The Implications of Climate Change for Mediation and Peace Processes

DPPA Practice Note

DPPA
Preventing Conflict. Sustaining Peace
POLICY & MEDIATION DIVISION

Warming stripes:

Global warming stripes data range from 1850-2021
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1. Introduction: integrating climate considerations into mediation efforts

The adverse effects of climate change and ecosystem degradation extend far beyond the environmental realm and increasingly shape human activity.[1] Rising temperatures, more severe and frequent extreme weather events, and erratic rainfall cause or exacerbate volatile food prices, insecure livelihoods, and large-scale displacement. Sea level rise is an existential threat for small island states and raises questions regarding maritime boundaries and national identity. Around the world, climate change alters politics, economies and societies in ways that have profound consequences.

Increasing evidence shows that **the effects of climate change can exacerbate existing fault lines and vulnerabilities, thereby fuelling violence and insecurity**.[2] In many of the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change, fragility and conflict have weakened coping mechanisms, people are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, and stark inequalities exist between men and women, or between culturally defined or identity-based groups.[3] The quality of governance and strength of institutions are frequently key determinants of how and to what extent climate change affects peace and conflict.

As climate change is fast becoming a major test of our collective ability to prevent and manage crises, mediators will increasingly need to consider its **short-, medium- and long-term implications for their engagements and integrate climate-informed practices into mediation and other forms of peacemaking**. Such approaches are not only necessary to help conflict parties address the risks associated with the adverse effects of climate change, they also allow mediators to take advantage of potential opportunities for bringing conflict parties together to discuss shared responses to common climate-related threats. However, in doing so, mediators need to avoid the perception that they are artificially injecting an external agenda into negotiations, or overstating its role. A climate-informed mediation process that is or appears to be externally driven may undercut local or national ownership of a process and its outcomes.

One purpose of **climate-informed mediation** therefore is to provide platforms to engage and better support the efforts of conflict parties to find a peaceful and sustainable solution to their dispute. Another goal is to enhance the chances that an agreement will stand the "climate test" over time. Integrating climate risk considerations, which can vary widely across different contexts, does not automatically advance a peace process or lead to more sustainable results, however. Mediators need to navigate climate change considerations in the context of complex negotiations and avoid pitfalls that could generate pushback from conflict parties. Indeed, unless efforts to deal with climate change are designed carefully, they may lead to new and different types of conflict.

This Practice Note identifies practical suggestions for addressing the effects of climate change in mediation processes, including by leveraging climate policy frameworks and climate finance during peace processes and agreement implementation. It proposes considerations applicable from the preparation and negotiation phases to the design and implementation of a peace agreement.[4] Crucially, it also provides guidance on where mediation teams can find the support necessary to design and undertake the proposed actions.

The Note draws on emerging work in this area as well as on experience in more established domains, such as the mediation of conflicts related to natural resources. It aims to encourage further thinking and experimentation, and to contribute to an iterative process of building a body of knowledge on mediation and climate change.

The Note forms part of broader efforts undertaken by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to promote inclusive, climate-informed peacemaking through awareness-raising within and beyond the UN system, capacity-building, and deeper partnerships with climate and environmental experts. It also builds on existing work on climate, peace and security, including the UN Climate Security Mechanism's reference documents,[5] and is designed to be read in conjunction with other guidance materials on mediation.[6]

2. Rationale

Climate change effects are felt in every corner of the world and can affect conflicts in different ways. They can be a **source of conflict, a multiplier of existing risks, or an opportunity for manipulation** by conflict parties to gain advantage. For example, climate change could straightforwardly heighten the risk of conflict by increasing water scarcity and creating tensions over water resources. Meanwhile, most of the UN's special political missions and peacekeeping operations are situated in contexts marked by a double vulnerability: high climate exposure and fragility.[7] In such settings, where climate change effects are among the core issues of a dispute, stakeholders may welcome their inclusion in the negotiation process.

In many cases, however, climate linkages are more indirect, complex and interwoven with socio-economic, identity-based and political factors than may be immediately obvious to the conflict parties themselves or to those supporting efforts to end the conflict, including through mediation. They may include longer-term environmental processes, such as shifts in agroecological zones, availability of pastures, land degradation and depletion of natural resources. In turn, these shifts may contribute to the loss of livelihoods, forced displacement, stresses on institutional capacities and disruptions or breakdowns in the delivery of public services, ultimately undermining the ability of society to productively manage and resolve tensions and disputes. In places where women play central roles in food production and energy generation, the impacts of climate change have gendered dimensions and can further heighten the risks of gender-based violence, child marriage and associated exploitation.

In situations involving climate-related effects, whether evident or indirect, mediators need to assess their impact on conflict dynamics and, as appropriate, creatively assist the parties to include climate-related issues in their negotiations.

Natural resources are a major factor in conflicts around the world. Typically highly exposed to climate change, they are commonly addressed in mediation and preventive diplomacy engagements.[8] Natural resources can be a source of grievances or be used by the parties to finance conflict. Where they are shared between communities

and states, however, natural resources can create opportunities for collaboration and joint-management mechanisms within and across borders. The effects of climate change can motivate cooperation over diminishing resources and introduce the need for adaptive forms of long-term cooperation in anticipation of changes in the natural environment.

In addition to affecting conflict, climate change impacts the environment in which peace is expected to take hold. Global, national and local efforts to mitigate and adapt to its accelerating effects can create opportunities for cooperation and peacemaking, including in building collective resilience and coping mechanisms. If human responses to climate change are ineffective, unequal or exclusive, however, they can potentially create new or reinforce existing grievances, and therefore impact conflict dynamics.

