

# SUMMARY

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## Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2020 High-Level Political Segment

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The [Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2020](#) (BCSC 2020) kicked-off on the 23rd and 24th June 2020, with over 750 participants tuning in from all around the world. The event, [part I](#) of the two-part conference, featured a high-level political segment hosted by German Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and focused on political responses to climate-security risks, informed by expert insights on the state of the art in science and the field.

Dynamic discussions centred on the role of the UN Security Council, context-relevant responses to climate-related security risks, the gender implications of these risks and the risk of securitising climate change. In the spirit of promoting evidence-based policymaking, the conference saw the launch of a Global Climate Security Risk and Foresight Assessment by Minister Maas and the launch of the publication [“10 Insights on Climate Impacts & Peace”](#) by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and adelphi.



Watch this session



## Climate, peace and international security. How should the UNSC act?

**Heiko Maas**, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, affirmed in his [keynote](#) that a new concept of foreign and security policy must be embraced. Recognizing climate change as a key risk to global peace and stability, he highlighted that the UN Security Council must address the threat of climate change to international peace & security in its daily work. He explained how Germany has consistently put the topic at the heart of its UNSC membership, co-founding the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, and announced that Germany will be organising a high-level debate on the issue during its UN Security Council presidency in July. Underscoring the importance of evidence-based action, Minister Maas officially launched a Global Climate Security Risk and Foresight Assessment. The state-of-the-art initiative will be jointly led by adelphi and PIK, and will provide a basis for evidence-based action on climate and security.

**Amina Mohammed**, UN Deputy Secretary-General, passionately emphasized three priority areas in her keynote: First, investing in adaptation and resilience, especially at the community level, is critical to conflict prevention. Second, investing in new technologies to improve climate risk forecasting, ensuring that countries affected by conflict have the tools to anticipate and prevent climate stress. And third, urgent climate action, as it is necessary to eliminate climate-security risks.

"A world in a stage of environmental emergency is also a world exposed to heightened security risks and new threats.

Why?

Because climate disasters lead to humanitarian disasters, food shortages, and economic, social and demographic shocks; and because all this disruption together contributes to creating or aggravating a climate of tension which itself is conducive to crises, conflicts and escalations of all kinds."



**Amina Mohammed**

*UN Deputy Secretary-General*



Watch this video statement

“When we talk about the impact of climate change on international security, we are not foretelling or speculating on a distant future. We are talking about the present.”

”

**Jean-Yves Le Drian**

*French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs*



Watch this video statement

In his keynote **Jean-Yves Le Drian**, French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, emphasized that the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on international security must become a key item on the conflict prevention and settlement agenda. He highlighted that the international community needs to establish a collective tool for analysis and early warning on the impacts of climate change on global peace and security. And added that observing is not enough - action is needed.



Echoing these strong calls for international action on climate-related security risks, and showing their support for the BCSC 2020, were video statements from: the President of Nauru, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Ireland, Maldives, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sweden, Vietnam, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the chiefs of the International Committee of the Red Cross, International Organisation for Migration, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN Environment Programme and the World Food Programme.

## Strengthened UNSC responses for peace in a changing climate

“The UN needs to reflect on whether its peacekeeping efforts are fit for purpose to address climate change threats.”



**Raychelle Awuor Omamo**  
*Kenyan Secretary for Foreign Affairs*

In the panel discussion on “**How can the UNSC strengthen its response to climate-related threats to international peace and security?**” Kenyan Secretary for Foreign Affairs **Raychelle Awuor Omamo** called for a strengthening of the UN's peacekeeping mechanisms to enable peacekeepers to deal with climate change issues in their areas of operations. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of stronger cooperation between the UN Security Council and regional organizations, such as the African Union. She highlighted that climate change is a global phenomenon, but that its implications differ regionally, and that we therefore need tools on both levels to tackle the challenge effectively.



“We see that the effects of climate change increasingly interact with the root causes of conflict and population flows. They act as a risk multiplier that can help drive future forced displacement.”



**Filippo Grandi**  
*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees **Filippo Grandi** stressed that to protect the world's displaced and foster social cohesion and sustainable solutions, we must do more to protect the environment. He welcomed the focus on forced displacement as one of the consequences of climate change, which shows the urgency of the climate emergency, and its impact on peace and stability.

