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Security Council

Background Guide Update

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I. The Impact of Climate-Related Disasters on International Peace and Security

Recent Developments

The most recent debate of the issue at hand by the Security Council was the Open Debate: "Addressing the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace and security" on January 25th 2019.[1] The presiding representative of the Dominican Republic laid out in the concept note (S/2019/1) the discussion, that addressed the link between security issues and the effects of climate change as well as natural disasters.[2] The debate highlighted the need for the entire UN system to be engaged in fighting climate change and increase its analytic capacity in order to draft scientifically informed response strategies.[3] It was widely agreed that the UN Security Council should discuss climate security more frequently since some currently existing conflicts in particular on the African continent are already being exacerbated by the effects of climate change.[4]

On the 22nd of April 2020 an Arria-formula Meeting of the Security Council on "Climate and security risks: the latest data" was organized by France.[5] It featured discussion on the impact of climate related disasters in particular on conflict prone regions and vulnerable societies.[6] Further questions included the search for appropriate tools for preventing climate-related conflicts and the integration of climate-fragility risks into UN policies.[7]

The general topic of climate and security was discussed in the Security Council's online meeting on the 24th of July 2020.[8] Under the presidency of Germany, a series of briefers from other UN organs, research facilities and representatives from affected member states addressed the council.[9] The risks to security for Pacific island states and the impact of climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa were prominently discussed.[10] Several speakers also proposed the appointment of a Special Representative

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[1] UN SC, *Meeting Record 8451st meeting Friday, 25 January 2019 (S/PV.8451),* 2019.
[2] UN SC, *Letter dated 2 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General* (S/2019/1)*, 2019.*
[3] UN SC, *Letter dated 2 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General* (S/2019/1), 2019.
[4] UN SC, *Letter dated 2 January 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General* (S/2019/1), 2019.
[5] Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, *Event on Climate and Security risks on April 22nd 2020* *https://onu.delegfrance.org/Event-on-Climate-and-Security-risks, 2020.*
[6] Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, *Event on Climate and Security risks on April 22nd 2020* *https://onu.delegfrance.org/Event-on-Climate-and-Security-risks, 2020.*
[7] Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, *Event on Climate and Security risks on April 22nd 2020* *https://onu.delegfrance.org/Event-on-Climate-and-Security-risks, 2020.*
[8] UN SC, Meeting record 30 July 2020, (S/2020/751), 2020.
[9] UN SC, Meeting record 30 July 2020, (S/2020/751), 2020.
[10] UN SC, Meeting record 30 July 2020, (S/2020/751), 2020.

of the Secretary-General on Climate and Security, reporting to the UN Security Council on the issue.[11] One crucial point of criticism brought up the representatives of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Kenya was the failure of the council to adequately address the issue of climate and security in their resolutions since Security Council resolution 2349 in 2017.[12]

On October 12th 2020 the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction report on *The Human Cost of Disasters - An overview of the last 20 years 2000-2019* was published.[13] It details the effects of extreme weather events and the rising threat these disasters pose to human lives.[14] The data based on the Emergency Events Database shows a steep increase of wildfires, droughts, major floods and extreme temperature events in addition to a rise in geo-physical activity and related disasters such as tsunamis or earthquakes.[15] The total number of climate-related disasters rose from around 3,600 between 1980 and 1999 to 6,700 between 2000 and 2019.[16]

The widening definition of security also includes the threats resulting from outbreaks of infectious diseases such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.[17] The impact of public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.[18] The Security council addressed the relation of these non-traditional threats to international peace in its meeting on the 3rd of November 2020.[19] In her concept note for the meeting the presiding representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines highlighted the interconnectedness and overlapping areas of the current challenges to international peace.[20] She urged the council to collaborate more closely with the UN's development system in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in areas where development deficits exist.[21]

