CONCEPT NOTE

The Road to Geneva:
Preparatory process towards the
2nd International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP) and the Centre on Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding (CCDP) call for a group of interested stakeholders, practitioners and researchers interested in collaboration in the preparatory process towards the 2nd International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding.

The aim of this conference is to strengthen a common dialogue between four fields: environment, climate, conflict, and peacebuilding.

The Road to Geneva will lead to the conference and is comprised of three main components: (1) a multi-stakeholder and inclusive consultation and research process towards the publication of a White Paper, (2) the enabling of youth research and scholarship on environment, climate, conflict, and peacebuilding, and (3) the community development through inclusive consultations. Collaborators are invited to participate in one or all components.

Interested parties should contact Annika Erickson-Pearson (GPP) at annika@gpplatform.ch. Please note: participation is informal in nature, with no formal membership obligations for engaged individuals.

1. Background

The Graduate Institute’s Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP), Environmental Peacebuilding Association and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP) and other partners are currently building a consortium to co-organize the 2nd International Conference on Environmental Peacebuilding at the Maison de la Paix in 2022 in Geneva. In the coming two years, we offer to develop the Road to Geneva, a strand of work that explores the nexus between environment, climate, conflict, and peacebuilding, and brings together practitioners and researchers to produce new analysis of region-specific environmental and conflict dynamics, and a forward-looking human rights-based approach and peacebuilding framework to address them.

The rationale for this preparatory process is the consistent message across risk forecasts that an increase in the frequency and intensity of environmental and human-made disasters will create more pressures on already stressed states and societies over the next decades.¹ For instance, the International Panel on Climate Change finds with “very high confidence” that “impacts from recent climate related extremes, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires, reveal significant vulnerability and exposure of some ecosystems and many

human systems to current climate variability.” These stresses meet changing geopolitics, increased weapons proliferation, mass protests, human rights abuses, and new conflict theatres such as cyber space along with other trends such as population growth, urbanization, and the implementation of artificial intelligence. 

The Road to Geneva builds on the unique characteristic of Geneva as a hub for environmental, conservation, and peacebuilding expertise, know-how and diplomacy, including many United Nations agencies and programmes, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions with global reach in these fields. The preparatory process aims at bridging the divide between research and policy by placing research within a multi-stakeholder process and aims to inform practical responses needed to nurture sustainability and peace at the same time.

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is currently piloting a thematic curated track and community of thought on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace, facilitating various initiatives that will lead up to Geneva Peace Week 2020 (2-6 November) and Geneva Peace Week 2021 (1-5 November). Between 2014 and 2015, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform led the White Paper on Peacebuilding and piloted a new methodology developed by the CCDP for a more bottom-up, inductive research process. The successful experience of this process led to the incubation of the White Paper on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peacebuilding that is proposed in the research component of the Road to Geneva.

2. The Road to Geneva: Three components

- Inclusive consultations and research: A White Paper

The Road to Geneva aims to produce a crosscutting peacebuilding framework to more effectively analyze and respond to the complex interaction of environmental challenges and related conflict dynamics: conservation/biodiversity, climate change, energy production, natural resources management, environmental crimes. It also fosters common purpose across the environmental, conservation, climate, security and peacebuilding communities about the responses to these dynamics.

The White Paper on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peacebuilding has the objective to provide a crosscutting peacebuilding framework to more effectively respond to the complex interaction of environmental and conflict dynamics. It aims to create common purpose across policy and expert communities in the environmental, conservation, and peacebuilding fields about the responses to these dynamics. It also aims to shape the way institutions adapt to the changing demand from local actors for expertise, know-how and capital in order to support the ‘Decade of Action and Delivery’ of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3 The IPCC has stated that insufficient global response has us currently on track for their worst-case scenario global temperature rise of 4.8C by 2100. The difference to peacebuilding of a 1.5C compared to a 4.8C rise is unimaginable.
The White Paper Process builds a platform for understanding from the interaction with practitioners and experts from a cross cutting network of practitioners and experts working on environmental, conservation or peacebuilding issues in over 100 globally connected, Geneva-based institutions. It collects views and perspectives along four avenues, including in-depth conversations with a variety of stakeholder communities; a review on the academic and scholarly literature; background papers offering regional perspective; and consultations and focus group discussions. The White Paper is a participatory process that attempts to give voice to, and capture, a multitude of diverging views and perspectives. It will be coordinated by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform which is currently establishing a Working Group including with UNEP, IUCN, WMO, QUNO, Initiatives of Change - Switzerland and others.