Simply put, since climate change and policy responses to it matter to conflict and peace, they also matter to mediation and preventive diplomacy.

Some of the benefits of including a climate lens in peace processes include:

- ***Mitigating unpredictability:*** Climate change will increasingly create unpredictable conflict environments within and between states, as resources diminish and institutions risk being overwhelmed. Negotiation outcomes are more likely to prevent the outbreak, recurrence or continuation of violence if they factor in the dynamic effects of climate change. An agreement on water resource management, for instance, has better chances of being sustainable if it accounts for the future impact of climate change on water supply and agropastoral productivity.
- ***Contributing to trust building***: Successful cooperation around shared interests on climate change effects can help build confidence among the parties in other, more contentious areas. Even if climate change is not a core issue of a dispute, addressing its current and future effects can create entry points for technical cooperation, confidence-building over environmental issues and natural resource management and, eventually, possible peaceful conflict resolution. In other words, helping to shift the focus from zero-sum thinking to the benefits of shared solutions can contribute to overall trust building between the parties.
- ***Strengthening inclusivity***: Designing solutions to address the effects of climate change can provide entry points for more inclusion and participation of women and youth as well as social, religious and regional minorities in peace processes. In many societies, women are the primary providers of food and water for their households and play a vital role in agriculture, which makes them critical actors in the analysis and response to climate change impacts.[9] Indeed, studies have shown that mediation strategies that systematically include women, and civil society more broadly, lead to a more sustainable peace.[10] Meanwhile, young people have emerged as leaders of global climate activism and climate justice movements with new ideas for protecting their future on a healthy planet.
- ***Attracting support***: Recognizing the impact of climate change on conflict dynamics and connecting peacemaking to climate action, where relevant, can help attract international support. As a growing number of UN Member States and multilateral organizations are pushing to mainstream climate considerations into conflict prevention efforts, and are keen to serve as frontrunners in meeting their international climate obligations, a climate-informed approach to mediation can help translate this broader interest into targeted support for a peace process.[11] Climate activists, non-governmental organizations and the private sector can similarly be strategic partners providing valuable ideas, expertise and resources. By keeping climate vulnerabilities and community resilience on the agenda, mediators can potentially unlock funds earmarked for climate mitigation or adaptation to support peace processes and facilitate implementation of their outcomes.[12]

- ***Supporting environmental protection***: Climate-informed peace agreements can help create inclusive socio-economic and political structures that protect the environment and support climate action. By providing platforms to develop sustainable resource management, land use, rural development and energy policies that are informed by local knowledge, peace agreements can contribute to a healthy environment and increased resilience to climate change in the long term. Such agreements are particularly important in settings where the protection of ecosystems – such as rainforests and other large natural carbon sinks – is key to meeting global climate action goals. Even basic, high-level commitments in peace agreements linked to climate adaptation can serve as valuable stepping stones towards more meaningful action-oriented measures later.
- ***Pre-empting unintended consequences***: Peace agreements that are blind to climate considerations can lead to adverse effects on the environment and increased vulnerabilities to climate change, threatening the durability of agreements. For example, the end of a conflict may trigger reconstruction efforts, alter livelihood systems or change migration patterns, which can lead to an increase in deforestation or other adverse impacts on the environment. Considering all aspects of a peace agenda and agreement from a climate perspective, including their longer-term implications, may help to prevent such unintended consequences and thereby contribute to environmentally sustainable peace.

3. Challenges

Despite the growing awareness of the opportunities associated with climate change, only a limited number of peace processes explicitly consider climate change effects in agreements and their implementation.[13] Where climate change effects have featured in peace agreements, they tend to be subsumed within a variety of issues – such as land, property and water rights – that are not specifically identified as related to the climate, although they may be impacted by it.

Whether addressing the topic explicitly or as part of a related or broader set of issues, mediators may face some of the following challenges in integrating climate considerations into peace processes.

- ***Long time frame***: The long-term nature of climate change can be perceived as overloading peace processes that are focused on finding an immediate end to violence. Conflict parties and mediators may argue that it is not feasible to prioritize climate issues in search of an agreement and in what may be an overcrowded mediation agenda, even at the expense of broader objectives.
- ***Lack of will to engage***: Conflict parties may not wish to include climate change in a peace process. The parties could, for example, resist the introduction of what could be perceived as an external agenda, or the effects of climate change may have asymmetrical impacts on the different communities represented by the negotiating parties. Actors who perceive benefits from the status quo may resist efforts to acknowledge or respond to the impacts of climate change. Some non-state armed groups have been able to exploit the inability of governments to protect populations from the effects of climate change, potentially limiting such groups' interest in finding effective adaptation or mitigation measures. In agropastoralist conflicts, stakeholders are especially likely to perceive climate change as advancing the interests of one party at the expense of another, which can harden resistance to including the issue.

- ***Uneven or missing technical knowledge:*** While local actors may have accurate knowledge or perceptions of risks associated with climate change and their adaptation capacity, mediators and conflict parties sometimes lack access to context-specific information of current or projected climate stressors and their cascading effects. In many parts of the world, particularly conflict zones, incomplete data and a lack of detailed climate change projections make it difficult to understand climate risks and reflect them in negotiations. Uneven access to technical expertise and varying familiarity with the issues, which may reflect the absence of a shared vocabulary, can benefit one or some of the stakeholders. Such imbalances can undermine efforts to find common ground as a basis for negotiations on other substantive issues, even transforming climate change into a divisive issue during negotiations.
- ***Limited body of good practice***: Given the relative paucity of good practice with respect to climate-informed mediation, mediators lack a body of knowledge on which to draw and may need to start from the ground up.
- ***Different levels of engagement***: While the effects of climate change on peace and security are often felt locally, finding solutions may require agreements at the national or regional levels. Conversely, climate impacts may be identified nationally, regionally or globally, although they may require local responses in the absence of high-level action. Challenges in connecting different levels of governance, each with a different set of power brokers and intermediaries, may make it difficult to advance integrated solutions.

