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Signs of Progress: Environment and Conflict in the UN Security Council

What is needed to fully tackle the complex challenges around environmental dimensions of armed conflicts? Civil society, affected states and experts have struggled with this essential question for decades. This briefing note elaborates on the latest insights on this issue as expressed during an informal (Arria formula) meeting on this topic in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

The environmental impact of wars, armed conflicts and military activities poses significant challenges to lives and livelihoods of affected communities and the natural resources they depend on. The images of thick columns of smoke released from 600 burning oil wells set on fire by the retreating Iraqi army during the 1991 Gulf War catalysed action on conflict and the environment. In 2001, the UN General Assembly declared November 6 [International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict](#) (Resolution [A/56/4](#)).

Political processes and humanitarian initiatives to prevent and mitigate immediate and long term conflict-inflicted damage to the environment continue. Widespread access to the internet, increased use of satellite imagery and documentation through social media and mobile phones are just one of the means and methods to [monitor](#) conflicts and resulting environmental impacts. Increase in access and use of these technologies provide direct knowledge of a range of environmental disasters unfolding in war zones.

From [oil fires](#) in Iraq, to [toxic waste](#) flooding from mines in Ukraine to large scale [deforestation](#) in Colombia, concerns are growing about the linkages between environment, peace and security. And this issue requires a more coherent approach. With this in mind, the Governments of Kuwait and Germany [hosted](#) an Arria-formula meeting in the UN Security Council on November 7, 2018.

In the context of current conflicts on the Council's agenda, environmental issues were recently raised in the UNSC in relation to the threat of an [environmental disaster](#) by the floating oil storage terminal, SAFER FSO, off the coast of Yemen, as well as around the environmental impacts of [peacekeeping operations](#), and the role of [natural resources](#) in conflict prevention.

With recent international legal and policy developments taking place in the International Law Commission's (ILC) work on [Protection of the Environment in Armed Conflict](#) (PERAC), various UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) resolution's on [conflict](#) and [environment](#), the International

Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) announcement to soon release its updated [Military Guidelines](#) on protection of the environment in armed conflict, there is clearly movement and an appetite for action. Yet an avenue to build a framework for solutions, resolutions binding all the different elements of this complex nexus together is still missing. Could there be room for more action in the UN Security Council? And what should such an approach look like?

With this in mind, the Governments of Kuwait, Germany, Peru and Estonia joined forces and with support of PAX and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organized a second, in-depth exploration of this theme. The [objective](#) of the December 2019 meeting was to *'address the interlinkages between the environment and armed conflict, building from the initial discussions on the PERAC agenda and delving more deeply into current needs for language and cooperation in response to previous and ongoing degradation of the environment caused by armed forces in conflicts on the Council's agenda.'* An overview and analysis of statements made during the UNSC discussion explores avenues to build a robust international policy framework on environment, peace and security.

UNSC Arria-formula meeting: issues introduced by the briefers

The meeting commenced with two briefings, Mr. Wim Zwijnenburg from PAX and Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Mr. Satya Tripathi, from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Mr. Wim Zwijnenburg of **PAX** [started](#) by setting the stage on this theme, providing an overview of current environmental issues caused by armed conflict, such as attacks on oil infrastructure, large scale deforestation or destruction of agricultural lands. These examples served to outline the linkages between PERAC and human and state security. PAX stressed three opportunities to demonstrate the relevance of addressing the conflict-environment nexus

in the Security Council. One way is to apply [frontier technologies](#) to collect, analyse and share data on environmental impacts of armed conflicts. This could improve humanitarian responses, prevent or at least minimize environmental damage and related health impacts for affected communities. It could further contribute to post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Secondly, the UNSC already addresses issues related to conflict and natural resources. As the premiere body tasked with maintaining international peace and security, the UNSC could serve as a platform that brings together ongoing international legal and policy discussions in a coherent framework, thus bridging the work in the ILC, the ICRC, and UNEA, among others. Lastly, looking forward, PAX called for building a mechanism inside the UNSC that serves as an awareness-raising and response tool to help in *"conflict-prevention over natural resources, support environmental peacebuilding, contribute to de-escalation of political tensions, address local grievances and improve protection of civilians in armed conflict."*

ASG Mr. Satya Tripathi of **UNEP**, focused on the cyclical relationship between environmental degradation and insecurity. He outlined three pathways to sustain peace through environmental protection: (1) through increasing environmental peacebuilding by stepping up efforts for the restoration of ecosystems and natural resource management in conflict-affected countries; (2) the use of frontier technologies that can improve identification of environmental degradation and improve our understanding of how this can impact livelihoods and drive insecurity and political and societal tensions, and; (3) the need for more action on climate adaption that is conflict-sensitive.

UNEP stressed that new approaches in dealing with climate changes and natural resource management must include equal access, and promote gender equality and human rights. In this vein, UNEP foresees a role for the UN system to mainstream environment throughout its work, including within early warning systems and peace-keeping missions.

UNSC Aria meeting: responses by Council members

Following the briefings, Council Members, took the floor. Having suffered from significant environmental pollution in the 1991 Gulf War, **Kuwait** underscored the need for increased political will to implement relevant international laws, legal frameworks and principles and referred to the work conducted by the ILC on PERAC and the upcoming ICRC Military Guidelines. Importantly, Kuwait stressed the need for a ‘comprehensive approach’ that deals with the environment in the life-cycle of conflict, including highlighting the need for a monitoring mechanism. Kuwait called for the UNSC to mainstream the environment in conflict-prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, noting the importance of the SC holding actors accountable for exploiting the environment in war or using it as a weapon.

Peru further acknowledged the relationship between armed conflict and the environment, linking climate change and land degradation with their destabilizing effect on societies. It called for regular reporting to the UNSC on the environmental impact of armed conflict. These reports would include direct and indirect effects as well as the military role in greenhouse gas production. Peru further outlined a role for the UN to strengthen accountability through a coordinated approach, and recognized the importance of the ILC work and the updated ICRC Military Guidelines.

Germany stressed the significance of the environment in conflict analysis and response, as this can have lasting consequences, and called for the conflict cycle to be approached holistically, with issues such as the environment and natural resources reflected in prevention and peacebuilding measures. Germany highlighted the importance of implementing international humanitarian law, as this promotes accountability for environmental damage caused by wars and armed conflicts. Germany further commended the ILC’s work on this matter and referred positively to the ICRC Military Guidelines.

Germany concluded noting the importance of environmental restoration in post-conflict zones, underscoring the importance of UNEP’s post-crisis environmental assessment and recovery work.

Estonia expressed concerns over regional environmental impacts. Citing the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, especially the detrimental impacts on civilians caused by the targeting of natural resources and civilian infrastructure. Estonia elaborated how ongoing shelling in the Donbas risks industrial areas that could lead to serious chemical incidents, while attacks on mines storing toxic and nuclear waste risk contaminated flooding from damaged water infrastructure. Estonia welcomed ongoing initiatives to include environmental considerations into peacekeeping missions and military operations. Estonia noted the swift identification, assessment and remediation of areas dealing with conflict-pollution is needed to mitigate health risks to civilians and stressed that on this the UNSC must do more and do better. Estonia further supported the ongoing work by the ILC and underscored the importance of implementation of international legal principles on PERAC, concluding by expressing the need for a comprehensive and collective approach on the environment throughout the lifecycle of conflict.

Poland also highlighted the need for more prominence in the Security Council on the topic of protection of the environment in armed conflict, stressing the long-term implication of environmental degradation on health, livelihoods, peace and security. In the statement, Poland also underscored the importance of the ILC’s work, stating that existing legal frameworks are sufficient but need better implementation, and highlighted the relevance of the ICRC’s update of the Military Guidelines. Poland also supported regular reporting to the Council by the UN Secretary General on the links between climate change, environmental degradation and armed conflict, which would necessitate improved data collection and monitoring on these topics. Notably, Poland called for the UNSC to include the protection of the environment in armed conflict in briefings to the Council, as well as within resolutions.

Furthermore, Poland recommended having natural resource management and protection included in the mandates of UN peacekeeping operations.

The United States provided an overview of recent examples where conflict has led to serious environmental degradation, including ISIS' scorched earth tactics, concerns over biodiversity in the Democratic Republic of Congo and deforestation in Colombia. In each of these conflicts, the US has partnered with other countries to provide assistance to deal with the environmental impacts of armed conflict, including working with the Government of Viet Nam in dealing with legacy pollution from Agent Orange used by the US in the country. In closing, the US noted the use of public-private partnerships as a potential avenue to counteract conflict-caused environmental damage, urging all States to be mindful of the impacts of this aspect of armed conflict and expressing gratitude for the ability to discuss the topic.

Indonesia directly [linked](#) climate change with conflict and continued its statement by welcoming the ILC's work and the upcoming ICRC Military Guidelines update. Indonesia followed with a brief analysis outlining both environmental degradation as a driver of conflict and a result of conflict, highlighting that the UNSC has already been considering environmental risks in relevant country cases on the Council's agenda and noting the Council should continue to do so. Indonesia also put forward three points for addressing this cycle, suggesting the international community should: (1) mainstream the environment both through legal frameworks and into humanitarian responses; (2) support national capacity-building in conflict-affected areas, as failing environmental governance can hamper response and remediation efforts; and (3) take steps to improve coherence in the UN system to address environmental dimensions, including in UN peacekeeping operations and also throughout the UN development pillar in order to more holistically address the linkages between conflict, environment and development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

France stressed the importance of ensuring that protection of the environment remains a priority before, during, and after armed conflict. In addressing the fundamental question: "*what can we do to better anticipate, prevent and address damages to the environment in conflict, which are multipliers of conflict and also undermine the basis for the restoration of peace afterwards?*"

France [suggested](#) that improvement could be made through systematic assessment enabling the UN to identify environmental issues if armed conflicts break out, and respond faster to environmental concerns in humanitarian work and reconstruction in the aftermath of conflict. It presented four options to collectively address the environmental dimensions of conflict: (1) compliance with international humanitarian and environmental law (France further encouraged the ICRC's work in this regard); (2) enhancing international environmental cooperation and data exchange; (3) reducing the environmental footprint of military operations, including peacekeeping operations, and; (4) integrating environmental protection into humanitarian responses in conflict-prone areas. France further supported the idea of a bi-annual report within the UN system, including to the Security Council, on the impact of climate change on international security, which could help States with prevention and mitigation measures.

The **Dominican Republic** acknowledged the importance of addressing this subject in the UN, in particular in the Security Council, and expressed the need for comprehensive action towards peace and security, including in the challenge of protecting the environment in armed conflict. Dominican Republic noted the importance of applying existing legal frameworks in relation to environmental damage and welcomed the ICRC's update of their Military Guidelines on the issue. Their statement provided strong examples of how environmental degradation has affected natural resources and the communities depending on them, as well as how conflict can have disastrous consequences for biodiversity or attacks on industrial areas can lead to conflict-pollution. In order to better address these issues, the Dominican Republic proposed a

framework linking conflicts, environmental degradation, humanitarian consequences, and development to help address and mitigate these challenges.

In **Russia's statement**, they noted the relevance of addressing the environment in conflict settings, particularly as it is vital to achieving sustainable development. They also took note of the valuable role of the Security Council in taking up implementation of the Minsk Agreements in relation to preventing an environmental catastrophe in the Donbas. Russia stressed that 'methods of war that target the environment are inappropriate', but argued that existing international laws on protection of the environment in armed conflict are sufficient. Russia warned against the securitization of the environment and suggested that existing work by UNEP and UN Habitat is already meeting the needs to counter environmental damage, adding concerns that protection of the environment in armed conflict is within the remit of other platforms, such as the UN Environmental Assembly, and not the Security Council. Russia further included examples of environmental damage in conflicts, referring to the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia and how the sanctions in Syria impact its ability for environmentally safe production processes. Russia concluded with a call for donor collaboration noting the importance of international law in relation to protection of the environment in armed conflict.

The **United Kingdom's** statement made special note of the relationship between climate change and conflicts, including highlighting the significant and complex relationship between climate, environmental degradation and conflicts. The UK called for the UNSC to recognize this link in its work, including by taking measures to reduce the carbon footprint of peacekeeping operations and ensuring the environment is taken into consideration in peacekeeping mission mandates, for example in dealing with mediation for disputes over natural resources. Notably, the UK called for regular reporting to the Security Council on environmental issues in armed conflicts, both in relevant country situations and thematic reporting. In this, the UK welcomed the Climate Security mechanism, but noted

that more work can be done through better coordination and integration of climate security issues in UN field work. Regarding the legal aspects, the UK called for states to abide by international law in relation to the protection of the environment in armed conflicts, stating that priority should be given to implementation of existing frameworks instead of seeking new treaty provisions. However, the UK also recognized the crucial role of the UNSC in the promotion of international law in this area, and further welcomed the ILC's draft principles on PERAC. They closed noting that there is a moral imperative for developed countries to support those affected by climate change, and that the UK will provide \$15 billion to support such efforts.

A regional dimension was highlighted by **South Africa**, that provided a broad view on the environmental impact of conflicts and the consequences they have for populations. Noting, their commitment to [Agenda 2063](#) prioritising peace and security, South Africa elaborated how the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources in Africa, such as timber, oil, diamonds and fertile land, fuels conflicts in the region. To address the legal issues, it called upon the Security Council to develop common understandings and cooperate to address root cause of conflicts, in particular to the illicit exploitation and trade in natural resources.

Speaking from experience with contaminated battlefields from World War I, **Belgium** called for enforcing and strengthening international law and international humanitarian law and the protections for the environment enshrined therein, including referring to the Environmental Modification Convention and the ILC process on PERAC. Belgium also argued that the conflict-environment nexus should be integrated across all the UN work, including in prevention and early warning systems. Belgium further commended the work done by the UN Secretariat in establishing an environmental strategy, and expressed support for the inclusion of the issue in the mandates and budgets of UN peacekeeping operations. The statement also linked the debate on conflict and environment to the ongoing work on climate change and security risks,

calling for regular reporting on this to the Security Council. Belgium underscored the importance of sustainable environment management in relation to natural resources and peacebuilding, specifically calling for protection of the natural environment as a conflict prevention measure. In conclusion, Belgium reinforced the links between conflict, climate change and environmental degradation, and expressed strong support for the inclusion of this issue on the Council's agenda.

Cote d'Ivoire reiterated concerns about how environmental degradation can extend beyond conflict zones and impact future generations and their wellbeing. Cote d'Ivoire stated that the responsibility to protect the environment in armed conflicts is the primary responsibility of states, including through upholding international law, and ensuring domestic laws are in compliance with international law. In this regard they made special reference to the ICRC's update of the Military Guidelines. Cote d'Ivoire also called for more cooperation among states and throughout the UN on this issue, encouraging holistic approaches to environmental protection and suggesting that the Security Council could do more to include environmental concerns in peacekeeping operations with regard to prevention of illegal exploitation of natural resources.

The last statement was delivered by **Equatorial Guinea**, who, referring to UNEP's work on conflict and natural resources, stated that the conflict-environment nexus should spur the UN, and particularly the Security Council, to step up efforts in addressing the links between the protection of the environment and protection of people in conflict zones. Equatorial Guinea stressed that protection of the environment and building peace is interconnected, calling for the UN to establish a new conflict prevention strategy, one that also ensures multinational organisations are not allowed to seize control of natural resources. Lastly the statement called for strengthening international legal frameworks, eliminating less ambiguous provisions, and instead have more responsibility-shouldering mechanisms that oblige states to act. They concluded that a lack of political will is the largest obstacle

for why legal provisions are not upheld on this issue and encouraged the Security Council to put the recommendations of this meeting into practice.

The debate on environment, peace and security

What is needed to fully tackle the complex challenges around environmental dimensions of armed conflicts? When faced with assessing this question, several key themes arose from the discussion among Security Council Members:

There is an intrinsic link between conflict and the environment. All participating Council Members took stock of the conflict-environment nexus in varying degrees throughout the meeting, either through outlining ways that environmental degradation or the exploitation of the environment can be a driver of conflict, or through exploring how conflict can have devastating consequences on the environment, natural resources, and the populations dependent upon them.

Poland, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic explicitly articulated the direct effects of environmental degradation in driving conflict, while **South Africa, Estonia, Germany, Equatorial Guinea** also noted the role of natural resources in fuelling and/or exacerbating conflict, and therefore, also impacting the security of civilian populations in conflict-affected countries. Within the conflict-environment nexus, some States, such as **Peru, Germany, Belgium, the UK,** and **Indonesia** took note of the relevant links between climate security issues and the protection of the environment in armed conflicts. Though there are differences between environmental protection and the climate security agendas, the two issues do share many overlapping characteristics and can both benefit from certain areas of joint consideration and steps taken towards prevention within the Security Council and the UN system more broadly.

Another shared view has been that **the protection of the environment in armed conflict should be mainstreamed across the UN system.** Due to their inextricable

link and cyclical relationship, many States underscored the need for a coordinated, holistic approach in order to address the challenges associated with the conflict-environment nexus. **The UK, Kuwait, and Germany** stressed the importance of employing a comprehensive and collective approach dealing with the environment throughout the entire conflict cycle, in prevention and peacebuilding measures. Member States repeatedly expressed their support for integrating the protection of the environment across the UN system, like **Belgium**, who stressed “*the need to ensure the environment in armed conflict is a cross-cutting issue across all of the United Nations’ work*” in order to improve coherence and collaboration among UN agencies and Member States. This includes incorporating environmental protection in the mandates and budgets of UN peace operations, harmonization with sustainable development and the SDGs, and particularly improving humanitarian responses.

In addition, several states highlighted that **international legal frameworks for the protection of the environment in armed conflict must be strengthened and implemented**. Nearly every participating Council Member referenced the role of international law, most notably through the ILC’s draft legal principles and throughout protections espoused in international humanitarian law, including those outlined in the ICRC’s Guidelines for Military Manuals. Some States, such as the **UK, France, and Russia**, expressed support for strengthening existing international legal frameworks for the protection of the environment in armed conflict, arguing that the international community should prioritize implementation rather than pursuing additional international legal measures or treaty provisions. However, States like **Kuwait** and **Equatorial Guinea** emphasized the major challenges posed by a lack of political will by States to uphold their obligations under international law in the current system.

There is **growing support from UNSC Member States to continue discussing this issue within the UNSC**. One of the most notable points derived from the December 2019 UNSC Arria-formula meeting

on PERAC was the overwhelming support expressed for the Council’s discussion of this topic, a majority of participating Members explicitly expressed support for the UNSC to play a role in the protection of the environment in armed conflict. Many states voiced their support for the inclusion of the PERAC issue on the Council’s agenda, either as an issue for consideration within itself – as supported by Belgium and Poland – or in relation to its important effects and links to other areas within the Council’s purview. For example, several states called for regular reporting and data collection and exchange on environmental protection risks and impacts during armed conflicts, including within country-specific and thematic briefings to the Council either by the UN Secretary-General, his relevant Special Envoys or Special Rapporteurs, or relevant UN or international bodies.

Furthermore, many states, including the **UK, Belgium, Poland, and Kuwait**, called for **the inclusion of the protection of the environment in mandates for peacekeeping operations**, and/or expressed support for taking steps to reduce the carbon footprint of UN missions, as supported by **France** and **Estonia**. Also, as the **UK** noted, the UNSC has a crucial role to play in promoting implementation of international laws on the protection of the environment in armed conflict as the premiere body for maintaining international peace and security. Moreover, this role also grants the UNSC a unique opportunity and responsibility to coordinate efforts and action for better implementation to protect the environment throughout international legal and policy frameworks, and a way to apply pressure on States to overcome a lack of political will for implementation throughout the international community.

Opportunities for Action on environment, peace and security

Against the background of the key themes and potential ways to overcome the identified challenges outlined in this meeting, the overarching question is, of course, what the role of the Security Council could and should

be in addressing the conflict-environment nexus. It is important to identify the best possible outcome that results in meaningful change in the conflict-lifecycle, i.e. in military operational planning, conflict monitoring, humanitarian response and post-conflict environmental analysis and reconstruction efforts.

To address these issues, the Security Council should continue and expand the dialogue on the conflict-environment nexus. This should include various topics and questions, such as how to ensure coordinated and coherent approaches to protection of the environment in armed conflicts across the UN, and international clarification and improved implementation of applicable international law.

A constructive first step would be holding a formal meeting of the Security Council on PERAC in 2020. In line with many Council Members' calls for reporting on this issue to the Council by relevant UN or international bodies, the UNSC could invite the Secretary-General to brief the Council on the current state of environmental risks and impacts in relation to armed conflicts. This would give the Security Council further opportunity to consider the topic and measures for better environmental protection and to take stock of UN capacities to assess, report on, and respond to these risks, which can have a critical impact on international peace and security, particularly for civilian populations.

Considering the urgency to address environmental dimensions of armed conflict, there is clear need to overcome the current political inertia to act on the environmental challenges we are faced. The security implications in relation to environmental degradation are therefore sharply addressed in the 6th edition of UNEP's [report](#) in 2019, stating

[w]ars and conflicts are major sources of pollution, especially air, water and soil pollution, waste, greenhouse gases and land degradation. Likewise, addressing environmental problems may provide important opportunities to help address political/military security problems

Similar concerns are echoed by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in September 2019 during the Conference of State Parties in its [Peace Forest Initiative](#):

There is an urgent need for interventions to protect environmental assets in conflict and post-conflict areas. It is imperative to restore degraded/abandoned land and forest to sustain their vital functions and thus support the livelihoods of affected communities ([ICCD/COP\(14\)MISC.1](#))

A combination of the past work in UNEA, the ILC's Draft Principles, the ICRC's Military Guidelines and various pledges made by national branches of the Red Cross, and a rich body of research by academics, civil society and think tanks has resulted in a broad collection of policy recommendations, ideas, and good practices. However, there is a lack of coordination of this information and its implementation, resulting in a dire need for a more structured approach that mainstreams the environment throughout the lifecycle of conflicts, and an effective implementation framework that results in direct and effective efforts to minimize and remediate environmental damage.

Therefore, we can learn from past suggestions and going initiatives to sketch out a rudimentary idea of how such a framework for solutions could be envisaged. Would it, as the [ICRC](#) (2011) suggested, be helpful to develop "*mechanisms and procedures for addressing the immediate and long-term consequences of environmental damage*" and if so, how could this look? There is inspiration to be drawn from the [Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and Damage associated with Climate Change impacts](#) (WIM), which has three main areas, namely to: 1) enhance knowledge and understanding of adverse effects of climate change; 2) strengthen dialogue and coordination among stakeholders; and 3) enhance action and support through financial means and capacity building. Could this three-step approach be a model to apply to environmental damage from conflicts? If we apply this to conflicts, we can first start off with improving our knowledge on the linkage between environment and conflict. As suggested by the ICRC's 2011

proposal, monitoring, identification and reporting of conflict-inflicted environmental damage would be the first step to improve our understanding of the breadth of environmental impacts. This should address both the direct and indirect environmental damage on conflicts and on lives, livelihoods, natural resources, eco-systems and biodiversity. Ongoing [work](#) using open-source data, remote sensing, citizen science and other frontier technologies have proved that there is significant progress to be made in terms of data collection, analysis and sharing. Such a Conflict and Environmental Damage Mechanism could address information collection and sharing during armed conflicts, improve coordination on humanitarian response that includes an environmental component, and lastly, ensure that ensure mandatory post-conflict remediation and reconstruction efforts for conflict-pollution and wider environmental damage is being carried out that utilizes all the data collected.

Moreover, States should improve environmental procedures and military practices, both in national capacities and international peacekeeping operations to prevent and minimize environmental impacts. This should also include the legal framework discussion on IHL and international environmental law, as, for example, are currently being [discussed](#) in the ILC and in the expected update of the ICRC's Military Guidelines. We welcome the [various pledges made](#) by national Red Crosses to support this work, and urge governments to expand on the implementation of existing commitments made, including [UNEA resolutions](#) in relation to PERAC and conflict-pollution. Third, developing a mechanism for financial and capacity support to affected states and communities is a necessary requirement to minimize and remediate environmental damage. This can help prevent further environmental health risks to individuals and communities, help remediate pollution and restore conflict affected ecosystems. For example, this line of work can be made obligatory in World Bank and International Monetary Fund reconstruction analysis and loans, and mainstreamed in rebuilding and rehabilitation programs.

Taking these suggestions as a starting points, there are number of questions to be resolved, such as who would lead such an undertaking. Would it be UNEP in coordination with UNDP, OCHA and UN Habitat? This would ensure all relevant stages in the conflict-cycle would be addressed, but there is also need for inclusion of independent and public data to build transparency and accountability for the conduct of state and non-state actors. Suggestions on how this could like have been [raised](#) in the past and can be build upon. Another pressing questions is where such a mechanism should be placed and who would be responsible for it. UNEP role is limited to post-conflict environment role, but it should be considered to create more room for engagement from them, considering their expertise, on conflict-related environmental monitoring.

In sum, building debate in the UNSC, combined with an annual reporting mechanism and publication, this larger endeavor would contribute to building stronger accountability mechanisms and norms on protection of the environment in armed conflict, and the people depending on it.

The questions and possible next steps outlined above serve as a means of continuing this discussion with initial thoughts. They require further exploration, sharpening, and fine-tuning in collaboration with legal scholars, environmental and humanitarian experts, civil society groups and military planners. What the 2019 UNSC Arria-formula meeting on PERAC has shown is that states recognize the urgent need to address the conflict-environment nexus and are open to ideas for remediation as they understand the urgent need for action to protect the environment in armed conflicts. We are keen to further engage with stakeholders from all levels. Including from across the community of practice, our civil society partners from affected communities and diplomats, in order to seek opportunities to create meaningful change for people and the environment in the pursuit of peace and security.





About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative sets out best practice, strategic entry points and new approaches to reducing climate-related risks to conflict and stability, thus promoting sustainable peace in a changing climate. The PSI is operated by the Clingendael Institute in partnership with Free Press Unlimited and The Hague Center for Strategic Studies.

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