

## POLICY BRIEF

# Climate, Peace, and Security: Shaping Policy for a Fragile and Warming World after COP30

**This paper**

- provides an analysis of COP outcomes from the perspective of the climate, peace, and security nexus,
- defines the next steps for further shaping policy for a fragile and warming world in 2026, with a view to COP31 but also to other climate and security relevant milestones.

**Key points**

- **From a peace and conflict perspective, COP30 fell short of what was urgently needed:** despite early momentum, geopolitical blockages and weak leadership – especially on fossil fuel phase-out and climate finance – undermined progress on measures that are critical to preventing climate-driven insecurity. While steps on just transition, adaptation, loss and damage, and climate finance created important entry points, ambition is limited and implementation is unclear. This carries the risk that fragile and conflict-affected countries and contexts, where climate action is most essential for human security and peace, will be left behind.
- **Looking ahead to 2026 and future COPs,** effective security and foreign policy must integrate ambitious climate action, bearing in mind that lasting stability in an era of escalating climate risks depends on rapid decarbonisation, just and conflict-sensitive transition pathways, and people-centred approaches to human security. To realise this shift, future UN climate conferences – COP31 and COP32 – should put the climate, peace, and security nexus back on the agenda and ensure that rapid and just implementation of Paris temperature goals, climate finance, adaptation, and loss-and-damage mechanisms are designed to strengthen peace in fragile contexts rather than inadvertently exacerbating risks. Also, the UN Security Council as well as discussions at the Munich Security Conference and the First International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels provide important possibilities to advance the climate, peace, and security nexus. Ultimately, a human security approach must guide these efforts, recognising climate action as a shared international responsibility that is indispensable for sustainable peace in a warming world.

# 1 A geopolitical context that reveals an urgent need for action

In times of increasing global uncertainty and intensifying geopolitical rivalries, the climate crisis is a risk multiplier with far-reaching implications for peace and security. The global situation is currently deteriorating dramatically: 25% of the world's population – over 2 billion people – already live in fragile or conflict-affected contexts. By 2030, over 80% of the world's poorest people are expected to live in such contexts.<sup>1</sup> The climate crisis is leading to a double, mutually reinforcing burden in these countries. It acts as a risk multiplier, exacerbating existing social, political, and economic tensions, deepening injustices, overwhelming state capacities, and hitting hardest those regions already characterised by fragility and violence. At the same time, the often limited state and social structures make it difficult to implement effective (climate and adaptation policy) measures.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these risks, only around 10% of international climate finance flows to fragile states – and covers only about a quarter of their actual needs.<sup>3</sup> Yet climate- and conflict-sensitive projects in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage can make a significant contribution to stabilisation, reduce conflict risks, and strengthen peace processes.<sup>4</sup> Ahead of COP30, numerous organisations and networks, including the Network of Climate Vulnerable Countries Affected by Conflicts, called for the climate, peace, and security nexus to be placed on the agenda and for integrated solutions to be promoted.<sup>5</sup> EU parliamentarians also urged for greater consideration of climate-related peace and security risks.<sup>6</sup> Some countries are already leading the way: Somalia's new NDC 3.0, for example, explicitly commits to systematically integrating climate, peace, and security aspects – including risk analysis and conflict-sensitive programme planning.<sup>7</sup>

# 2 At COP30: Recognised challenge, little political space

In recent years, significant progress has been made in strengthening the links between climate, peace, and security issues. The COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery & Peace and the Baku Call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief and Recovery were important steps towards acknowledging the urgent need for stronger climate action in conflict-affected settings and committing to its implementation. The establishment of the 'Peace Days' proclaimed by the COP presidencies or the Baku Climate and Peace Action Hub provided a forum for discussing the nexus issue. The international community has also acknowledged the importance of providing special support to climate vulnerable and fragile countries. Ahead of COP29, a global community of experts, practitioners, civil society, and policymakers developed the Common Principles for Effective Climate Finance and Action for Relief, Recovery, and Peace.

However, the topic played hardly any role at COP30, and the nexus was largely absent from the official programme. Nevertheless, numerous states and organisations addressed the security implications of the climate crisis in side events and statements. Particularly relevant impetus came from:

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Künzel/Adil/Farbin 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Cao 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Friess 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Frient et al. 2025.

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Federal Government of Somalia 2025.