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[11] UN SC, Meeting record 30 July 2020, (S/2020/751), 2020.
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[13] UNDRR, *Human cost of disasters: An overview of the last 20 years 2000-2019,* 2020.
[14] UNDRR, *Human cost of disasters: An overview of the last 20 years 2000-2019,* 2020.
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[16] UNDRR , *Human cost of disasters: An overview of the last 20 years 2000-2019,* 2020.
[17] UNHCR, *Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it particularly impacts the displaced,* 2020.
[18] UNHCR, *Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it particularly impacts the displaced,* 2020.
[19] UN SC, *Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding, Development Urgently Needed as Climate Change, COVID-19 Pandemic Aggravate Cross-Border Conflict, Speakers Warn Security Council* (SC/14345), 2020.
[20] UN SC, *Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding, Development Urgently Needed as Climate Change, COVID-19 Pandemic Aggravate Cross-Border Conflict, Speakers Warn Security Council* (SC/14345), 2020.
[21] UN SC, *Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding, Development Urgently Needed as Climate Change, COVID-19 Pandemic Aggravate Cross-Border Conflict, Speakers Warn Security Council* (SC/14345), 2020.

United Nations Security Council, *Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding, Development Urgently Needed as Climate Change, COVID-19 Pandemic Aggravate Cross-Border Conflict, Speakers Warn Security Council* (SC/14345), 2020. Retrieved January 25, 2021: https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14345.doc.htm

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II. Women, Peace, and Security

Recent Developments

2020 marks the year twenty years after the passing of the Security Council resolution 1325.[22] The Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council regarding this anniversary outlines five goals the Security Council wishes to achieve within the next decade. [23] These Goals involve including women in the peace making and peacekeeping operations and collecting more data to close data gaps and increase knowledge in the most pressing issued of today.[24]

The report further provides data on the accomplishments since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). [25] The worldwide percentage of peace agreements with gender equality provisions increased by 8 per cent between 1995 and 2019.[26] The representation of women in national parliament has nearly doubled since 2000 to now 29.4 per cent, however the representation in conflict-affected areas remains at 18.9 per cent.[27]

In the light of the global pandemic the Secretary-General has called for a global ceasefire; he called for an end to all violence everywhere.[28] He thereby also addressed the violence against women around the world in the light of the worrying global surge of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic related lockdowns.[29] The Security Council endorsed the global ceasefire in its resolution 2532 (2020).[30] In the same resolution the Security Council acknowledged the important role that women have in the COVID-19 response efforts, and the disproportionate negative impact of the pandemic on women and girls.[31]

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[22] UN Women, *Press release: 20 Years on, radical change needed to realize women's inclusion in peace and political power*, 2020.
[23] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[24] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[25] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[26] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[27] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[28] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[29] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[30] UN SC, *On cessation of hostilities in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic* (S/RES/2532), 2020.
[31] UN SC, *On cessation of hostilities in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic* (S/RES/2532), 2020.

Furthermore the Security Council calls for actions to minimize this impact and to include women and youth in the development and implementation of responses to the pandemic.[32]

The Secretary-General also states in his report that many of the best examples of leadership during the pandemic have come from women.[33] However a survey of 30 countries has shown that on average only 24 per cent of members of COVID-19 taskforces are women; in conflict-affected areas the representation is at 18 per cent.[34]

The report further highlights the importance of keeping up the work on the women, peace and security agenda.[35] The Secretary-General calls the pandemic a "wake-up call to built more equal and inclusive societies", addressing the Member States to not ignore the lessons learned from the past years to ensure a positive impact on women and also the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[36]

A policy brief by the Peace and Security Team of UN Women regarding the pandemic and the meaningful participation of women in the actions regarding the issue points out the important role of women in the peace-making and peacekeeping process.[37] The call for a global ceasefire has opened opportunities to shift existing dynamics and start talks with conflict actors.[38] The brief calls for the inclusion of women every time these talks are held.[39] It highlights the risk of women's leadership may be overlooked – due to the pandemic and violent conflicts – when it is needed most.[40] The document offers ten recommendations to ensure women's inclusion in peace-making during the pandemic.[41] Among others the brief calls for specific support to women on negotiating delegations, amplifying the voices of women's civil society organisations as well as providing funds for specific Women, Peace and Security capacity.[42]

