

# Geneva Peace Week 2022

## Thematic Track Report

Cultivating cooperation: Environmental challenges and opportunities for peace in a new age of insecurity

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## 1. Overview

The multiple and complex situations of armed violence pose great challenges, especially to the world's most fragile environments and the most vulnerable communities. This track was an attempt to rethink paradigms of action and formulate responses at the international, state, and local levels in the face of life-threatening challenges to the sustainable and equitable access and management of basic vital natural resources. To answer these important questions, the track convened 5 panels and workshops in person, as well as 5 more online, organized in partnerships across 30 different institutions. It also included a High-Level Panel where moderator Guillaume Charron of Independent Diplomat collected the perspectives on Ambassador Deike Potzel, Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilization, Peace Building and Humanitarian Assistance for the German Federal Foreign Office, Josephine Ekiru, Peacebuilding Coordinator, Northern Rangelands Trust, Kealoha Fox, President and Senior Advisor, Institute for Climate and Peace and Yves Lador, Representative to the UN, EarthJustice on how to move the field forward.

The other various discussions of the day sought to respond to three driving concerns. A first concern is **the impacts that current conflicts are having on the environment**, in particular, what the growing weaponization of the environment means for ecosystems and the climate, but also food and energy security, and how safe and fair environment restoration can serve the prospects of peace. In response to this concern, a second strand of the track asked **how peace has also evolved**, what best practices and shortcomings were visible across the field against the backdrop of this evolution and how peacebuilders could improve their harnessing of environmental issues and meaningful participation. Finally, a third concern is **cross-sectoral approaches to environment and peace**, in particular how to better engage and include diverse actors in climate security and environmental peacebuilding.

## 2. Key Insights & Takeaways

Discussions at Geneva Peace Week 2022 covered a wide diversity of subjects, and yet certain discernible insights emerged:

- The field is increasingly moving from documenting and debating the link between climate change and conflict to articulating how to address this link as effectively, justly and quickly.
- There is a continued need to improve the coherence of the diverse field of actors working at the intersection of environment, climate change, conflict and peace through participation, empowerment, and accountability.
- Local, national and regional levels should be better joined up for more effective action.

The field is quickly moving from the “what” to the “how”. The conversation has evolved from establishing and discussing the link between climate change and conflict to how we might operationalize and institutionalize solutions. This new, more solution-oriented approach was well-represented at Geneva Peace Week, with participants discussing ways to: improve regional cooperation, make effective use of nature-based solutions, engage local governance in urban settings to navigate migration related to climate change, and encourage individuals to take collective action in their own local communities.

But those working at the intersection of climate change, environmental degradation, security, and peace still have much to do to reflect and improve as a ‘sector’. Environmental peacebuilding is making progress on monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability and the participation of communities. It can go further in showcasing positive stories to mobilise donors and improve the quantitative and qualitative aspects of finance flows. Moreover, activities and programming must centre communities and people as actors and not vulnerable populations. For this to happen, language has to evolve to become more empowering, and processes must create space for populations to speak for themselves.

The sector also needs to better build bridges across scales: states, regional bodies and local communities. The sessions were hosted by a diverse array of actors: conservationists, policy-makers, faith-based actors, community activists, researchers and more. This demonstrates the vibrancy of the field, at the national but also local and supranational levels. In order to best harness this diversity, the field has to make sure it is joined up across levels and beyond silos.

### 3. Conclusions and Next Steps

The environment day of the Geneva Peace Week demonstrated clear progress towards operationalising solutions to the interlocking crises our global society is facing.

To get there, the field must continue to grow and expand in an effective but just way. Actors must refine understandings of conflict and environmental degradation dynamics, including in urban settings and faith communities. They should prefer flexibility and pragmatism over lofty principles and silver bullets while taking great care to avoid securitisation and greenwashing. Funding remains a key avenue of progress, as funding flows that adequately address climate and security issues should be improved and increased, and promote Nature-based solutions.

Geneva-based actors are in a privileged position to bridge silos and further integrate action. This could be facilitated by the current building of a database of examples of successful environmental and climate peacebuilding around the world, and by the further dissemination of the [White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding](#).

Despite the daunting nature of these challenges, the field should remain engaged and active, remembering the Hawaiian saying to “*shut our mouths and turn our hands into the soil*”.