



Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2025

Event Summary

German Federal Foreign Office

October 2025

The seventh Berlin Climate and Security Conference (BCSC) 2025 explored how to navigate **climate, conflict, and cooperation in a turbulent era**, highlighting the urgency of integrating climate security into responses to today's geopolitical, humanitarian and development challenges.

On 23 October, the climate security community convened in Berlin and online to exchange practical insights and identify solutions for **coordinated action on climate issues and conflict reduction**. Participants addressed the most pressing issues in climate and security, including increasing resource scarcity and rising demand for critical raw materials, effective climate finance models and risk management in fragile contexts, and new opportunities for collaboration and collective action.

To enable **broad and global participation**, all plenary sessions and several breakout sessions were livestreamed. Side events across Berlin and online on 21, 22, and 24 October offered additional opportunities for in-depth exchange and collaboration. The full programme and conference recordings are available online [here](#).

The conference highlights

1. Climate risks are already rewriting security realities on the ground, yet institutional architectures remain stubbornly segmented. Effective strategy requires embedding climate analysis where decisions actually happen – in defence budgets, economic planning and operational doctrine – not relegating it to environment ministries alone.
2. Climate action demands unprecedented cooperation, precisely when geopolitical fragmentation makes it least likely. As major powers weaponise climate disinformation to polarise societies, building resilience requires diplomacy robust enough to maintain cross-border security coordination, even amid strategic rivalry.
3. Innovative finance mechanisms – blended finance, pre-arranged funding, climate insurance – exist and show promise for fragile contexts, yet remain boutique experiments rather than standard practice. The bottleneck isn't invention but scaling: translating pilot success into systemic change that matches the magnitude of need in conflict-affected states.
4. Effective action requires shifting decision-making authority to those closest to the problem. This means moving beyond consultation toward genuine resource control for local actors, women, and youth – a shift that challenges institutional comfort zones but proves essential for interventions that communities actually want and sustain.



280+ in person participants



750+ online participants



63 speakers from around the world



21 partner organizations



16 sessions



10 official side events

BCSC 2025 plenary sessions examined how climate change reshapes global security and geopolitics, strategies for mobilising innovative finance in fragile and conflict-affected states, and how regional initiatives can deliver context-specific solutions beyond traditional multilateral frameworks. Spotlight sessions explored gender-responsive approaches to climate, peace and security, integrating climate considerations into peace programming through the Weathering Risk Peace Pillar, and the challenge of disinformation in the climate-security nexus.

Interactive breakout sessions addressed rebuilding for resilience in post-conflict settings, climate-related human mobility, the geopolitics of the energy transition, water as an entry point for peace, critical minerals and global security, private investment, and island nation resilience. Partner-led marketplace events showcased initiatives and tools advancing the climate-peace-security agenda.

Official side events (21, 22, 24 October) included monitoring, evaluation and learning exchanges among climate, peace and security (CPS) advisers, a high-level panel on building peace through climate, land, and nature action under the Rio Conventions, and a workshop on climate-human security intersections in Latin America and the Caribbean ahead of COP30. Additional sessions examined climate and environmental factors in mediation processes, implications for India's development and security, bridging the science-policy divide, gender-climate-security intersections, and urban resilience.



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Keynote by H.E. State Secretary Dr. Géza Andreas von Geyr

State Secretary Dr. Géza Andreas von Geyr opened the seventh BCSC with four central messages. He began by stressing that, while immediate crises, such as those in Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan, undoubtedly require urgent attention, **the long-term and systemic risks posed by climate change must not be overlooked**. He warned against allowing the urgent to overshadow the important, pointing out that **climate change threatens the very foundations of security, freedom, and prosperity**.

“We often hear the saying: ‘The urgent always beats the important’. When it comes to climate change, we cannot accept that. [...] We have to deal with both: with the urgent as well as with the important.”