**Ine Eriksen Søreide**, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed her surprise that climate security is no frequent topic in UN Security Council debates, compared to how present the conversation on climate threat multipliers was with military officials in her previous role at the Norwegian Ministry of Defence. She emphasized that Norway will continue to prioritize climate and security action during its time as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

## Assessment, analysis, action

Accompanying the high-level political discussions were a number of expert-lead sessions elaborating on the latest research and experiences from the field.

The scientific segment of the conference was opened by **Professor Johan Rockström**, Director of the PIK.



Elaborating further on the new risk landscape, **Barbora Sedova**, PIK, and **Benjamin Pohl**, adelphi, set out **“10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace”** based on the state of the art of current climate and security research. They explained how climate-related security risks are context-dependent and manifest in different ways, such as through competition over natural resources and climatic impacts on climate-sensitive livelihoods and food prices. Taken together, the 10 Insights underscore the importance of assessing and addressing climate change and security together – in a manner which takes account of gender-based differences, governance and global and localised dynamics – to develop context-informed responses which can yield significant positive synergies for climate resilience and peace.



**Prof. Ottmar Edenhofer**, Director of the PIK, in his keynote, reminded us to look beyond known climate-related security risks. Drawing on the conclusions from the new report, he emphasized that we are likely underestimating the implications of climate change for security. As an example, he mentioned that many indirect climatic effects on security, such as transmission of shocks across large spatial scales, are not well understood. He explained that the [new risk assessment](#) will help to fill such research gaps and to improve our policy responses addressing security risks in a changing climate.

## Dealing with context and complexity

In the panel discussion “**Dealing with Complexity – Innovating Institutions**” **Patrick Youssef**, ICRC, **Sabine Starke**, WFP Berlin, and **Mehreen Afzal**, UNHCR, discussed how climate and security risks affect agencies tasked to deal with existing societal challenges. One central outcome of the discussion was that international responses need to be adapted to achieve sustainable impacts in the long- and short-term. Coordinated action must be strengthened.

“We need to balance programs that save lives with programs that change lives and strengthen the resilience of those most vulnerable.”

”

**Sabine Starke**  
WFP Berlin



“Climate change affects all of us. But not equally! For people affected by armed conflict, climate change only makes matters worse.”

”

**Patrick Youssef**  
ICRC



Climate Security Expert Network members **Ottília Anna Maunganidze**, ISS, **Chitra Nagarajan**, Independent Conflict Researcher, **Adriana Abdenur**, Igarapé Institute, and **Oli Brown**, Chatham House, shared insights from affected regions and discussed context-relevant responses in the panel discussion "[Dispatches from the Field](#)". Common themes from all regions were the importance of:

- 1) Bringing a climate lens into peacebuilding and conflict prevention, as well as vice versa;
- 2) Building multi-stakeholder groups; and
- 3) Consulting experts other than the climate security community.

"Peacebuilding must acknowledge the role of climate security in their risk analysis".

"People do not live siloed lives – responses need to reflect that."



**Chitra Nagarajan**

*Independent Conflict Researcher*

## Ways forward: Risk assessment, BCSC Part II and more

Closing the conference, **Alexander Carius**, Managing Director of adelphi, underlined that it is only through cooperation and collaboration between governments, international organisations, and civil society that geographic and sectoral boundaries can be overcome to build back better after COVID-19 for peace in a changing climate. The international collaboration fostered through the Global Climate Security Risk and Foresight Assessment is a manifestation of what is required. He emphasized the importance of climate security for national and international foreign and security policy.

"Foreign policy which invests into decarbonisation pathways, makes climate adaptation conflict sensitive and peacebuilding measures climate proof will yield a peace dividend for the next decades."