- The Improved and Equitable Access to Climate Finance Network (IEACF), a network of ten fragile and conflict-affected countries, issued a statement openly criticising the fact that they were effectively ‘excluded’ from climate finance. Somalia was cited as an example, currently receiving USD 300 million in climate finance annually – less than 1% of what it needs – while humanitarian aid amounts to three times that amount.<sup>8</sup>
- The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) and the Group of Friends on Climate and Security organised a high-level event on ‘Bridging the Gap: Making Climate Finance Work for the Underserved.’<sup>9</sup> The CSM announced its support for the establishment of country platforms in fragile and conflict-affected countries. During the event, the Loss and Damage Fund (FRLD) pledged to prioritise simplified access modalities specifically for fragile countries. The European Union reaffirmed its commitment to systematically anchor climate, peace, and security aspects in its foreign policy. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) announced that it would develop a multi-year programme in 2026 to strengthen its work on the links between climate change and security throughout the region.
- In a side event, the African Development Bank (AfDB) demonstrated how it is systematically embedding the nexus through its Fragility Strategy, Transition Support Facility, and Climate Change and Green Growth Framework for 2030.

### 3 A look at the COP30 results from a peace and conflict perspective

Ten years after the conclusion of the Paris Climate Agreement, COP30 faced a major challenge: it had to simultaneously close the large ambition gap, breathe life into the Global Adaptation Goal, and chart a clear path for increasing climate finance. The conference started with promising momentum, particularly regarding a roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels. However, this was followed by bitter obstruction from a few but relevant states, which prevented urgently needed decisions from being taken. Even the industrialised countries were unable to put forward a convincing package for increasing climate finance.<sup>10</sup> Despite some progress, the results of COP30 fell short of what would have been necessary. Results relevant to the climate, peace, and security nexus include:

**1. Fossil fuels:** A key solution to prevent climate-driven insecurity is an equitable fossil fuel phase-out with clear pathways for a conflict sensitive and just transition. Effective action is more urgent than ever – A recently published report shows that the remaining CO<sub>2</sub> budget for 1.5°C will be used up in less than three years.<sup>11</sup> However, the current NDCs are leading us down a dangerous path of well over 2°C. Every additional tenth of a degree increases the risks of irreversible tipping points. Limiting warming to 1.5 °C is now only conceivable if the world is able to return to this threshold after a temporary overshoot. Failure to achieve such reductions will not only lock in higher levels of warming but will also lead to a sharp increase in climate-related security risks, which rise non-linearly and potentially exponentially as critical tipping points in the Earth system are approached or crossed. During the first nine days of the climate summit, there was strong momentum to agree on a roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels within the next two years. Around 90 countries had already signed up to it, and many countries from the group of least developed countries (LDCs) wanted to follow suit. However, the interplay of two fundamental problems prevented the necessary outcome. The EU’s inability to act, given reduced climate budgets, significantly damaged its credibility in building alliances. At the same time, an alliance led by Saudi Arabia and Russia – this time also supported by China, India, and Nigeria – blocked any clear mention of phasing out fossil fuels in the final text. To move the process forward, progress now needs to come from outside the formal negotiations. Brazil will continue

<sup>8</sup> Chimuka 2025.

<sup>9</sup> UN Climate Security Mechanism 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Schäfer et al. 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Forster et al. 2025.

to press ahead with work on a fossil-fuel transition roadmap during its Presidency, and Colombia and the Netherlands will host the first international conference on a Just Transition away from fossil fuels. While such initiatives cannot replace a negotiated commitment, they can help create the political conditions necessary for one.<sup>12</sup>

**2. Just Transition:** Reducing emissions and transitioning to low-carbon systems are essential prerequisites for limiting future climate risks – and thus also conflict-exacerbating effects. At the same time, poorly designed climate policy can create new tensions, for example through job losses, unequal access to land, or perceptions of injustice in green investments. The COP30 decision to develop a Just Transition Mechanism is therefore an important step. The reference to the 1.5-degree limit, the inclusion of indigenous communities, and the anchoring of human rights aspects are positive developments. However, the mechanism is still in its infancy: its mandate, institutional anchoring, and concrete procedures must be designed in such a way that they include marginalised groups and systematically take conflict risks into account.

**3. Adaptation** to climate change is not only a technical process, but also a political and social one – especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In such contexts, successful adaptation is crucial to human security. COP30 produced an adaptation package consisting of indicators, a new adaptation financing target, and an implementation agenda. However, it falls well short of what is needed: only 59 of the 100 indicators of the Global Adaptation Goal could be adopted, the peace related indicators fell out of the list already before COP. The pledged financing is far below what would be necessary in a world where the 1.5°C threshold is exceeded. The new Baku Adaptation Roadmap provides a framework for future implementation but leaves key questions unanswered. For the adaptation goal to actually guide action, the indicators need to be further concretised. In doing so, care must be taken to ensure that they at least comply with the ‘do no harm’ principle but also guarantee prevention and preparedness within the framework of a multi-hazard approach, increase human security, and maintain peace.

