

## **Geneva Dialogue on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace: Meeting 13**

*16 February, Zoom*

*Participants: 17 individuals from organizations in Geneva and beyond*

### **Presentation on environmental peacemaking:**

- Capstone project of the Graduate Institute, in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Research by master's students Claudia Schiavelli, Lina Hillert, and Duong Mai.
  - Context on the project:
    - This project is helping to fill a real gap in research and practice as there is very little out there on this specific topic.
    - It is helping us to talk about 'environmental peacemaking' specifically, as before we would often fall between the climate and the security sides – this shows there is something specific and of its own kind.
    - It also shows that there is much more space for connections between research and practice. As we're trying to further operationalize this concept, we need concrete research and support to do this.
- [Link to full report here](#)
- [Link to PPT here](#)
- Project objectives
  - Understanding the links between the environment, conflict, and peacemaking
  - Analysing past practices and selecting examples of environmentally-sensitive peace agreements
  - Assessing chosen peace agreements and processes
- Database study
  - Analysis of peace agreements from 2010 to 2020 based on six keywords, using two main databases
    - Environment, natural resources, water, land, pastoralism, climate change
  - Categorising agreements according to their level
    - Local, intra-state, inter-state, and overlapping
  - Findings
    - Approximately 16.6% of all peace agreements signed between 2010 and 2020 include environmental-related keywords
- Case study
  - Countries: Colombia, The Philippines, Nigeria
  - Insights
    - Environmental peacemaking is an evolving and flexible definition - from the ecological sense to the economic sense of the "environment"
      - Concrete examples of environmentally-sensitive peace agreements are highly dependent on the definitions of environment and all look pretty different from one another
    - The importance of local engagement and inclusion of diverse stakeholders in peacemaking efforts - the environment has a lot of potential of engaging communities in the peace process

- Environmental peacemaking is not just limited to peace agreements - it can happen even where an agreement is not signed (i.e. Ukraine)
  - The environment is not always a positive factor for change and peace
    - Ex: in Nigeria, the establishment of ranching policies actually increased tensions between ranchers and herders.
    - Ex: Deforestation has increased in Colombia following the agreement there
- Recommendations
  - Redefine the meaning of environmental peacemaking
  - Find other possible examples of environmentally-sensitive peace agreements
  - Peacemaking is not always in agreements themselves, so need to think beyond the databases
  - Add a few chairs to the negotiating table - inclusion of diverse voices
  - Bring in what is kept outside the closed doors of mediation - open broader societal dialogue on environmental peace issues

### Discussion

- In the case studies, were the conflicts built on environmental issues, or did the environment just happen to be included in the agreements?
  - It's a mixed bag.
  - For example, they looked at farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. That was explicitly oriented towards the environment, but it was intertwined with political issues. This was the challenge of the local peace agreement - how complicated the conflict was.
    - In the agreement, the environment was always mentioned in the root causes.
    - But then this proved to be a major challenge moving forward, because the road map did not know how to address the environment in practice.
- How do we navigate the discrepancies between the words in agreements and the practice of implementation? How can we allocate capacity in post-conflict reconstruction for this?
  - This was one of our interests, but this was a much bigger topic than we could scope for the research project.
  - Agreements are clearly not the only tool available to us. This is why we are interested in the peacemaking that happens outside of agreements and how that might work. The more the (international) community can engage around peace activities and the peace process, the better.
- The potential of environmental issues to gather stakeholders together is enormous.
  - For example, the context of the semi-arid area in Nigeria of which you speak is one of massive environmental degradation and breakdown. The biggest game changer to change the condition is to work together, so you are right that this *is* happening outside of peace agreements.
  - Collective environmental peacemaking work is one of the biggest game-changers for mitigating violent extremism, climate change, etc. Projects need to be framed with the different actors (from the environment, climate, peace, security, etc. silos). Projects should also amplify the local people already doing this work instead of seeking to reinvent the wheel.

- In fact, in a lot of their case studies, they found that indigenous groups are already doing environmental peacemaking without calling it environmental peacemaking.
    - What is the role of Geneva in this? To provide a platform for exchange between the required different expertises. Peacebuilding expertise and land restoration (for example) need to talk to each other. Geneva should incubate a new sort of cross-track field. This isn't happening yet.
  - "Environment" is used so broadly and so vaguely in peace agreements, often without details of what it means, how to do it, and what an appropriate time frame should be. (i.e., "integrating the environment," etc.)
    - Another study looked at GEF projects, and whether or not they are conflict-sensitive - it was a mixed bag for the results. Another example of vague definitions and cross-sector conceptual implementation.
    - An idea for a future cross-sectoral dialogue could be between different kinds of actors (environmental defenders, analysts, policymakers, etc.) on how they actually define, relate to, and operationalize different legal instruments.
      - The core of the idea is getting to the heart of how different actors define and understand issues and untangling mistranslations.
  - **Closing thoughts:** If the environment gets to be included in all peace discussions, there is the danger of it becoming a political football.
    - There is a need for more research on how the environment can enter discussions meaningfully without being exploited.