Conducted over the period July 2020 to December 2021, it will respond to the urgent need to adapt policy and practice to a new strategic landscape shaped by the complex interaction of environmental and conflict dynamics.

(1) To review academic literature on the interaction between environmental challenges and conflict dynamics, and responses applied to address them. This review aims to establish clarity on key concepts and the current state of knowledge as well as on the spectrum of responses in different sectors.

(2) To conduct a survey of actors working on environmental, conservation, climate, security or peacebuilding topics, as well as individuals experiencing these phenomena, about their perception of the complex interaction between environmental and conflict dynamics and the responses to these dynamics. The survey draws on the global network of professionals easily accessible via Geneva.

(3) To commission 8-10 background papers on regional perspectives on responses to the complex interaction of environmental and conflict dynamics written by senior scholars/experts from different ecosystems they are writing on. These papers provide a deeper context for a regional assessment of opportunities and constraints of relevant responses.

(4) To convene three regional focus group discussions on preliminary findings per region. The CCDP will organize these discussions in collaboration with partner institutions including the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing; Stellenbosch University Business School in Cape Town; and the Pontificia Universidad Católica in Lima.

- **Enabling youth research and scholarship**

The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding offers to build on the Graduate Institute’s community of students to promote study and scholarship on Environment, Conflict and Peacebuilding. Masters students at the Graduate Institute will be offered to work specifically on these subjects for their thesis and capstone projects. This component will continue to be developed in partnership with the students themselves, their supervisors, and the Head of Research within the CCDP in between 2020-2022.
• **Community development among Geneva actors**

‘Community management’ can be understood as the process of organizing a network of professionals around the common cause. It aims to generate collaboration and cohesion around a joint objective in order to: facilitate knowledge exchange; develop synergies; mobilize for action around joint initiatives; advance new solutions and approaches; and increase the overall impact of a given field.

The aim of this component will be to facilitate relationships and opportunities for information and knowledge exchange between community members. In line with the Platform’s established practice, the approach will be:

- Decentralised, systematic and outcome-oriented, with each track having its own dynamics and milestones;
- Cross-sectoral, bringing together individuals from research, policy and practice, and private sector to explore identified themes across organizational boundaries;
- Co-owned, with the curation, innovation and shaping functions conducted jointly by those involved in the track.

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform’s main role in Community Management will be facilitation and assuring momentum. It will offer administrative and intellectual support to facilitate reporting, event logistics and network administration.

Thematic considerations will emerge from a multi-stakeholder process that builds momentum towards the 2022 convening, and regular convenings, trainings, briefings, and other events will bring stakeholders together to collaborate and advance the field.

### 3. Next steps: Building a reference group

The CCDP is one of five founding partners of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and advances the research component of the White Paper. The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform will coordinate the *Road to Geneva* and the Conference in 2022.

This process aims at bridging practice and research and at being as inclusive as possible in order to gather state-of-the-art knowledge on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peacebuilding. We are now calling for a group of interested stakeholders, practitioners and researchers to join the *Road to Geneva*. They will contribute the development of the thematic programme, ecosystems focus, and regional perspectives as well as the definition and writing of the White Paper. This informal group will be regularly informed of the progress and invited to share information, to identify and facilitate further opportunities to bring the subject forward, and to actively engage in the conference.

Interested parties should contact Annika Erickson-Pearson at the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform at [annika@gpplatform.ch](mailto:annika@gpplatform.ch).

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5 The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a joint project of the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies; DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance; Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); Interpeace; and Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva (QUNO).