10 INSIGHTS ON CLIMATE IMPACTS AND PEACE

Executive Summary

Climate change is one of the most pressing political issues of our time. Science is uncovering the unprecedented nature and scale of its impacts on people, economies and ecosystems worldwide. One critical dimension of these impacts is their effect on international peace and security.

10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace summarises the state of knowledge regarding security risks related to climate change. To this end, the report synthesises and contextualises the existing scientific evidence. It does not reflect all aspects of the debate that have emerged across social science but focuses on those that are particularly relevant at the political level.

Climate change itself is rarely a direct cause of conflict. Yet, there is ample evidence that its effects exacerbate important drivers and contextual factors of conflict and fragility, thereby challenging the stability of states and

Ten insights stand out:

1. The risks that climate change impacts pose to international peace and security are real and present.

2. Climate change impacts affect competition and conflict over natural resources such as land and water.

3. Climate change impacts undermine livelihoods, affect human mobility, and push people into illegal coping mechanisms.

4. Climate change impacts contribute to extreme food price spikes and food insecurity.

5. Extreme weather events challenge government effectiveness and legitimacy.

6. The unintended consequences of poorly designed climate and security policies carry their own risks.

7. Climate-related security risks are particularly significant where governance mechanisms are weak or failing.

8. We are very likely underestimating the scale and scope of climate-related security risks.

9. Climate-related security risks will increase and multiply in the future.

10. Our capacities to assess and manage climate-related security risks lag behind the changing risk landscape.

The implication of these insights is that, without appropriate action, climate change will mean more fragility, less peace and less security. The ways in which climate change threatens international peace and security need to be addressed across the entire impact chain: we must work to mitigate climate change; attenuate its consequences on ecosystems; adapt our socio-economic systems; better manage the heightened resource competition that climate change will bring about; and strengthen governance and conflict management institutions. Managing these security risks requires action far beyond the peacebuilding community, yet every dimension of the response must be conflict-sensitive. At the same time, the tools of peacebuilding – from early warning and responses to mediation and peacekeeping – need to reflect the ability to anticipate and address climate risks to security. In short, conflict prevention and peacebuilding need to become climate-sensitive.

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