Geneva Dialogue on Environment,
Climate, Conflict, and Peace:
Meeting 7

13 October, Zoom

Participants: 19 participants from a range of institutions

Round of introductions

Presentation from Silja Halle, United Nations Environment Programme
- Building the evidence base in environmental peacebuilding: a quick overview its development and evolution
  - Looking forward to emerging areas
  - Reviewing problems and challenges
  - Coming from a practitioner angle, not an academic angle
- Crisis Management Branch of UNEP - close to 20 years, but looking at peacebuilding issues more specifically for about 10 years
- There are at least 30 years of academic literature on environment/natural resource factors that can drive, finance, and fuel conflict
  - Scarcity narratives - scarcity of natural resources such as land and water
  - Resource curse narratives/greed-grievance narratives
  - But there has been little uptake of these ideas among peace & security policy-makers and practitioners until quite recently
    - Recently changed with a new and big interest in climate change as a security issue
  - Environmental peacebuilding
    - Four key characteristics of natural resources that can incentivize cooperation
      - Resources cross political boundaries (common dependence)
      - Sustainable management requires longer timeframe and stability
      - Natural resource governance/management involves stakeholders across sectors (public/private) and at different levels (local, national, regional)
      - Technical dimensions which can be quantified
- UNEP's Environmental Peacebuilding Pillars
  - Pillar 1: Providing thought leadership and building the evidence base for programming
    - Together with ELI, EnPAx, several universities, this included the publication of six landmark books containing 150 case studies and examples from across the world of different approaches and their impact on the ground
    - [Link here](#)
    - Subscribe to EnPAx - there is so much constantly uploaded there and it's the #1 place to go for information

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  - PIllar 2: Conducting strategic advocacy and joint policy analysis across UN peace and security architecture
    - Core lessons from the field influence global policy through strategic partnerships
      - UNEP & PBSO; UNEP, ELI, & ICRC; UNEP, UN-WOMEN, PBSO, & UNDP; UNEP & DPPA; etc.
    - These reports provide a framework of how to think about environmental peacebuilding & the sub-topic at hand from the perspective of the end user
  - Pillar 3: Catalyzing uptake of good practices and pilot projects in the field
- Key challenges for measuring the impact of environmental peacebuilding approaches
  - Peace is multifactorial – how do you identify and measure environmental factors?
  - Many levels of conflict/many kinds of natural resources – peace can occur at different levels and is rarely comprehensive.
  - Proving a negative (how do you prove that *your* initiative prevented renewed conflict? peace is the absence of conflict?)
  - Lack of agreed indicators/poor quality of indicators - there is no common framework of indicators
  - Boundaries and definitions around terms such as peace, environmental peacebuilding itself, etc.
  - Multiplicity of methodologies & approaches
  - Role of social capital & cohesion (resilience)
  - Towards integrated indicators/indices
- Trends
  - Big data & AI
    - Helps us understand where environmental peacebuilding approaches might have the most impact, and then can also better measure their impact
    - UNEP tool called STRATA - a data catalogue on different indicators (land use, temperature, rainfall, etc.), identifies convergence of stresses and hotspot at risk for conflict
      - It will be open-source - currently under development – first beta-tested version available approx. February of next year
      - Feel free to contact them if interested
    - Looking at trends over time
  - Environmental peacebuilding in practice
    - Multiple projects testing environmental peacebuilding approaches on the ground - a lot of new information coming out about interventions
      - UN Peacebuilding Fund has taken new interest in this, financing new projects using environmental peacebuilding approaches
      - Environment/climate multilateral funds (GEF, GCF) are increasingly understanding the importance of conflict sensitivity and starting to develop their own indicator frameworks around these topics
        - This is a new source of learning, evidence, for our field

- - Integrated approaches (e.g. gender) essential

Discussion Notes:
- What kind of indicators are there to assess impact on environmental peacebuilding practices? Are there specific indicators for water, air, or other chemistry overlaps?
  - There is not really a common indicator framework that national governments or practitioners are using to understand the impact of environmental peacebuilding interventions.
  - For example, the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda has an indicator framework that all countries use to assess their progress against the agenda's objectives. Projects around this issue base themselves around this standard. But there isn't something like this for environmental peacebuilding currently. Each project/intervention develops its own set of indicators to assess its impact, but many of these are fairly superficial (typically output or lower income indicators) and/or poor quality.
- Is there anything other experts and practitioners would add?
  - Agree that the issue of indicators is particularly challenging. One of the weakest parts of the 2030 Agenda is the Peace Pillar, despite other pillars having much stronger indicators.
  - Agree on the list of challenges outlined in the presentation, and yes, the indicators. How could we shift from measuring outputs (# of meetings, etc.) to instead measuring outcomes (increased wellbeing, reduced poverty, etc.)?
- To what extent are major organizations like the Global Environmental Facility ("the GEF") or the Green Climate Fund engaging in conflict sensitivity?
  - They have recruited well-known experts in the field to lead the development of a strategy around conflict sensitivity. They are also exploring how projects funded by the GEF can support other peacebuilding goals - committing to a robust strategy.
    - Over their history, there has not been consistency in whether or not they engage with conflict sensitivity.
  - The Green Climate Fund may not be engaging to this same extent yet, though they have their own activities looking at unintended consequences of their projects.
- What could be an outcome that we would want to measure in environmental peacebuilding?
  - Ideally, we could demonstrate a reduction in the level of violence (in whichever way you measure this, number of deaths, etc.) or to be able to tell the story of how a situation did not degenerate into violence.
  - The key challenge is that the timeline of sustainability in environment and peace is very much at odds with the timeline of their projects. How can you measure the sustainability of the environment or peace within an 18 month project? The better timeline is 5 or 10 years - a better length of time to determine the contribution of environmental peacebuilding strategies to the maintenance or construction of peace.
  - There is interesting work done in relationships and measuring levels of communication, trust, and perception of the other. These are some promising indicators.
  - We need a revolution on what constitutes a good peace indicator.

- What is the vision for UNEP in this area in the next 3-5 years, particularly in light of covid-19 and its impacts on funding and environmental protections/priorities in-country?
    - After many years of the opposite, the door to the peace & security communities is now open wide. There is now a flood of interest from across the UN system, both from peace & security actors trying to understand climate change, and also from the development side who see opportunities for programming and funding from the climate security nexus.
    - Right now, UNEP's key role is supporting this flood of uptake and interest, and making sure that the knowledge that the coalition and community of practice have built over 30 years is taken into account. This includes integrated risk analysis, project design and development, etc.
    - Climate security is the new buzz word, and their job is to ensure that the broad range of issues and their deep interlinkages are fully appreciated and integrated. The Climate Security Mechanism is one of the points that demonstrates this interest - UNEP's role is in providing data and integrated analysis.