4. Entry points

Mediators can take a number of different actions to help parties address the effects of climate change in peace processes. Mediation experts suggest that instead of discussing climate effects in broad terms, mediators may find more success by talking about localized, tangible climate hazards, such as drought, flooding, sea level rise, or changes in weather patterns and their effects. Since populations in conflict-affected contexts tend to rely on natural resources for their livelihoods, the impact of climate shocks on natural resources is often a compelling issue. Compared to approaches that aim to address wider climate change effects, such **context-driven framing** is more likely to resonate with and engage local parties and communities, while offering options for integrating their voices and expertise.

By encouraging parties and other stakeholders to focus on **localized, tangible effects of climate change**, mediators can help to prevent climate-related issues from overburdening negotiations. This approach can also serve to prioritize the integration of women and marginalized groups, who face particular climate risks, as well as environmental defenders and, where applicable, indigenous people, whose expertise can help identify key issues and priorities. Mediators, however, should avoid the perception that they are artificially injecting an external agenda into negotiations, particularly if local conflict actors view international stakeholders as responsible for driving climate change or as overstating its role, as either could trigger unintended consequences. A climate-informed mediation process that is or appears to be externally driven may undercut local or national ownership of a process and its outcomes.

Building on these broad observations, this section provides a non-exhaustive overview of entry points. Mediators are encouraged to identify and engage conflict parties on the most relevant points in each stage of the mediation process: preparation, process design and negotiations, the peace agreement and its implementation.

4.1 Mediation preparation

As a first step, even before undertaking a conflict analysis, **mediators are advised to look for indications that a climate lens is warranted within the mediation process**. Known objectives of conflict parties may serve as clues, as may the following conflict environment characteristics:

- contested laws and policies concerning ownership, management or access to natural resources, such as water, land, or rural or agricultural development
- instability related to transhumance, including due to climate-driven shifts in historical routes
- use of natural resource revenue to finance the conflict
- significant conflict-related damage to ecosystems
- high actual or potential vulnerability to droughts, floods, extreme weather events or other climate stressors
- rapid degradation or unsustainable use of critical resources, such as water
- high prevalence of food insecurity, particularly for women
- high dependence on natural resources for livelihoods
- actual or perceived lack of key public services, such as electricity or water, or unequal delivery thereof
- elite influence over the exploitation of natural resources, including deforestation, fishing and dams
- targeting of environmental defenders, women and indigenous rights defenders
- significant levels of forced displacement or migration linked to climate change effects, such as droughts, floods, or the loss of livelihoods or employment
- exploitation of climate-exposed natural resources, for instance in situations where this has been identified by a UN Security Council-mandated sanctions committee.

Establishing climate expertise in a mediation team

Successful mediation starts with an effort to understand the context and conflict actors, build a team with the right capacities to earn and maintain the trust of the conflict parties and assist them in taking the process forward. Mediators and their teams work in complex environments, often under intense political and time pressure; they are not usually expected to possess the capacity or technical knowledge to address the climate-related issues outlined in this Practice Note. Mediation teams should, however, strive to recognize where the effects of climate change represent a conflict factor, and where climate action might serve as a potential entry point. Preparatory work thus involves **assessing team members' expertise and additional capacity requirements with respect to the impacts of climate change** (such as on water, land and pastoralism).

Additional expertise can take different forms, including short-term support for conducting climate-informed conflict analysis and mediation strategy design. A team can also secure more sustained capacity, such as by recruiting a full-time climate and mediation expert to provide advice throughout a mediation process. Technical experts can assist in linking technical knowledge to the conflict context in a way that is meaningful to the parties, and that

helps the mediator find language and actions that resonate with their experiences (see Box 1). Engagement with local environmental defenders (including women, youth and indigenous environmental and human rights defenders) can provide an opportunity to bring in local climate-related expertise. Developing such local expertise may prove more beneficial to the process than introducing outside technical expertise.

In some situations, **it may be helpful to increase the conflict parties' familiarity with climate-related concerns, for example by raising their awareness of climate projections and environmental impact in advance of a negotiation process**. Mediators may then find it easier to support the introduction of climate-related issues at the appropriate point in a process. Similarly, familiarity with climate topics within the mediation team can help members identify entry points throughout the peace process.

Climate-informed conflict analysis

Climate-informed conflict analysis forms the basis of the mediation process design and helps mediators identify entry points. The analysis should:

- Assess climate change effects at different **spatial levels** (local, national and transboundary) and **temporal levels** (in the short, medium and long term).
- Look beyond the immediate manifestations of conflict and factually assess **whether and how the effects of climate change may exacerbate existing conflict dynamics or trigger new tensions**, including how (both rapid- and slow-onset[14]) climate stressors interact with existing risk factors and affect socioeconomic and political conditions for different groups, including regarding livelihoods, food security and inequalities.[15]
- Examine each of the **conflict parties' perceptions and political narratives of the effects of climate change** on their cause and situation, and assess whether and how the parties have recognized or utilized the effects of climate change to pursue their objectives or strategies, alongside possible motivations of political elites for not acting to address climate change effects.
- **Expand the typical circle of interlocutors** and integrate the views and expertise of civil society (including women, youths and indigenous environmental defenders) and the private sector, as well as local communities (including farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, migrants, women and young people), as they tend to bear the brunt of the climate impacts.
- Attempt to understand the **links between different environmental dimensions** (such as land, water, extractives, forests, degradation and natural hazards), as well as the overlay of **political and administrative boundaries** on ecological systems.