Dr. Géza Andreas von Geyr
State Secretary



Dr. von Geyr went on to highlight the growing significance of the climate-security nexus. Climate change is being **increasingly recognised as a core security issue**. Citing Germany's National Climate Risk Assessment, he argued that **anyone thinking about security must also think about climate**. Addressing these challenges requires broad, interdisciplinary cooperation, bringing together diplomats, military and security experts, first responders, and technical specialists to work collaboratively.



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Thirdly, he called to **speed up getting from analysis to action**. While understanding the links between climate, crisis, and security is essential, the focus must shift to delivering tangible results. Initiatives such as Investing for Peace and Weathering Risk were cited as examples of efforts to address the root causes of conflict exacerbated by climate change, particularly in fragile regions.

Finally, Dr. von Geyr emphasised the necessity of global cooperation. He pointed to Germany's leadership roles in international forums, ongoing support for climate adaptation and conflict prevention, and commitment to international climate targets. He reaffirmed Germany's solidarity with vulnerable nations and linked these efforts to the country's candidacy for the UN Security Council, remarking that Germany would continue to be a reliable and active partner in addressing the security implications of climate change.

Key takeaways

While BCSC brought together a diverse group of policymakers, experts and practitioners, consensus on what is needed to address interconnected global crises urgently, collectively and within limited resources was clear on eight fronts:

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We should not ‘break’ silos, as specialists and experts are important. Rather, we need to get better at ‘bridging’ silos.

Dr Benjamin Pohl
Director, Climate Diplomacy and Security, adelphi global

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1. National defence strategies must embed climate risk and evolving geopolitical realities across planning and operations.

- **Defence and security strategies are increasingly integrating climate risk, recognising its direct impact on operations, infrastructure, and national resilience:** NATO's climate agenda and the EU's 2023 Joint Communication, alongside the CSDP climate package, are embedding climate considerations into planning, training and missions, with a focus on moving from awareness to practice.
- **Defence readiness is inseparable from climate readiness:** defence ministries and armed forces must embed climate projections and adaptation into doctrine, procurement, training, operations, and infrastructure to preserve operational effectiveness, with feedback loops from tactical to strategic levels.
- **Geopolitics and alliances are being reshaped by climate and energy realities:** EU-NATO cooperation, shared training/exercises, and the systematic translation of data into actionable policy are essential to embed climate security in defence and crisis response, strengthening resilience, deterrence, and overall preparedness.
- **National climate risk assessments are strategic enablers:** Germany's National Interdisciplinary Climate Risk Assessment, tasking intelligence and line ministries, shows climate among the top five security threats and structures risks across direct domestic impacts, global spillovers (e.g., food and water stress), and indirect system effects, providing the specificity needed to drive policy and investment.

“Multilateralism remains the foundation, but plurilateral coalitions are increasingly filling gaps in action and finance, which could raise the risk of fragmentation as competing coalitions pursue divergent agendas.”

Emma Whitaker
adelphi global



2. With geopolitical dynamics shifting and multilateral forums often gridlocked, regional organisations, cross-regional alliances and plurilateral initiatives are stepping in to fill the gap.

- **Multilateralism alone is not sufficient:** The current multilateral system often struggles with slow decision-making, competing national interests and fragmented implementation. Regional organisations and initiatives can act more nimbly, offer new platforms for collective action and tailor solutions to specific contexts.
- **Effective solutions call for enhanced regional cooperation.** Regional organisations such as BIMSTEC in South and Southeast Asia, the OSCE in Europe, and the Pacific Islands Forum enable shared governance, joint adaptation projects, and cross-border risk assessments. For example, the OSCE promotes transboundary cooperation and dialogue, supporting member states in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and Southeast Europe to jointly identify climate risks, conduct wildfire risk assessments (e.g. in the Šar Mountains), and manage transboundary water resources.
- **Water security exemplifies the need for regional cooperation:** climate-driven variability, scarcity, and pollution cut across borders, elevating tension and displacement; embedding inclusive, multi-stakeholder water governance – linking resilient infrastructure and nature-based solutions with climate adaptation – strengthens social cohesion and economic stability between neighbouring states and sectors. For example, regional cooperation mechanisms under the UN Water Convention can build trust, share data and develop joint adaptation projects.