**4. Loss and damage:** Climate-related losses and damages threaten livelihoods, health, cultural heritage, and thus social cohesion – with significant implications for conflict risks. At COP30, however, the issue remained politically marginal. Good steps forward were that the review of the Warsaw Mechanism was completed, an L&D status report was adopted, and the implementation phase of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) was initiated, including the first call for proposals. However, there are no clear commitments to close the massive financing gaps. De facto, the communities that have contributed least to climate change continue to bear the costs – a step backwards in terms of justice and human security. What is important now for the climate, peace, and security nexus is that fragile and conflict-affected countries and contexts are taken into account when selecting the first projects to be financed by the FRLD. The agreed L&D status report should explicitly analyse needs, capacity, and financing gaps in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

**5. Climate finance:** The Baku-to-Belém Roadmap for implementing the new global climate finance goal (NCQG) was presented shortly before the COP and was hardly discussed. The path to the promised USD 1.3 trillion by 2035 remains unclear after the COP. A ministerial roundtable and a new target to triple adaptation financing by 2035 were agreed upon. This might be an important step; however, the reference year, donor base, and implementation mechanisms remain vague. This leaves a key problem for the climate, peace, and security nexus: the UNFCCC climate finance architecture does not yet guarantee that a substantial portion of the funds will actually reach conflict-affected communities, where climate risks and violence reinforce each other. At least the FRLD board members emphasised in a side event that it wants to support particularly vulnerable and fragile states, through simplified, bottom-up, and country-led approaches. Implementation will now be crucial: selection criteria and supportive framework conditions must ensure that fragile and conflict-affected countries and contexts are no longer marginalised in climate finance.

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<sup>12</sup> Bals et al. 2026.

## 4 Outlook for 2026 and future COPs

In an era of growing global uncertainty and intensifying geopolitical rivalries, the climate crisis acts as a powerful risk multiplier with far-reaching implications for peace and security. **To further shape policy for a fragile and warming world in 2026 the following steps are important:**

- **Anyone who takes security seriously today must also consider climate issues.** The climate crisis is one of the biggest security threats of our time; extreme weather events increasingly exacerbate conflicts and undermine stability. The global race for green technologies, critical raw materials, and energy dependencies is shifting power relations and creating new lines of conflict. Governments have legitimate responsibilities to protect civilians, safeguard critical infrastructure, and address immediate threats – but, as e.g. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has emphasised, lasting security cannot be achieved through military spending alone. Both an ambitious climate policy that quickly reduces demand for oil and gas and expands renewable energy and a circular economy with a focus on critical resources should be seen as important pillars of European security architecture. This message should be expressed clearly at forums such as the upcoming **Munich Security Conference**.
- The international community should recognise that a rapid and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels, coupled with clear pathways for a conflict-sensitive and just transition, is a key solution to prevent climate-driven insecurity. **The First International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels** provides an important platform to advance these discussions and create clear pathways for the rapid transitioning away from fossil fuels.
- The UNFCCC financial architecture, the Global Goal on Adaptation, and the Just Transition Mechanism and most of all their implementation must be further developed to ensure that climate action strengthens peace and human security in fragile contexts, rather than creating new risks. Platforms such as the **New York Edition of the Berlin Climate and Security Conference in 2026**, offer opportunities to engage with these questions – building on the leadership of local and Indigenous actors and involving the most affected people who bear the brunt of climate impacts.
- **COP31, and particularly the African COP32 in 2027**, should place the climate, peace, and security nexus back on the agenda. Doing so can revive the momentum of the COP28 Declaration and the Baku Call for Action, advance existing coalitions, and accelerate the implementation of concrete measures. At COP31 it will be important to discuss how all UNFCCC funds can be aligned with the Common Principles for Effective Climate Finance and Action for Relief, Recovery, and Peace. The newly established FRLD offers a key opportunity to operationalise these principles in fragile contexts.
- The **UN Security Council** plays an important role in advancing the climate, peace, and security nexus. Its agenda-setting power makes it a central forum for shaping how security risks are recognised and prioritised internationally. It will be important to safeguard recent progress<sup>13</sup> on the nexus in the Council. On this basis, Council debates should help to elevate global political attention on climate, peace and security and encourage expanded funding, including via global climate funds.

Finally, **human security** – which places people, and not just the state, at the centre of sustainable peace – must remain a guiding principle for integrating climate, peace, and security agendas in policy and practice. Moreover, while in times of intensifying geopolitical rivalries and changes in the multilateral order security debates are dominating the political agenda, we should not forget that **climate action is a shared international responsibility**.

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<sup>13</sup> Kyed/Chambers 2026.

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