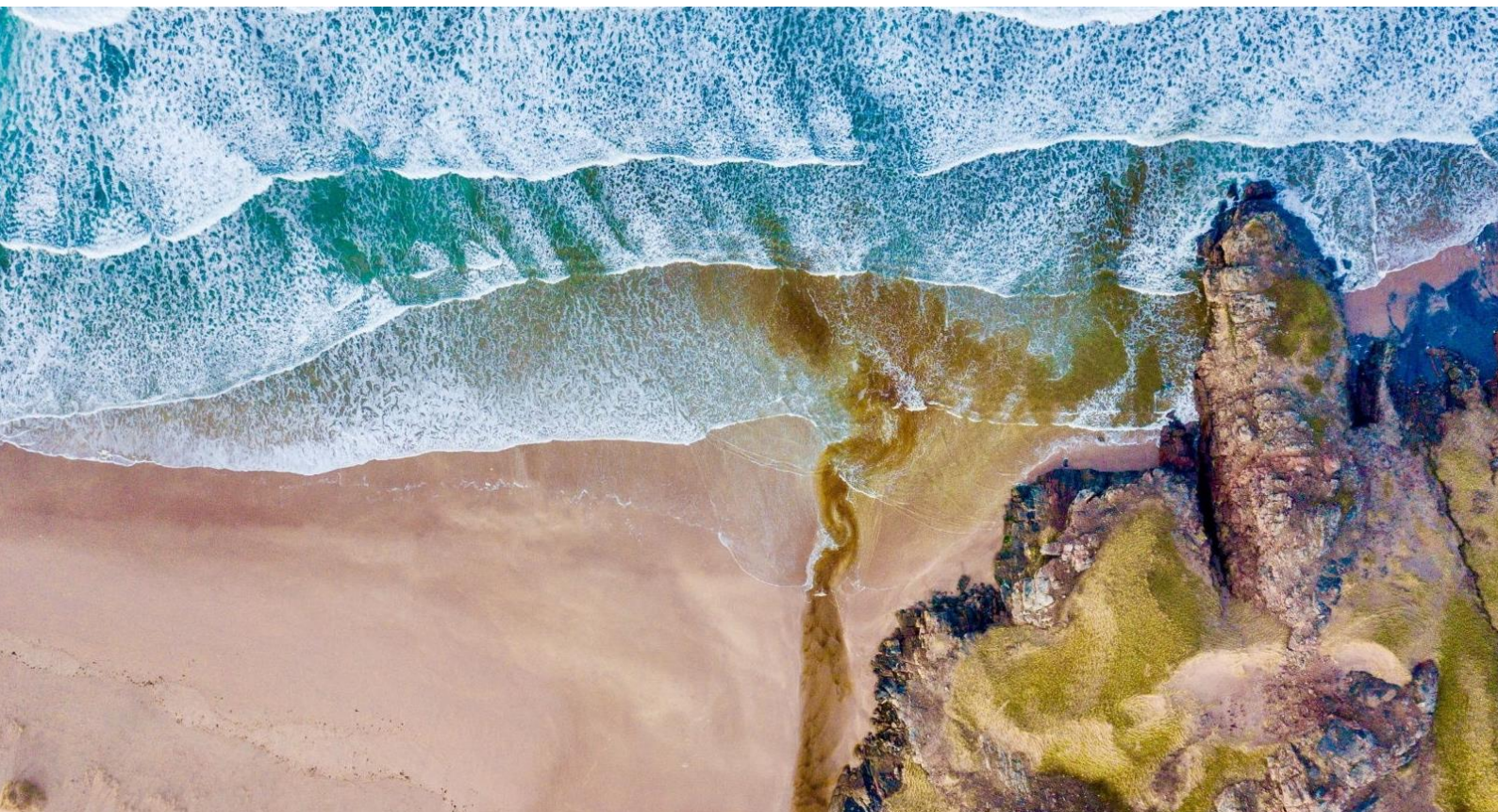
#### Recommendations for defence:

- The defence community should support other policy and practitioner groups less versed in coping with uncertainty through sharing decision-making tools and **enhancing competences for effective planning in uncertainty**. Today's environment is patterned by faceless-threats, such as climate change and pandemics. It often demands decisions to be taken without complete and comprehensive information. Because the defence community is well-versed in decision-making in uncertainty, they should pass their knowledge on to policy and practitioner groups in the diplomacy and development sector. This would support a much-needed cultural shift in these institutions with regards to decision-making based in uncertainty, increasing their competences for effective planning and action in an environment characterised by incomplete information.
- Defence's **understanding of trigger events should be updated** to reflect the lack of causality and direct pathways between climate change and insecurity. The current understanding of events triggering insecurity and conflict excludes influences with complex causal pathways, such as climate change, due to the absence of linear causality to insecurity. This understanding must be updated, so that trigger events include indirect impacts on peace and security to enable the defence sector to better prepare, plan, and adequately react to multidimensional risks to peace and security.
- Defence can **support humanitarian communities where appropriate, but should do so with sensitivity**. An increased frequency and severity of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations should be met by more inclusive, collaborative, and coordinated policy making, planning, training, and operations across government, sectors, and local communities. In certain contexts, the national defence sector or international defence partners can offer valuable support in disaster preparedness and response, with logistics and



planning or as first responders. In other contexts, where the role of the defence sector may be met with mistrust or concern, a more sensitive approach would be called for.

- **Defence diplomacy and the international defence and security network must complement efforts** to address the cross-border nature of climate security. Defence diplomacy links the implementation of foreign policy objectives to those of the defence sector. It can be an important instrument, combining dimensions of both soft and hard power and could be a central instrument to advance the climate and security agenda on a national and multilateral level.



Synthesis prepared by Hannah Kurnoth and Janani Vivekananda. For questions, please contact [kurnoth@adelphi.de](mailto:kurnoth@adelphi.de).

---

Led by:



Supported by:

