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## The EU Joint Communication on the Climate-Security Nexus One Year On

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*To mark one year since the adoption of the Joint Communication on ‘A New Outlook on the Climate and Security Nexus’ in June 2023, last summer the Belgian Presidency of the EU and the Egmont Institute, together with the EEAS, organised [a workshop](#) to take stock of the progress in its implementation.*

*The conclusions reached during the workshop indicate that the Joint Communication has consolidated ‘climate and security’ as a key policy area. The broad approach of the Communication to climate change and environmental degradation, and peace, security and defence, ensures new thematic and operational connections – both at the global level and in specific local contexts.*

*At the same time, in the next policy cycle, it is important to continue to support the operationalisation of this nexus across the whole spectrum of relevant policy areas including human security, conflict prevention, peace, and development and humanitarian action. To achieve this, it is fundamental to strengthen evidence use through existing tools, ensure necessary human and financial resources, devise localised solutions, and engage with a broad range of partners.*

### THE JOINT COMMUNICATION ON THE CLIMATE AND SECURITY NEXUS IN BRIEF

Climate change and environmental degradation, including changes in seasonal patterns, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and pollution, act as risk multipliers. Their effects interact with the drivers of conflict and displacement and are felt particularly in fragile and

conflict-affected countries, where governance is weak and societal resilience already stretched.

To better respond to the interconnected effects of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence, in June 2023, the High Representative and the European Commission adopted a [Joint Communication on ‘A New Outlook on the Climate and Security Nexus’](#).

The Joint Communication is constructed around four pillars – evidence-based policy making, operationalisation, capabilities and partnerships – and around 30 concrete actions engaging a wide range of EU services and agencies, as well as EU Delegations and CSDP missions and operations.<sup>1</sup> It represents an important step forward in operationalising the climate-security nexus and forms an integral part of the EU’s ambitious global climate action and commitment to environmental sustainability.

More recently in 2024, the [Council Conclusions on Green Diplomacy](#) and the [Council Conclusions on Security and Defence](#), adopted in March and May 2024 respectively, called for the swift implementation of the Joint Communication and further emphasised the importance of mainstreaming the climate and security nexus into the EU’s and the member states’ external action.

### A HIGH-LEVEL WORKSHOP TO TAKE STOCK OF PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT COMMUNICATION

To mark one year since its adoption, the Belgian Presidency

<sup>1</sup> Including the EEAS, DG Clima, DG Environment, INTPA, ECHO, the EU Joint Research Centre and Satellite Centre and the European Defense Agency.

of the EU and the Egmont Institute, together with the EEAS, [organised a workshop](#) to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the objectives set out in the Joint Communication. The workshop, organised back to back with a meeting of the EU Green Diplomacy Network, brought together close to 100 participants from across EU institutions, Member States, multilateral and bilateral partners, as well as civil society and think tanks.

Concretely, participants took stock of how the climate and security nexus has been operationalised across policy fields and geographical locations, including in EU delegations and CSDP missions and operations.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

The discussion highlighted the need for continuous learning on how to mainstream the use of available tools to advance the EU's external action across policy domains. Additionally, participants stressed the need to use these tools to tailor responses to local contexts and achieve objectives ranging from humanitarian aid and disaster risk reduction, to peace-building and crisis response, stabilisation, development, and security and defence.

### 1. The Joint Communication consolidates existing policy objectives, but continued efforts are needed to guide its operationalisation and implementation

The broad focus of the Joint Communication on climate *and* environment, and *peace*, security and defence allows for integrated, whole-of-government approaches to different thematic areas and sectors, creating new connections while also making use of specialised expertise. This integrated approach is particularly important in the operationalisation of the climate-security nexus. Concretely, for example, the Communication encourages conflict sensitivity in EU's climate and environmental programming and the inclusion of climate and environmental considerations in crisis management. At the same time, the Communication is often referred to as the Joint Communication on the 'climate and security nexus'. There is some risk that using the notion of 'climate and security' as a shorthand will divert attention from the

broader spectrum of issues, including the nexus between climate change and environmental degradation, and from a focus on prevention and stability and peace to one primarily on security and defence. Adopting operational guidelines, possibly with a regional focus, could help fine tune the operationalisation of the Joint Communication across all these policy areas.

### 2. Evidence on the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation, and peace, security and defence, including the effects of non-action, should be further integrated into policy-making and communicated clearly to all stakeholders.

The Joint Communication has ensured a continued focus on building the evidence base on the climate and security nexus. This is foreseen, for example, through the forthcoming EU Satellite Centre Climate and Security Hub, the ongoing integration of data on climate change and droughts into the EU Joint Research Centre's contribution to EU conflict analysis, and the production of a periodic climate and security trend analysis. More broadly, evidence production is also done through comprehensive funding to research through, for example, Horizon programmes.

For the future, evidence should cover the cost of non-action regarding the interlinked effects of climate change and environmental degradation on security, peace and defence. It is also fundamental to ensure that available data and analyses are accessible to and used by policy makers and practitioners. This demands that data and analysis is well communicated and that it can be tailored to the specific needs of EU actors at headquarter level and in the field. In addition, it is important to build substantial engagement between research and policy communities, and between headquarters, delegations and missions.

### 3. Tailored and localised responses remain fundamental to scale up the operationalisation of the nexus approach.

During the workshop, participants discussed ongoing work in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Somalia, central Sahel and the Amazon, the effects of climate change and environmental

degradation in these areas, and existing support needs. Participants highlighted that governments and local communities are very differently equipped to respond to climate change and environmental degradation, and that there are no easy answers or one-size-fits-all approaches. Transferring solutions from one area/case to another is complicated and tailored responses remain essential. At the same time, it is important to ensure that knowledge management and lessons learned processes capture what works, what can be scaled up and what could be applicable to other contexts. Knowledge management and lessons learned processes should also address unintended consequences of action leading to exacerbation of tensions and/or maladaptation.

#### **4. Continued attention is needed to climate adaptation and resilience in fragile and conflict-affected states.**

Socio-political fragility or active conflicts pose major operational challenges to efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change. Relatively low levels of institutional capacity as well as corruption, international non-recognition of authorities and active conflict, all prevent international assistance from achieving its full impact.

At the same time, participants highlighted that climate adaptation and resilience building can help find common ground between international actors and national authorities IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES, providing an entry point for technical discussions and potential cooperation on matters of common concern.

#### **5. Partnerships are and should remain at the heart of the Joint Communication and the EU's approach to the climate and security nexus.**

Partnerships are central to implementing the nexus approach to climate and security and should be understood in a broad sense – from building bridges among EU member states to engaging with most affected communities in fragile and conflict-affected countries. In the first year of implementation of the Joint Communication, the EU has continued to consolidate its Climate, Environment and Security Partnership with the UN Environmental

Program and piloted desk-to-desk meetings between EU environmental advisers, focal points in CSDP missions and their counterparts in UN missions. The EU has also held the first EU-NATO structured dialogue on climate and security, attended the African Union inter-departmental retreat on climate and security, and hosted the first EU-US informal dialogue on climate and security.

Going forward, it is important to build on existing and emerging partnership approaches, including through a focus on the best use of resources (i.e. sharing of tasks between different partners) and the implementation of operational outcomes. To this end, it is fundamental not only to engage with governmental partners but also to support emerging multi-disciplinary partnerships between actors within and across regions.

In addition, it is important to ensure clear communication about potential solutions and disseminate good practice. In some domains, including, for example, those covered by Global Gateway, the uptake and use of data and evidence regarding the interplay between the environment and security as well as the societal impacts of their intersection still needs to be fully developed, including through comparative evidence that takes into account local realities.

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