CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY IN PEACE OPERATIONS

On 1-3 December 2021, the Challenges Annual Forum gathered partners and key stakeholders to exchange views and develop recommendations on how peace operations can more effectively address climate and environmental security risks and opportunities. The Forum, co-hosted by the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), engaged more than a hundred participants from across the globe in interactive discussions around the following three sub-themes:

1. Analysis: Integrating climate risks into analysis and planning

Peace operations need to develop an understanding on how climate change affects their security and peace context. Identifying climate-related security risks and assessing the scale of their impact, lays the foundation for prioritizing necessary actions. Mainstreaming these risks into the wider mandates of peace operations can help deliver a more conflict-sensitive response.

Key takeaways from CAF21:

- Improve climate "literacy" in peace operations. Apply a climate lens to existing conflict analysis and planning processes, which requires a multidisciplinary analysis that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Work with peace operations to identify appropriate methodologies and structures to enhance their capacities. Increase collaboration with climate experts in the wider UN system at country and regional level to support analysis and programming.

- Dedicated capacity and champions. Speed up the institutionalization of the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) as a key instrument for comprehensive climate risk assessment and analysis in peace operations. Increase dedicated capacities such as 'Climate Security Advisors' who can serve as "connectors or translators" to build bridges across various thematic areas and help mainstream climate and environmental considerations in peace operations. Avoid creating more silos in UN peace operations.

- Regional analysis. Climate security often has a regional dimension whereas peace operations typically have a national orientation. The UN Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report underlines the importance of improving the predictive capacities for UN systems, and is an opportunity to help peace operations draw from common regional sources of geo-spatial information and climate risk analysis.

2. Opportunities: Developing a people-centered approach to climate security

People and communities, not states, need to be the focus of climate security approaches, making sure that hardships and grievances exacerbated by the changing climate do not escalate into security issues. Peace operations should equally look at both conflict risks and climate change vulnerability, thus addressing and transforming the underlying structures and drivers of insecurity within countries.

Key takeaways from CAF21:

- Place people at the center. Focus on people's needs, and the specific contexts, when tailoring interventions accordingly. The climate-security nexus should be a central part of local peacebuilding and development programming, given the links between climate and conflict, including competition over natural resources, and its impact on vulnerable communities.
- Creative partnerships. Amplify local adaptive strategies for peace operations and identify entry points for turning competition over fewer resources into opportunities for more collaboration. Partnerships with civil society and local peacebuilders, particularly with women and youth organizations, will enable a more locally-owned approach.
- Be more catalytic. Be more catalytic in peacebuilding, social cohesion and local development, including engaging more with public-private and local civil society initiatives.

3. Partnerships: Exploring new avenues for collaboration

Public-private partnerships could help foster local development of sustainable energy or waste management. Partnerships with civil society and local peacebuilders would enable the inclusion of local knowledge and ownership. Moreover, it is important to align efforts by UN, EU, AU and other international actors by establishing closer partnerships through joint agreements and coordination mechanisms.

Key takeaways from CAF21:

- Leave a positive legacy. Scaling up renewable energy use through partnerships with local providers, can serve mission needs while supporting local development. A system-level change is required in how missions think about and operationalize energy use in the field. Troop- and police-contributing countries should also be further incentivized to deploy more with renewable energy systems, and be supported to reduce barriers of doing so.
- Regional organizations. Align efforts further, among the UN, EU and AU, through joint agreements and new coordination mechanisms. A good way forward are the upcoming "EU-UN Priorities 2022-24" which will mainstream climate security throughout this partnership.
- World Bank. Enhance the theme of climate security in the World Bank–UN discussions, on how to improve development approaches in fragile and conflict settings to foster peace and stability.