



**SRMUN CHARLOTTE 2022**  
*Reconciling the Past and Restoring Multilateral  
Partnerships for the Future*  
March 24-26, 2022  
[sc\\_charlotte@srmun.org](mailto:sc_charlotte@srmun.org)

**Security Council Update III: Climate and Natural Disasters**

*"If we continue on our current path, we will face the collapse of every- thing that gives us our security—  
food production; access to fresh water; habitable, ambient temperatures; and ocean food chains."  
— David Attenborough.<sup>1</sup>*

***Introduction***

From Afghanistan to Yemen and Mali to Somalia, the continuing hostilities across these and other Member States have been routed to climate change. Droughts, storms, and flooding have led to conflicts and political instabilities. It has been said that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been "reluctant" to tackle the issue of climate change.<sup>2</sup> UNSC Member States have viewed climate change as a security threat that warrants the consideration of the council but not all members agree.<sup>3</sup> UNSC Member States have also heard discussions and debated whether climate change falls under the purview of the council.<sup>4</sup> Over the years, however, peace and security have been threatened due to climate change and natural disasters

***Actions Taken by the United Nations Security Council***

In S/RES/2349 (2017), the UNSC recognized that climate change has had "adverse effects" and ecological changes in Central Africa's Lake Chad.<sup>5</sup> The effects listed in S/RES/2349 ranged from drought, desertification, food insecurity, land degradation, and water scarcity.<sup>6</sup> The UNSC called for risk assessments and management strategies from governments and the UN to address these factors.<sup>7</sup> The Lake Chad region has been strife with conflict and humanitarian emergencies as a result of terror groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>8</sup> The UNSC called upon the governments across the region to engage in measures addressing the environmental challenges.<sup>9</sup> One program that has been highlighted by the Security Council is the Lake Chad Development and Climate Resilience Action Plan.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the UNSC called for the region, with backing from the international community, to support investments in agriculture, education, health care, and infrastructure.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "The UN Security Council and Climate Change," *Security Council Report*, June 21, 2021, accessed February 18, 2022, [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/climate\\_security\\_2021.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/climate_security_2021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "What Can the UN Security Council do on Climate and Security?" *Adelphi*, July 2020, accessed February 18, 2022, [https://climate-security-expert-network.org/sites/climate-security-expert-network.com/files/documents/what\\_can\\_the\\_un\\_security\\_council\\_do\\_on\\_climate\\_and\\_security\\_v2.pdf](https://climate-security-expert-network.org/sites/climate-security-expert-network.com/files/documents/what_can_the_un_security_council_do_on_climate_and_security_v2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> "The UN Security Council and Climate Change," *Security Council Report*.

<sup>4</sup> "The UN Security Council and Climate Change," *Security Council Report*.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349, *Resolution 2349 (2017) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7911th meeting, on 31 March 2017*, SC/RES/2349, (March 31, 2017), [https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%20FRES%202349\(2017\)&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%20FRES%202349(2017)&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop)

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Security Council resolution 2349.

In June 2020, several UNSC Member States met with UN Secretary-General António Guterres regarding climate-related security risks.<sup>12</sup> With Permanent Five (P5) members France and United Kingdom, fellow UNSC members Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Niger, Tunisia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Vietnam have discussed how to include climate-related security risks into the UNSC's decision-making process.<sup>13</sup> A joint statement published through the Permanent Mission of the Germany to the UN stated, "The impacts of climate change affect – and will increasingly affect – populations across the globe. In specific cases, this can lead to food and water insecurity, large scale displacement, particularly among women and children, and social tensions which can potentially exacerbate, prolong or contribute to the risk of future conflicts and instability. The effects of climate change therefore constitute a key risk to global peace and stability."<sup>14</sup> The ten UNSC members indicated they would continue to press for high-level debates about climate change in future meetings.<sup>15</sup>

It was a year prior to the aforementioned joint statement where some UN Member States insisted that the topic of climate change in the UNSC was the "wrong forum."<sup>16</sup> Speakers informed the UNSC about climate change's risks to international peace and security during a late January 2019 meeting. The speakers said substantial displacement of people and increased competition for already-limited natural resources are effects of climate change.<sup>17</sup> One of the speakers was Rosemary DiCarlo, who served as the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, said such effects are not consequences that will occur in the future but are "a reality today for millions of people around the globe."<sup>18</sup> DiCarlo continued that climate change has increased competition for shrinking land and water resources, heightened tensions between herders and farmers, increased socioeconomic exclusion, and elevated the probabilities of youth being recruited into armed groups.<sup>19</sup>

