



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE
برلمان البحر الأبيض المتوسط

PAM APPROACH TO CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS

Background paper

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Climate change has significant implications for PAM countries, as it amplifies existing issues related to food insecurity, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and over-exploitation of natural resources. These issues have the potential to negatively impact the social and political stability of Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf countries, and increase the risk of mass migration movements, economic crises, and regional conflicts. In the promotion of an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous PAM region, the Assembly supports Member Parliaments in designing and adopting effective climate legislation and exchanging relevant information and best practices. PAM also joins the UNSC in welcoming the proposal of appointing a UN Special Envoy for Climate Security.

On 23 February 2021, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) hosted a meeting dedicated to the implications of climate change on international peace and security. Members have highlighted how climate change contributes to global instability and how it threatens development gains achieved worldwide. Participants expressed their support for renewing current frameworks for climate policies, appointing a UN Special Envoy for Climate Security, and publishing an annual report on climate-related security risks and possible areas of intervention.

BACKGROUND¹:

1. The Members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) convened on 23 February 2021 to discuss the implications of climate change on international peace and security. The meeting – chaired by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson and attended by the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres – gathered top leaders from the represented Nations, including the French President Emmanuel Macron, the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, the Chinese Special Envoy for Climate Change Xie Zhenhua, and the German Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas.

¹ Source of data presented in this paper: *Maintenance of international peace and security: Climate and Security*. Security Council Open VTC, 23 February 2021. Available at: <http://webtv.un.org/watch/maintenance-of-international-peace-and-security-climate-and-security-security-council-open-vtc/6234686966001/>

2. The Members of the Council firmly stated the existence of a nexus between climate change and international security. They unanimously defined climate change as an amplifier and multiplier of tensions and instability that could lead to conflicts and exacerbate existing security risks. Most crucially, the leaders went beyond the characterisation of the issue as a purely environmental concern. Rather, they stressed the “undeniable and unavoidable” connection between climate disruption, conflicts, water, food and energy security, and internal and international migratory flows. The chair of the Council, the UK Prime Minister Johnson, pointed out that the Security Council has the right and duty to contrast climate change – as climate factors are currently leading to the displacement of 16 million people per year.
3. The African leaders attending the Council debate warned that climate disasters are damaging Africa more than any other region of the world. In particular, the President of the Republic of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, highlighted that the current climate crisis is severely threatening the development gains achieved in the continent in the past decades. The Prime Minister of Niger, Mr. Brigi Rafini, reported that increasing water scarcity could depress the GDP of Sahelian countries by up to 6% in the next decades. He also stressed that environmental degradation in the region would contribute to a 20% increase in hunger and malnutrition rates, and it would plunge 2.5 million small agricultural producers into poverty.
4. The Council meeting resulted in a wide range of policy proposals. Members argued for the adoption of a renewed framework for climate policies based on the integration of climate risk assessments within strategies for economic and financial support, and conflict prevention and resolution. They also proposed the creation of an early warning system to map climate hot spots in combination with the reinforcement of accessible data sharing systems. Moreover, they suggested that conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction operations, as well as the funnelling of humanitarian aid, should be oriented towards local job creation and support sustainable development outcomes.
5. Central to the UNSC debate were two proposals concerning the role of the UN in addressing climate risks. For the first time, the Members of the Council officially discussed the introduction of an annual report publication, to be issued by the UN Secretary General, to present a forward-looking and region-specific assessment of climate-related risks. The report will include concrete policy recommendations to prevent and tackle the identified risks. Secondly, a group of Members including France, Germany, and the U.S. also emphasised the importance of appointing a special UN envoy for climate risk. While such proposals had already been made by isolated Members in the past, they were never put forth and agreed upon so vigorously in the context of the UNSC.
6. To conclude, the Members of the UN Security Council highlighted the importance of maintaining a high level of multilateral cooperation in the course of 2021, especially in light of the COP26 that will take place in Glasgow in November 2021. The Conference is

seen as the last chance to commit to an ambitious climate agenda and reshape the trajectory of the global economy towards a sustainable development path.

PAM ROLE:

The PAM region has proven to be vulnerable to climate change disruption, including its negative impacts on water supplies, agricultural production, prices of food commodities, biodiversity, and natural resource degradation. Such phenomena could potentially exacerbate social, political, and economic tensions. To address these complex issues, it is important to promote a coordinated multidimensional regional approach. PAM can and should play a pivotal role in this process by promoting cooperation among its Member Parliaments by adopting national environmental legislative frameworks that are harmonized and coherent at the regional level. PAM is ready to implement the following initiatives on climate change and security:

1. Promote coordinated action among PAM Members to design recovery plans abiding by the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Barcelona Convention. This will keep the need for economic reconstruction aligned with the international climate agenda.
2. Encourage information sharing on climate-related security risks, especially for those geographic areas in the Mediterranean that are particularly vulnerable to political instability, terrorist threats, and radicalisation. This will facilitate rapid and coordinated actions, enhancing the capacity of PAM Member States to prevent and manage climate risks and their direct and indirect impacts on socio-economic development, human security, and societal stability.
3. Promote the adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach to climate legislation. PAM can support Members to design climate adaptation and mitigation strategies that also address climate-related security risks – such as food insecurity, migration stemming from natural disasters, and political and socio-economic tensions over water and land resources.
4. Support Member States in the design and adoption of ambitious and security-sensitive Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) ahead of the upcoming COP26. PAM can play a crucial role in assisting national parliaments in the integration of the multi-faceted and transboundary character of climate risks in the new NDCs.
5. Provide the maximum support to the new UN Special Envoy for Climate Security, should the UN Security Council decide to appoint one. PAM could facilitate the direct cooperation between policymakers, local and regional authorities, and the UN Special Envoy, contributing to the establishment of effective multilateral climate diplomacy across the Euro-Mediterranean and Gulf regions.