In many Pacific languages, there is no direct translation for vulnerability, but there is for resilience.

Jamie Tarawa
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-CSM)



3. Meaningful inclusion requires restructuring how resources flow and decisions get made – not adding 'local voices' to predetermined agendas.

- **Resilience strategies fail when they extract local knowledge to inform externally designed solutions.** Genuine place-based approaches require ceding design authority – not just consultation – to communities whose cultural and political legitimacy determines whether interventions survive first contact with reality. Pacific Island states, for example, are advancing legal recognition of the rights of nature and integrating customary practices into resilience strategies, moving beyond a narrow focus on sea level rise to address social cohesion, land tenure, migration, and food security.
- **Understanding the 'why' of failure and success can bridge institutional gaps:** The gap between policy ambition and implementation isn't technical – it's about legitimacy. Solutions designed without transferring real decision-making power to diverse local actors lack the cultural grounding and political buy-in needed to withstand pressure when resources get scarce or priorities shift. Policy responses that empower community leadership, such as Vanuatu's community-led disaster committees, help bridge gaps between national institutions and local needs, ensuring interventions are both legitimate and effective.
- **Inclusive governance and grassroots networks foster trust and adaptive capacity:** Local actors and informal networks (e.g. churches in the Pacific, women's groups, youth organisations, and grassroots civil society in Ukraine and Iraq) are often the most trusted channels for adaptation, early warning, and crisis response, making their involvement essential for policy legitimacy and uptake.
- **Donor timelines, reporting requirements, and risk frameworks actively work against locally owned resilience.** Direct access to finance, sustained capacity-building, and decision-making authority for local actors are vital for ownership and the long-term success of climate security initiatives, yet raise transaction costs and risks for donors.



When you talk about climate finance you talk about what you can bring, but it should be about what we can build.

Stefanie Speck
Green Climate Fund



4. Climate finance architecture fails fragile states – and needs rewiring, not just scaling.

- **The gap is structural, not incidental.** Conflict-affected countries receive less than two-thirds the per capita climate finance of other low-income states (World Bank 2024). Blended finance, pre-arranged funding, and climate insurance remain niche experiments, when they should be standard practice for contexts where traditional models don't work.
- **Women-led organisations deliver results but can't access the money.** The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund demonstrates what's possible when finance actually reaches grassroots groups: flexible small grants, simple applications, local language support. The model works – it's just not scaled.
- **Post-conflict finance needs to match ground realities.** Heat-resistant shelters in Iraq, using local materials and labour. Private sector delivery in remote Somalia, where government reach is limited. Carbon bonds and decentralised funding where state capacity is weak. These aren't innovations – they're pragmatic responses to contexts where conventional finance architecture fails.
- **The bottleneck isn't money – it's access.** Demand-driven priorities, continuous applicant support, and funding structures designed for local and women-led organisations aren't nice-to-haves. They're prerequisites for getting finance to communities that actually understand the risks they face.



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5. Strategic minerals are shaping geopolitical competition.

- **The energy transition is deeply geopolitical and uneven:** The shift towards decarbonisation is redefining energy security, creating new dependencies, reshaping global power dynamics, and prompting renewed competition and cooperation. This transition is intensifying the need for resilient supply chains, inclusive governance and international collaboration to ensure the benefits and burdens of the energy transition are shared equitably.
- **Partnerships over extraction:** Collaboration should prioritise equity, technology transfer, capacity building, and mutual benefit. Regional partnerships, such as OECD-AU initiatives and Africa Mining Vision, are key to improving tax collection, responsible sourcing, and resilience against corruption and illicit financial flows.
- **Local agency and transparency are essential** to translate mineral wealth into stability and prosperity. Examples include Zambia's push for local processing and value addition, as well as strategic, long-term investment in research, innovation and skills development, and Angola's emphasis on parliamentary oversight to ensure compliance with international standards, community consent and accountability. Global cooperation and harmonised standards remain essential to secure ethical supply chains, address scepticism about premiums for clean minerals, and align social safeguards with climate and development goals.



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To tackle environmental crime, we need the support of civil society organisations. We need the support of the banking sector to monitor illicit flows. We particularly need the support of indigenous peoples and local communities, who are at the forefront of this fight.

Carlos Sánchez Del Águila
Permanent Mission of Peru to the UN (Vienna)

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7. Addressing environmental crime and corruption can be a pragmatic entry point across geographies to bring more perspectives into climate-security discourse.

- **Environmental crimes, including illegal mining, wildlife trafficking, and deforestation, are recognised drivers of insecurity** and the climate crisis, particularly in Latin America and Africa, yet the severity and global reach of the issue is often still underestimated. Responses require collaboration across sectors (e.g. environment and foreign ministries) and consideration for alternative sources of income for local communities.
- **Corruption and environmental crime reinforce one another**, accelerating ecosystem degradation, fuelling violence, and undermining the rule of law. Weak oversight and fragmented legal systems hinder effective responses.
- **Environmental protection and the rule of law must be mutually reinforcing pillars of climate security.** Harmonising legal frameworks and strengthening international cooperation can disrupt environmental crime networks, with initiatives such as the project Fighting Climate Change and Loss of Biodiversity, otherwise known as Project GAIA, and joint Interpol operations demonstrating the value of intelligence sharing and advanced investigative techniques. Transparent governance, community engagement, and firm accountability are essential to rebuild trust.

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When you engage in a process that impacts half a million people and having successes in reducing violence and opening markets, it becomes a lesson that many other communities are interested in.

Caroline Nyaga
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

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8. From evidence to action: Delivering resilience through integrated programming and cross-sector partnerships.

- **Integrating climate and environmental considerations into peace programming is a pragmatic investment** that multiplies value beyond the sum of its parts and generates new capabilities and co-benefits that siloed programming can't replicate. In Nigeria, peace agreements that combined dispute resolution with provisions on climate adaptation are enabling communities to manage grazing land and water cooperatively and reduce violence.
- **Shared environmental risks can drive cooperation:** Climate and environmental security issues, such as water scarcity and degraded pastureland, can transcend political and identity-based divisions. Even in divisive contexts, these shared concerns can create opportunities for collaboration.
- **Resilience is a capacity:** Building resilience comes from investing in systems and relationships that allow communities and institutions to flexibly and inclusively problem-solve in a way that can be sustained long-term.
- **Translating trust into tangible outcomes:** Dialogue needs to be reinforced with action and practical collaboration. In the Bay of Bengal, practical exchanges like rehearsing joint responses to cross-border incidents at sea have fostered trust and fed into the development of draft guiding principles on conduct at sea for law enforcement agencies.
- **Cross-sector partnerships,** including government, civil society, the private sector, and local communities, are essential for building resilience. By combining expertise and resources, this ensures that climate security solutions are inclusive, effective, and grounded in local realities.

Conclusions:

As instability intensifies globally, the seventh BCSC examined how to navigate climate, conflict, and cooperation when traditional multilateral frameworks are strained. Participants explored drivers linking climate stress to insecurity – resource scarcity, critical minerals, disinformation, environmental crime – and emphasised that plurilateral and regional coalitions are increasingly filling gaps in action and finance, even as competition between coalitions risks fragmentation.