Speaking on behalf of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Pavel Kabat, chief scientist for the WMO, emphasized findings from their organization's Global Risks Report 2019 report, which showed climate change, extreme weather, natural disasters, and water crises are the top four existential threats to Earth, and those threats have influences on peace and security.<sup>20</sup> Kabat said climate change impacts security in a variety of ways, such as reducing advances in food access, intensifying wildfire risks, and mounting the potential for water-related conflict.<sup>21</sup> WMO has offered to support the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre provide expert information and back the leadership in creating informed and strategic decisions.

UNSC Member States, including India and Russian Federation, questioned the inclusion of climate change in the council. The Russian Federation representative, Vassily Nebenzia, said the topic of climate change in

---

<sup>12</sup> "Joint Statement by 10 Members of the UN Security Council (Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Tunisia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, United Kingdom, Vietnam) on their Joint Initiative to Address Climate-related Security Risks, June 22, 2020," *Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations*, June 22, 2020, <https://new-york-un.diplo.de/un-en/news-corner/200622-climate/2355076>

<sup>13</sup> "Joint Statement by 10 Members of the UN Security Council...," *Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations*.

<sup>14</sup> "Joint Statement by 10 Members of the UN Security Council...," *Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations*.

<sup>15</sup> "Joint Statement by 10 Members of the UN Security Council...," *Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations*.

<sup>16</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13677.doc.htm>

<sup>17</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>18</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>19</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>20</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>21</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

the UNSC is both counter-productive and excessive.<sup>22</sup> Climate change, according to Nebenzia, has not been a universal challenge and should not be considered as such.<sup>23</sup> The Russian representative warned that adding climate change to the UNSC's agenda might lead to the "false assumption that climate change always leads to conflict," per a UN report.<sup>24</sup> Nebenzia isn't dismissing the topic of climate change in the UN but noted there are existing specialized bodies in the UN system that can provide the appropriate forum.

The representative from India, Syed Akbaruddin, said climate change should be a priority for the international community, and global institutions should be responsive to disaster preparedness, resilience, and response.<sup>25</sup> Akbaruddin said, "The nexus between climate change and security is complex, contingent and not fully understood."<sup>26</sup> A UN report further summarized Akbaruddin's comments as:

*"[T]hat while defining a problem as a security challenge often upgrades attention and resources, a securitized approach to climate change risks pitting States in a competition, when cooperation is most productive to tackling the threat. Thinking in security terms also usually engenders overly militarized response. [Akbaruddin] questioned whether mitigation and adaptation strategies can be fulfilled through enforcement actions, and whether the needs of climate justice can be served by shifting climate law-making from the Convention on Climate Change to a structurally unrepresentative institution with an exclusionary approach decided in secretive deliberations."<sup>27</sup>*

In September 2021, the UNSC gathered to discuss climate risks preparedness when peace is threatened, including how to involve conflict mediation, conflict prevention, and peacekeeping.<sup>28</sup> The UNSC does recognize that "fragile" UN Member States have limited resources to tackle climate and other weather crises.<sup>29</sup> The debate underlined that more than 140 Member States saw 24.9 million people displaced due to weather-related hazards. Women and girls are under threat, and the UNSC has had "women, peace and security" in its agenda.<sup>30,31</sup> According to Guterres, "Our window of opportunity to prevent the worst climate impacts is rapidly closing. No region is immune," noting the Middle East and North Africa are among the most climate-vulnerable regions.<sup>32</sup> He continued, "Wildfires, flooding, droughts, and other extreme weather events are affecting every continent. The effects of climate change are particularly profound when they overlap with fragility and past or current conflicts."<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>23</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>24</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>25</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>26</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>27</sup> "Massive Displacement, Greater Competition for Scarce Resources Cited as Major Risks in Security Council Debate on Climate-Related Threats," *United Nations*.

<sup>28</sup> "Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security," *United Nations*, September 23, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/security-council-open-debate-climate-and-security-0>

<sup>29</sup> "Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security," *United Nations*.

<sup>30</sup> "Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security," *United Nations*.

<sup>31</sup> Gender, climate and security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change," *UN Women*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-climate-and-security>

<sup>32</sup> "Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security," *United Nations*.

<sup>33</sup> "Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security," *United Nations*.