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[33] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
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[35] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[36] UN SC, *Women and peace and security* (S/2020/946), 2020.
[37] UN Women, *Policy brief No. 19: COVID-19 and conflict: Advancing Women's meaningful participation in ceasefires and peace processes*, 2020.
[38] UN Women, *Policy brief No. 19: COVID-19 and conflict: Advancing Women's meaningful participation in ceasefires and peace processes*, 2020.
[39] UN Women, *Policy brief No. 19: COVID-19 and conflict: Advancing Women's meaningful participation in ceasefires and peace processes*, 2020.
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III. Countering Violent Extremism

Recent Developments

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced all aspects of life, as well as the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. In July 2020 the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism held the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week. [43] The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, stated in his closing remarks, that the COVID-19 pandemic was "one of the greatest challenges since the creation of the United Nations 75 years ago".[44] Further he added, that the world is focused on the virus, however, as terrorists are exploiting the situation, Member States must keep up with the efforts to prevent and fight terrorism.[45] During the pandemic the digital transformation has been accelerated, therefore the risk of cyberterrorism needs to be addressed more strategically at multiple levels.[46] The Under-Secretary-General also highlighted the importance of "decisive actions to prevent terrorist exploitation of social media and the Internet while protecting freedom of expression".[47] In his closing remarks, he also urged the Member States to take action regarding current crisis situations to prevent the situation to be used by terrorists to radicalize future generations.[48]

On the 16th of December 2020 the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/187, which includes the call to action from the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.[49] They focus on the importance of fostering religious tolerance, peace and respect and offer several actions for the Member States to implement in order to archive this goal.[50] The actions the resolution offers are to encourage dialogue, training government officials in effective outreach strategies and to combat religious stereotyping of people among other actions.[51] The resolution further calls upon the States to take steps against the discrimination of individuals based on their religion, as this can lead to violent extremism and terrorism.[52]

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[43] UN Press Release, *Partners Reaffirm Joint Commitment to Fighting Terrorism, Violent Extremism amid COVID-19, as Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week Concludes,* 2020.
[44] UN Press Release, *Partners Reaffirm Joint Commitment to Fighting Terrorism, Violent Extremism amid COVID-19, as Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week Concludes,* 2020.
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The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) released a paper outlining the impact of the pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism in June 2020.[53] The paper depicts the short-term impact of COVID-19 on terrorism. [54] As more people - especially young people - spend more time online, terrorist have access to a captive audience and this offers them an opportunity to expose more people to their ideas. [55] Several terrorist groups have integrated the pandemic into their narratives and also used the pandemic to fuel their existing narratives to intensify hatred toward particular groups.[56] Terrorist groups – particularly in areas where the States presence is weak or contested – have an opportunity to step up to act as alternative service providers.[57] The real or perceived failures of the States' responses to the pandemic have already lead to the promotion of anti-State violence.[58]

In an Update to this report, published in December 2020, the CTED shows that the travel-restrictions and other COVID-19 responses have made it harder for terrorist groups to conduct attacks.[59] However, they emphasize that due to the limits on in-person gatherings, for example in market places and places of worship, terrorists may shift the attention away from those targets and act out attacks against critical infrastructure, such as hospitals and clinics. [60] The CTED notes that the emergency measures in Member States that limit human rights has the potential to increase grievances and further the radicalization to terrorism.[61] As many Member States experience economic strain due to the pandemic, the CTED has pointed out a decrease in funding of counter terrorism measures and initiatives to counter violent extremism.[62] Border closures and stricter procedures of entry have restricted the mobility of terrorist groups, however the collected data can be vulnerable to various forms of attacks. [63] The CTED pointed out that normalizing these measures after the pandemic would create several challenges, including human rights concerns. [64] The CTED calls for "proportional COVID-19 responses and [adopting] a comprehensive, balanced, fully human rights-compliant and gender-sensitive approach to counterterrorism and CVE".[65]

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