A climate-informed analysis should also look at **existing and potential responses to climate change effects**, and whether they both influence the conflict dynamics and offer entry points. Specifically, it should:

- **Draw on available local, national and regional adaptation and mitigation strategies or action plans**, especially if they contain country-specific information on climate risks and vulnerabilities and identify existing capacities and technical expertise.
- Assess state institutions' capacity for and approach to implementing adaptation and mitigation strategies and governing natural resources, noting that the state's administrative and financial (de)centralization may also be a factor in determining the range of possible interventions and the extent to which local agreements may be able to address climate-related issues.
- Begin to **identify climate adaptation strategies that could address conflict drivers associated with climate change** and facilitate inclusion in the mediation process (for example, nature-based solutions that involve more efficient use of natural resources, renewable energy investments, reforestation, climate-smart agriculture and livelihood diversification opportunities).
- Assess the applicability of **locally rooted, tribal, indigenous or other customary or faith-based practices** for responding to environmental change or managing and sharing resources.
- **Identify any peace or community bodies**, including those led by women, that seek to manage local conflicts over land, water and other resources, norms and practices that have emerged from past agreements, or local climate-related data sets that can be utilized in the negotiation process.
- Explore connections between any local practices and traditional institutions on the one hand, and formal state structures on the other.
- Understand the **political economy of climate change effects** and examine how any available climate adaptation and mitigation plans at the regional, national or local levels affect different actors, conflict parties and broader communities, noting that such plans frequently involve the allocation of significant amounts of resources and can thus create new "winners" and "losers" and become a source of contention.

The above considerations are critical to developing a nuanced understanding of the effects of climate change, the ways in which they interact with conflict dynamics, and conflict parties' potential interest in addressing them during negotiations or through other processes. Climate-informed conflict analysis has direct implications for process design and can form the basis for identifying entry points and developing a mediation strategy that integrates climate considerations in a practical, risk-conscious and conflict-sensitive manner.

Balancing technical and political considerations

As noted above, climate sensitive approaches do not automatically yield positive results. While exploring synergies between peacemaking and other objectives, mediators are also advised to **consider potential unintended consequences**, including the following:

- If one conflict party prioritizes climate issues more than another, or if the mediator is seen as overstating the role of climate change in the conflict context or referring to linkages that are not supported by science, the incorporation of climate change perspectives in the mediation process may erode perceptions of the mediator's impartiality.

- While climate change effects can in some cases offer useful entry points to advance negotiations, including at a more technical level, discussing them may also distract the stakeholders from other issues that are important to the political process and overly complicate the dynamics between the parties, especially if introduced too early in the process. Defining when and how to suggest connecting negotiations about climate change effects to other aspects of the peace process is thus an important part of the mediation process design.
- Discussing climate change effects without clearly establishing how they impact conflict dynamics may lead the parties to lose confidence in the process. To be addressed effectively, climate change effects must be understood through the experience of the parties. It may therefore be useful to identify other terms with greater local resonance, such as speaking in relation to the environment, geography, changes in weather patterns, or specific types of events such as droughts, desertification, floods or fires.

In particularly fragile and climate-exposed contexts, the introduction of climate change effects into a mediation process may highlight the existential nature of the conflict for either or both conflict parties, reinforce zero-sum thinking, lead to more conflict (for example over the control of critical and diminishing resources, such as fertile land or water) and make it more difficult to find common ground. Wherever climate change considerations are integrated into the mediation strategy and process design, it is necessary to **consider when and how to address this technical set of issues as part of a political process**.

The question of when and how to link political and technical processes forms part of a broader negotiation agenda setting and continues throughout the mediation process. These considerations must be informed by an analysis of the pros and cons of allowing space for technical discussions to evolve independently of the political process versus merging them with the political negotiations. **The objective should be to develop trust and common understanding among the conflict parties as well as opportunities for progress in the negotiations**.[16]

LEVERAGING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

To increase the parties' familiarity with climate change impacts as well as mitigation and adaptation measures, independent technical experts can make tailored presentations and identify possible outcomes under various scenarios. Technical expertise that builds on local priorities and is gender-responsive can be used to highlight opportunities for mutual gain, help stakeholders understand regulatory issues and advise on the availability of different resources.

Mediators can encourage conflict parties to generate a shared vocabulary as a way of promoting a common understanding of climate-related issues and options. In the absence of a shared technical knowledge base, one side may lack the confidence required to make commitments during negotiations, which can lead to prevarication and perceptions of being exploited. The relative newness of these issues, the complexity of climate science and the large volumes of data on the topic all increase the need for experts who can "translate" between the climate science and mediation spaces. Parties may be most open to experts who are themselves local, although external expertise could also be required.

4.2 Process design and negotiations

Negotiating climate-related issues

Throughout a peacemaking process, mediators can assist conflict parties in the formulation of a plan or a strategy on the approach and organization of negotiations. This so-called mediation process design can involve, among others, decisions related to participation formats, sequencing of agenda items, determining whether agenda items are to be negotiated one by one or in parallel, meeting in plenaries or working groups, and practicing multi-track engagement. Mediators can similarly support parties as they assess options for including ongoing and likely future impacts of climate change in the negotiation design.