The conference challenged familiar framings: climate isn't an environmental add-on, but a compounding risk factor requiring integration into defence budgets and operational doctrine. Geopolitical rivals are weaponising climate disinformation to fracture societies, precisely when cooperation is most needed. Innovative finance mechanisms for fragile states – blended finance, pre-arranged funding, climate insurance – remain boutique experiments when they should be standard practice. And genuine localisation requires ceding decision-making authority, not just consulting communities.

Participants showcased initiatives delivering results: women-led organisations demonstrating what's possible when finance is accessible, post-conflict reconstruction using local materials and knowledge, and regional networks navigating institutional silos to address realities on the ground.

As global experts convene in Belém, COP30 offers an opportunity to connect climate ambition with human security. Building on Brazil's convening role – and confronting challenges from extreme events, deforestation, and environmental crime in the Amazon – the agenda must elevate locally driven solutions and the cross-border cooperation required to sustain them.

Next Steps:

Beyond BCSC 2025, regional conversations have continued to deepen the global dialogue on climate, peace and security. On June 11, 2025, BCSC-Rio was held in Rio de Janeiro, bringing together local and international stakeholders in the climate and security spheres to discuss the unique climate, peace and security challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, opportunities for collaboration and partnerships in Brazil and the wider region were explored, with the aim of leveraging the region's existing response landscape. Insights from BCSC-Rio built on the outcomes of BCSC-Cali 2024 and contributed to shaping a locally owned agenda on environmental change and security ahead of COP30.

Climate, peace and security discussions in Asia and the Pacific are gaining momentum. These conversations recognise both the region's vulnerabilities and its unique opportunities for climate security collaboration. With COP31 likely to feature greater Pacific and Australian engagement, regional perspectives are poised to take centre stage – particularly, how communities' cultural, legal and spiritual foundations, alongside their deep connections to land and resources, shape their adaptation to climate shocks. Understanding these dynamics will be essential for designing effective policy and meaningful partnerships.

Thank you to all partner organisations and participants for keeping the conversation moving forward. For more insights, explore the hashtag #BCSC2025 on Bluesky and LinkedIn, and view additional articles, news coverage and takeaways online here.

23 October

- Conference Welcome
- Opening Impulse
- **Plenary 1:** Climate in the crosshairs: Security, scarcity, and power in a warming world
- **Plenary 2:** Bridging the gap: Innovative climate finance for fragile states
- The policy dimensions of cross-boundary climate-related human mobility
- No defence readiness without climate readiness
- Water, peace and conflict: Can water be an entry point for peace?
- The geopolitics of the energy transition
- Bridging climate and environmental security and crimes that affect the environment
- **Spotlight conversation:** 25 years of Women, Peace and Security - What has been achieved?
- **Conversation:** Weathering Risk Peace Pillar
- **Conversation:** Climate security and disinformation
- Rebuilding for resilience: Climate-smart post-conflict recovery
- Rethinking vulnerability and resilience in island nations
- Climate resilience to strengthen our security: Impacts of global climate change on national security
- Strategic minerals, strategic futures: Africa at the heart of shifting global security
- Private investments for climate action in fragile and conflict-affected settings
- **Plenary 3:** Beyond Borders: Regional and plurilateral climate security in action
- Conference Closing

21 October

- Building peace through climate, land and nature action: Synergies for security under the three Rio Conventions

22 October

- Translating Evidence into Action: The MEL Exchange
- The implications for climate change and environmental degradation for dialogue and mediation processes in peace operations and crisis management
- Advancing Latin American and Caribbean Leadership: A solutions-focused exchange on climate change, environment and peacebuilding
- A climate double-crunch? Implications for development and security in India
- Bridging the climate, peace and security science-policy divide
- Exploring progress at the intersection of Gender, Climate, Environment and Security
- Governance and social contract for urban climate, peace and security
- Speaker reception

24 October

- Climate, Peace and Security Advisory Exchange at BCSC 2025: Evolving Agenda and Regionalisation of Climate, Peace and Security

Our partners:

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