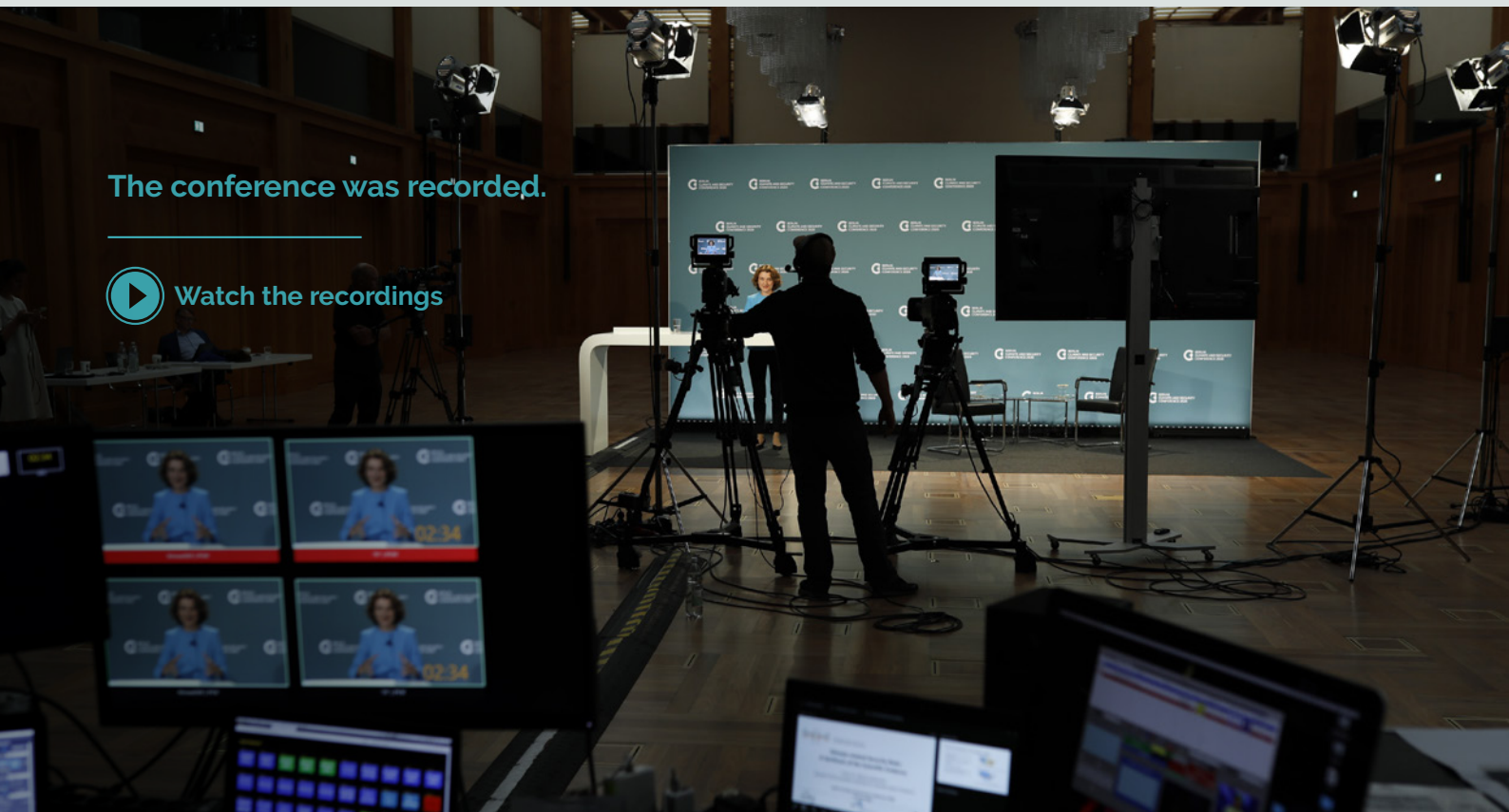


**Alexander Carius**

*Managing Director of adelphi*



Part I of the BCSC set out the latest evidence on climate and security and started the discussion on appropriate political responses. Through insightful live questions from the audience, conversations were able to tackle challenging questions about moving from words to action. Part II of the Berlin Climate and Security Conference will pick up this theme. Running from September 7 to October 2, it will feature a variety of partner-led, interactive sessions on substantive themes ranging from gender and climate-security to risk informed planning with a focus on how to support forward-looking and preventative foreign and security policy and practice.



The conference was recorded.



Watch the recordings

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