As noted above, **conflict parties may be reluctant to include climate change considerations in negotiations if they perceive mediators to be imposing the topic**. They are more likely to integrate climate-related issues in the negotiations if mediators create an environment that is conducive to thoughtful consideration of associated impacts. To that end, mediators can propose strategies or initiate actions that are geared towards integrating climate considerations as **confidence-building measures** or as **entry points for cooperation**, or they can pursue approaches that address climate change effects as a **conflict driver**. Specifically, mediators can:

- Ensure that climate change effects are presented in a way that enables the parties to appreciate their **complexity** and engage with their **practical implications**. Doing so requires the allocation of sufficient time and the provision of adequate information. It may help to introduce climate change considerations in abstract, targeted or localized ways, for instance by discussing impacts on clearly defined issues, such as natural resource management or land tenure.
- Help parties develop a **common language** and reach a **shared understanding** of the effects of climate change, including gender-differentiated impacts. Community testimony, consultations with environmental defenders, joint fact-finding missions, a shared repository of climate-related data, and independent technical advice can help to connect scientific knowledge with lived experiences. A subcommittee or technical expert group can be established to support these efforts or to create a mutually shared scientific baseline.
- Consider proposing **broader participation** in the mediation process to account for the differentiated impacts of climate change on the lives, livelihoods and security of people and to amplify the voices of climate-affected stakeholders. The integration of climate-related issues may provide opportunities to strengthen the inclusion and participation of groups that tend to be marginalized but that are often active in mobilizing for climate justice, such as women, youth and indigenous communities – either directly as delegates or through consultations or dialogue. In localized conflict situations in particular, giving voice to community members' experiences and knowledge is key.
- Adjust the **objectives and forms of engagement** to what is realistic and most conducive in the context of and the level at which negotiations are taking place – local, national or regional. For example, agreements may be more readily attainable at the local level, while national and regional engagements may, at least initially, be more effective if designed as platforms for dialogue, without a stated objective of reaching an agreement.

- Help parties to **identify alternative channels** for addressing climate-related issues that are consistently deprioritized during the negotiations or that may not be achievable, such as if they require national or transnational cooperation. Such channels might include government policies, development or peacebuilding programmes, or the incorporation of climate-related issues in future or parallel processes, such as a national dialogue, constitutional process or regional multilateral instruments and negotiations.
- Consider creating a **separate space** for talks that are not directly linked to a political negotiation, but that would help parties explore and share their thinking on topics such as climate change, environmental issues or a green economy. Mediators may wish to invite a co-chair or co-mediator with the appropriate background or profile to host such talks, which can give parties the opportunity to formulate their positions to audiences beyond their usual constituencies.

Mediators can also consider opportunities for creative sequencing and problem-solving around climate-related issues. In particular, they can support parties to:

- Integrate any contentious or provocative climate-related issues **indirectly**, for instance as provisions on natural resources or agricultural production, instead of as stand-alone items.
- Reframe climate-related issues by highlighting the opportunities they generate for **shared benefits** and **new income sources**, while being mindful not to raise expectations that cannot be met. Climate-informed investments in agriculture, water, energy or vocational training can create new jobs and economic opportunities for all stakeholders.
- Introduce **supportive, climate-related negotiation tracks**, such as expert group meetings and local or community-level dialogue. Depending on the parties' sensitivities, discussions on climate-related issues can be limited to sessions with technical experts, as distinct from broader negotiations, until they are ripe enough to feed into the political process.
- Invite **climate experts and private-sector representatives** to problem-solving workshops, with the aim of injecting innovative ideas and technological solutions into negotiations on climate-related agenda points.
- Consider introducing climate-related items as **confidence-building measures** and explore how prevention, adaptation or mitigation measures can be brought into the negotiation process to generate incentives for collaboration, compromise and peace dividends. Building shared water infrastructure, for instance, can shift the focus of parties from a political stalemate to technical cooperation, thus potentially paving the way for dialogue.

International and regional support

UN Member States, regional and subregional organizations are exhibiting growing support for the integration of climate change considerations in peace and security activities. In this context, mediators can use international and regional platforms to draw political support for their climate-informed mediation processes, for example by:

- Establishing a **formal or informal contact group** that focuses on the connection between the conflict and the effects of climate change. Such groups can solicit political support for a negotiation process at the national, regional and international levels, using the climate change dimension of the conflict as an entry point.
- **Leveraging existing multilateral mechanisms** – such as the UN Group of Friends on Climate and Security, the Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security, or the Peacebuilding Commission.

4.3 Peace agreement

To maximize climate-related opportunities for inclusive, effective and sustainable outcomes, mediators who are working with parties towards a peace agreement or other conflict-resolution mechanisms may choose to:

- Encourage the drafting of a **climate-adaptive agreement** that accounts for the future impacts of climate change. Without adaptiveness, agreements may be rendered irrelevant within a few years. Changing rainfall patterns, for instance, could rapidly undermine an agreement on seasonal migration patterns. By maintaining a degree of flexibility, drafters can allow for adjustments to climate-related sections, if mutually agreed and supported by joint analysis. Alternatively, mediators can propose the inclusion of provisions to mandate associated bodies or processes to adapt an agreement or establish monitoring mechanisms that can address climate change-related issues. Efforts may be required to prevent stakeholders from interpreting an agreement's adaptiveness as an indicator that it may be continually renegotiated, which could slow or delay implementation.
- Suggest the establishment of a **"climate subcommittee"** to review the draft text with a climate lens and to help **avoid "climate-blind" formulations** that may inadvertently increase vulnerabilities or reduce resilience to climate change, following the example of structures that have been used to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed in peace agreements.
- Use **international norms, frameworks and good practice** – including commitments made under the Paris Agreement or international standards regarding natural resource governance or environmental conservation and protection – to advance agreement on climate-related issues.
- Consider proposing **shared climate-related goals and initiatives** and their inclusion in the agreement to promote trust and cooperation among parties during implementation. Such additions could relate to action plans on adaptation, joint initiatives on loss and damage reparations, or innovative climate financing modalities.
- Encourage the establishment or strengthening of **inclusive early warning and dispute resolution mechanisms** to address potential conflicts fuelled by climate stressors. In many contexts, women's proximity and dependence on natural resources make them uniquely qualified to anticipate, identify and address risks related to climate stressors. The integration of diverse societal

