

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 6 February 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am pleased to transmit for your attention the concept note for the high-level open debate of the Security Council on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security, to be convened by the delegation of Guyana in its capacity as President of the Council for February 2024 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Carolyn **Rodrigues-Birkett**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 6 February 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council high-level open debate on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security, 13 February 2024

Overview

Conflict and climate change are two of the leading drivers of global food insecurity.¹ The international community continues to face considerable difficulties in alleviating entrenched global food insecurity, especially that induced by conflict. Although conflicts are not driven by a single cause, the multifaceted impacts of both climate change and food insecurity are threat multipliers and engender new challenges for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The impacts of climate change and food insecurity are often interconnected and unevenly distributed across different countries and geographic regions.² Irrespective of the geographic hemisphere, food insecurity is accelerated by climate change and can compound conflict situations globally. The increased frequency of extreme climatic events such as drought and flooding can cause the degradation or destruction of resources, including in countries already affected by conflict, thereby creating supply-induced scarcity. Projected increases in temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns and reductions in water availability can all result in reduced agricultural productivity and, consequently, contribute to food insecurity. Moreover, climate hazards are a growing driver of involuntary migration and displacement, which are contributing factors to violent conflict. Hunger itself is also seen as both a cause and a result of conflict, and climate change deepens the spiral of hunger and conflict.³

The challenge is especially severe for countries that are most vulnerable to climate impacts, including previously identified hunger hotspots, small island developing States and those vulnerable to or already in conflict situations. In 2017, 14 of the 34 countries undergoing food crises experienced the double impact of conflict and climate shocks, leading to significant increases in the severity of acute food insecurity.⁴

The World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have identified 18 hunger “hotspots” out of a total of 22 countries where food security is expected to significantly deteriorate, as indicated in the outlook for the period from November 2023 to April 2024.⁵ Globally, there has been an increase in hunger, and more than 800 million people are suffering from lack of food. Continued attention must be given to that situation, as many of those countries are also experiencing conflict.

The interrelation between climate change and global food insecurity is highlighted in a 2023 thematic review on climate security and peacebuilding,⁶ in which particular emphasis is placed on the ways that climate change may, directly or

¹ See www.fao.org/3/CC3017EN/online/state-food-security-and-nutrition-2023/introduction.html.

² See www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/chapter-7/.

³ See www.ifad.org/nl/web/latest/-/breaking-the-vicious-circle-of-hunger-and-conflict.

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018: Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition* (Rome, 2018).

⁵ See www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-november-2023-april-2024.

⁶ Erica Gaston and others, *Climate-Security and Peacebuilding: Thematic Review* (New York, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 2023).

indirectly, exacerbate or compound risks of violence and conflict. In that regard, resource scarcity and changes in socioeconomic patterns or livelihood activities resulting from changing climatic conditions are factors that are already contributing to an increase in the risk or incidence of conflict or violence.

In its resolution 70/1, the General Assembly recognized that climate change was one of the greatest challenges of our time and that its adverse impacts undermined the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. In recognition of climate-related security risks, there is strong multilateral support for addressing climate change as part of efforts to promote peace and stability. According to the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it is both useful and appropriate for the Council to take a holistic approach to all matters that have implications for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Climate change is a complex phenomenon that affects all spheres of human life. It is, accordingly, a global challenge for peace, security and development, and its impacts are becoming more pronounced and unavoidable. In combination with food insecurity, the challenges are magnified. In that context, in its special report on land,⁷ the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noted, with a high degree of confidence, that observed climate change was already affecting food security through increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequency of some extreme events; that food security and climate change had strong gender and equity dimensions; that food security would be increasingly affected by projected future climate change; and that pastoral systems were particularly vulnerable to climate change. It also noted that a significant percentage of greenhouse gas emissions were attributable to the food system.

During the high-level open debate, the Security Council will examine the dynamic interrelationships between climate change and food insecurity within the context of maintaining international peace and security.

Background

The Security Council has been seized of matters relating to both climate change and food insecurity with varied consideration, and several events have been focused on these issues in recent years. In its resolution 2417 (2018), the Council recognized the need to break the vicious cycle between armed conflict and food insecurity. The Council also reiterated its commitment to address conflict-induced food insecurity in situations of armed conflict. In a statement by the President adopted on 3 August 2023 (S/PRST/2023/4), the Council noted that armed conflict had been the most significant driver of high levels of acute food insecurity for roughly 117 million people in 19 countries and territories. Among other topics, the Council has deliberated on ending the cycle of conflict-driven food insecurity and the need to confront famine and acute malnutrition and on addressing food insecurity as a means of ensuring the security and dignity of civilians in conflict.

Since its first meeting, in April 2007, on the linkage between climate change and insecurity, the Security Council has continued to engage to various degrees. In its resolution 2349 (2017), the Council recognized the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes, among other factors, on the stability of the Lake Chad basin and the wider Sahel region, and identified water scarcity and food insecurity as two

⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*, P.R. Shukla and others, eds. (Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Cambridge University Press, 2022).

such adverse consequences. In January 2019, the Council deliberated on the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace and security and heard its first briefing from the World Meteorological Organization on the risks that climate change and weather-related disasters posed to international peace and security. At a meeting held on 13 June 2023, several Council members stressed the need for the Council to ramp up its efforts to lessen the risk of conflict emanating from climate-related events (see [S/PV.9345](#)).

Objectives

The objective of the open debate is to promote greater understanding, better coordination of responses and proactive approaches to addressing the intersection of food insecurity and climate change in the maintenance of international peace and security. Participants will seek to generate concrete recommendations for sustaining the Security Council's engagement on this matter.

The debate will provide an opportunity for Security Council members and other Member States to consider the impacts of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security, including with regard to the situations currently before the Council, and to highlight opportunities to enhance international efforts to strengthen food systems, prevent acute food insecurity and foster preparedness, so as to reduce the impacts of climate change.

Guiding questions

1. How is climate change exacerbating global food insecurity and reinforcing or creating new peace and security concerns in countries and regions around the world?
2. What additional concrete measures and/or strategies can be taken to alleviate or avert the worst impacts of climate change in relation to food insecurity and forestall greater threats to international peace and security?
3. How can the Security Council enhance coordination with other relevant mechanisms, including the Economic and Social Council, in order to take into consideration the impacts of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security?
4. What opportunities exist for the Security Council, Member States, civil society and the private sector to fashion a proactive, coherent and effective approach to addressing climate change, food insecurity and peace and security concerns and to support the efforts of the worst affected countries and regions?

Format

The open debate will commence at 10 a.m. and will be chaired by the President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Mohamed Irfaan Ali. The Secretary-General will deliver remarks at the event. High-level participation by Security Council members and other participating Member and observer States is encouraged.

The list of speakers for the open debate will open on 8 February 2024 at 9.30 a.m. Member States wishing to be inscribed on the list of speakers should register through the e-speakers module on e-deleGATE. A cover letter duly signed by the Permanent Representative or Chargé d'affaires a.i. and addressed to the President of the Security Council should accompany the request. A template is attached for ease of reference. In order to guarantee the participation of as many Member States as possible, participants are encouraged to limit their statements to a maximum of four minutes.

Briefers

Simon Stiell Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Beth Bechdol Deputy Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Jimena Leiva Roesch Director of Global Initiatives and Head of Peace, Climate and Sustainable Development, International Peace Institute