perspectives – including those of women, youths and indigenous people – in early warning and dispute resolution mechanisms is key to the effective anticipation and mitigation of climate-related risks to and impacts on local communities.

- Advocate for strengthening or developing **governance processes** and capacities to ensure compliance with and implementation of the agreement. Doing so may require exploring how the agreement could bolster institutional and societal coping capacities needed to boost climate resilience.
- Consider proposing the use of **joint implementation bodies and collective monitoring systems** in relation to agreed prevention, adaptation and mitigation measures, the gathering of new climate or environmental data, and disbursement of climate-related financing. In local processes, mediators could point out the benefits of strengthening or establishing local peace and environmental infrastructure, such as peace committees or environmental monitoring groups.

Not all climate-related issues need to be reflected as agreed text. Mediators may wish to propose that certain issues be integrated in post-settlement governance, for example. In this way, complex issues can be canvassed without the burden of reaching formal agreement. Also of note is that peace agreements could allow for climate change issues to be referred to implementation commissions. As is the case with other complex policy issues, such bodies could be mandated to study and make recommendations on unresolved items from the negotiating agenda.

4.4 Implementation

The inclusion of climate-related entry points and provisions in a peace agreement has implications for its implementation. Actors that are not traditionally part of peacemaking can be brought in as partners to support the implementation of an agreement. New funding sources may become accessible during this phase, and long-term trends may need to be monitored. Mediators can:

- Facilitate **contacts between the signatories and relevant funding mechanisms** through the growing and evolving international climate finance architecture. Agreements that feature climate-related solutions – such as nature-based agricultural practices, investment in renewable energy sources or restoration of ecosystems – can attract support from climate finance mechanisms. Only a tiny proportion of international climate finance currently reaches conflict-affected and least developed countries, but efforts are increasing to address this imbalance.[17]
- **Work with development actors and international financial institutions**, such as the World Bank, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to encourage regional, national and local partnerships for long-term programmes aimed at strengthening coping capacities, institutions and governance.

- Explore how **UN system entities**, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund, relevant UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, and UN peacekeeping operations or special political missions – particularly if their Security Council mandates reference climate risks – could support climate-related elements in the agreement. For instance, UN field missions could help bridge political and technical expertise and support ongoing initiatives on de-risking investment in renewable energy by collaborating on projects with external partners.[18]
- Support the establishment of **dynamic climate risk monitoring and data analytics mechanisms** that track the evolution of climate change effects and their impact on socioeconomic and political factors, as they pertain to the peace agreement. Such early warning signals may prove helpful, should additional action be required to address climate risks to the peace process. Local actors and structures – including women, youths, environmental activists, indigenous communities, and community-based conflict-resolution bodies – can offer valuable insights as members and partners of such mechanisms.
- **Monitor possible changes** in global climate governance as well as national-level climate change commitments to anticipate their impact on the implementation of the agreement.
- Facilitate the integration of climate change considerations into **subsequent or parallel processes**, such as a national dialogue or constitutional reform process. This work can usefully build on the climate-informed conflict analysis undertaken as part of the mediation process.

The successful identification of opportunities for climate-related cooperation and funding relies on a solid understanding of **how the conflict-sensitive allocation of new resources can mitigate the risk that such opportunities become sources of contention and competition**. In view of the limited experience so far in climate finance spending in fragile and conflict-affected contexts – and associated challenges – monitoring of the disbursement and use of such resources is required.[19]

5. Conclusion

The effects of climate change are intensifying rapidly and leading to cascading impacts across sectors and borders. This Practice Note presents concrete measures that mediators can take as they prepare for and incorporate climate change considerations into all aspects and phases of peace processes. It identifies both opportunities and challenges to climate-informed peacemaking and argues that peace processes that incorporate climate considerations can simultaneously help advance peace and climate action.

Intended as a conversation starter for peacemaking and climate, peace and security practitioners alike, this Practice Note seeks to foster collaboration and strengthen the shared knowledge base in both fields.

Endnotes

[1] This Practice Note focuses primarily on the adverse effects of climate change. Given that climate and other environmental changes are intertwined and often difficult to separate, however, many of the Note's findings and recommendations also apply to environmental degradation. See the glossary for definitions of key terms.

[2] See, for instance, the UN Secretary-General's reports to the UN General Assembly (A/64/350) and to the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2022/3), as well as recent reports by the Climate Security Expert Network (https://climate-security-expert-network.org/library), the Climate-related Peace and Security Risks project (https://www.sipri.org/research/peace-and-development/climate-change-and-risk/climate-related-peace-and-security-risks), and the Igarapé Institute (https://igarape.org.br/en/climate-security/).

[3] Seventy per cent of the most climate-vulnerable countries are also among the most fragile in the world; another 27 per cent fall within the second most fragile quartile. See Adelphi, *10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace: A Summary of What We Know*, 2020, available at https://berlin-climate-security-conference.de/sites/berlin-climate-security-conference.de/files/documents/10_insights_on_climate_impacts_and_peace_report.pdf. Of the 10 most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, eight are on the World Bank's harmonized list of fragile situations, see https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/888211594267968803-0090022020/original/FCSListFY21.pdf. The same eight also rank in the lowest 20 per cent of the global index on women's inclusion, justice, and security. See Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, "ND-GAIN Country Index", available at https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/ and Georgetown University Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Women, Peace, and Security Index 2021/22: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women, 2021*, available at https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WPS-Index-2021.pdf.

[4] While this Practice Note is structured around elements of a mediation process, it does not assume that all of them are present or that they occur sequentially in all processes. Entry points vary and can be selectively applied and adjusted by mediators and other actors supporting and participating in various types of processes, including formal and informal negotiations, traditional and local conflict resolution and mitigation mechanisms, facilitations, consultations and dialogue.

[5] The Climate Security Mechanism is a joint initiative of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the UN Department of Peace Operations, the UN Development Programme and the UN Environment Programme. It aims to strengthen the UN System's capacity to analyse and address climate-related security risks in a systematic fashion. Related guidance materials are available at https://dppa.un.org/en/climate-peace-security.

[6] See https://peacemaker.un.org/resources/mediation-guidance for UN Mediation Guidance, including the 2015 publication *Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners*.

[7] The UN Security Council has included references to climate change in resolutions and Presidential Statements regarding 12 contexts.

[8] According to the UN Environment Programme, at least 40 per cent of intrastate conflicts in the 60-year period between 1949 and 2009 were related to natural resources, among other causes. See UN Environment Programme, *From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment*, 2009, available at https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7867.

[9] See UN, *Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change*, 2020, available at https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/gender_climate_and_security_report.pdf.

[10] See UN Department of Political Affairs, *Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies*, 2017, available at https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/1. English -GIMS.pdf.

[11] See, for instance, "Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security", 23 September 2021, available at https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/security-council-open-debate-climate-and-security-0.

[12] In 2009, at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP15), developed countries committed to mobilizing $100 billion per year by 2020 in climate finance for developing countries. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, developed countries provided $79.6 billion in 2019. The $100 billion target per year is projected to be reached in 2023. See https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a53aac3b-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/a53aac3b-en

[13] Of 1,000 known peace agreements signed since 1990, only five explicitly mention climate change: the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (2011); two agreements in Colombia, Hacia un Nuevo Campo Colombiano: Reforma Rural Integral (2014) and the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace (2016); the Kafanchan Peace Declaration between Grazers and Farmers (2016) in Nigeria; and the Northern Ireland New Decade, New Approach agreement (2020), all available at https://www.peaceagreements.org. See Tim Epple, "Peace agreements, climate change, and the environment", Political Settlements Research Programme, University of Edinburgh, forthcoming.

[14] The effects of climate change can be divided into rapid-onset events (such as storms, floods and heat waves) and slow-onset processes (such as sea level rise, temperature increase and desertification).

[15] See the Climate Security Mechanism toolbox, available at https://dppa.un.org/en/climate-peace-security.

[16] See Simon J. A. Mason and Dorothea Blank, *Mediating Water Use Conflicts in Peace Processes*, 2013, available at https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Mediating_Water_Use_Conflict_2013.pdf.

[17] Improved access to climate finance for conflict-affected and least developed countries, which are among the most vulnerable to climate change while bearing the least responsibility for causing it, forms a critical element of climate justice debates and international climate action agendas. At the Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow in 2021 (COP26), developed countries pledged to double climate adaptation finance between 2019 and 2025. See UN Development Programme, *Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts*, 2021, available at https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2021-12/UNDP-Climate-Finance-for-Sustaining-Peace.pdf and UN, "COP26 Outcomes: Finance for Climate Adaptation", available at https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact/cop26-outcomes-finance-for-climate-adaptation - eq-1.

[18] See, for instance, Dirk Druet and Rida Lyammouri, *From Renewable Energy to Peacebuilding in Mali: MINUSMA's Opportunity to Bridge the Gap*, Henry L. Stimson Center and Energy Peace Partners, 2021, available at https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Stimson_FinalRelease_June25.pdf.

[19] UN Development Programme, *Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts*, 2021, available at https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2021-12/UNDP-Climate-Finance-for-Sustaining-Peace.pdf.

Glossary of climate change and peacemaking terms

Sources cited in brackets.

Adaptation — Adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts. Adaptation refers to changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change (UNFCCC).

Climate change — A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (UNFCCC).

Climate exposure — The nature [of] and degree to which a system is exposed to significant climatic variations (IPCC).

Climate finance — Local, national, or transnational financing – drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing – that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change (UNFCCC).

Climate justice — Justice that links development and human rights to achieve a human-centred approach to addressing climate change, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly (IPCC).

Coping capacity — The ability of people, institutions, organizations, and systems, using available skills, values, beliefs, resources, and opportunities, to address, manage, and overcome adverse conditions in the short to medium term (IPCC).

Environmental degradation — Deterioration in environmental quality from ambient concentrations of pollutants and other activities and processes such as improper land use and natural disasters (OECD).

Exposure — The presence of people, livelihoods, species or ecosystems, environmental functions, services, resources, infrastructure, or economic, social, or cultural assets in places and settings that could be adversely affected (IPCC).

Inclusivity — The extent to and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort. Inclusive mediation rests on the assumption that building sustainable peace requires integrating diverse societal perspectives, those of conflicting parties and other stakeholders, into the peace process (DPPA).

Mediation — A process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements (United Nations).

Mitigation — A human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. Examples include using fossil fuels more efficiently for industrial processes or electricity generation, switching to solar energy or wind power, improving the insulation of buildings, and expanding forests and other sinks to remove greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (UNFCCC).

National dialogue — A mechanism to help find workable solutions to contested issues that existing formal institutions are not able to resolve. A national dialogue is often a large gathering, intended to provide the platform for an inclusive exchange of ideas to generate consensus about the shape and vision of society (DPPA).

Natural resource management — Activities related with the management of natural resources (monitoring, control, surveys, administration and actions for facilitating structural adjustments of the sector concerned) and their exploitation (abstraction, harvesting) (OECD).

Natural resources — Renewable and non-renewable resources such as minerals, oil and gas, land, forestry, marine resources, water and others (Peacebuilding Initiative).

Nature-based solutions — Actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, to provide both human well-being and biodiversity benefits (IUCN).

Peacebuilding — A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development (United Nations).

Peace dividends — Timely and tangible deliverables, which in particular contexts can facilitate social cohesion and stability, build trust in the peace process and support the state to earn legitimacy under challenging conditions (United Nations).

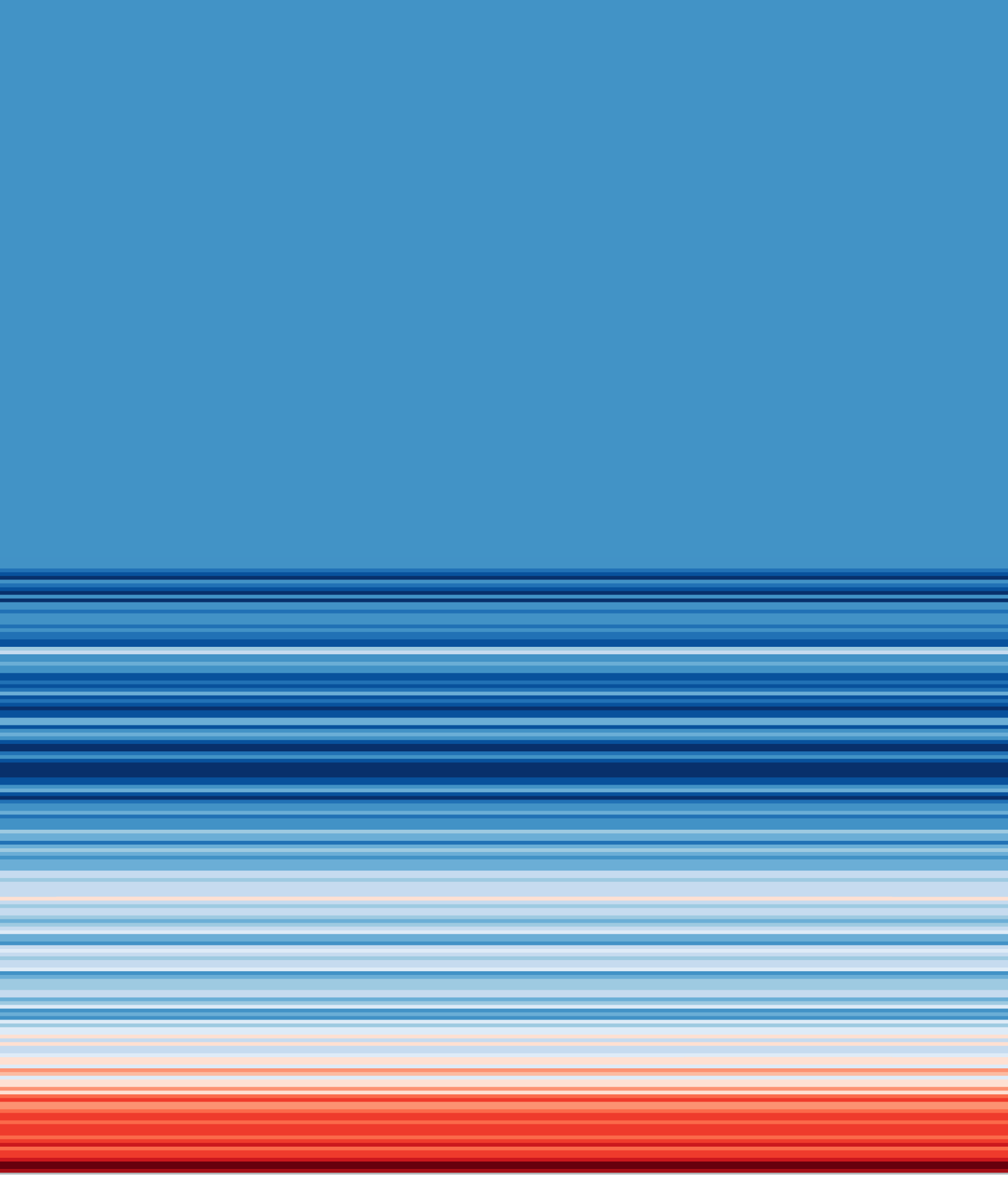
Peacemaking — Action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations).

Preventive diplomacy — Action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur (United Nations).

Process design — Mediation process design is the formulation of a plan or a strategy on the approach and organization of the mediation, in order to facilitate a successful prevention, resolution or management of conflict (DPPA). Elements of this design may often require negotiation to obtain the consent and mutual agreement of conflict parties.

Resilience — The capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation (IPCC).

Vulnerability — The degree to which a system is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude, and rate of climate variation to which a system is exposed, its sensitivity, and its adaptive capacity (UNFCCC).



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