



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



## Expert Group Meeting

### Climate-related security risks in the Arab region

23 May 2023, Beirut (15:00 -17:30 local time)

#### Background

Climate, peace, and security are pertinent issues for the Arab region, which is suffering from protracted conflicts and fragility, as well as being highly vulnerable to climate impacts. The number of people living in countries in conflict has more than doubled since 2010, totalling 163 million people in 2022. Even though violence peaked in 2014, fragility remains high.<sup>1</sup> The compounded crises faced by the Arab region has exacerbated the levels of humanitarian need. The number of people requiring assistance has significantly increased from 47.23 million in 2015 to 57.76 million in 2020 and is expected to rise to around 64.7 million in 2023.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, climate hazards and natural disasters, such as droughts, floods, extreme temperatures, dust and sandstorms, and locust outbreaks, are already affecting the region. For example, about 6.5 million people in Somalia face acute food insecurity,<sup>3</sup> with over one million displaced due to the historical drought in the Horn of Africa.<sup>4</sup> With climate change, such hazards are likely to further increase in length, duration, and intensity.

While not a direct cause of conflict, climate impacts can increase insecurity and conflict risk through transmission channels, such as loss of livelihoods and income, competition for resources, food insecurity, and migration. At the same time, conflict can erode institutions and increase people's vulnerability to climate impacts. Together, these challenges have the potential to create a vicious cycle of conflict, insecurity, vulnerability, and climate impacts.<sup>5</sup> The quality of governance and efficacy of institutions are key for mitigating such risk, through conditioning adaptive and coping capacity to climate impacts, as well as reducing fragility and strengthening resilience. However, governance challenges within the region limits the gaps in moderating capacity to moderate climate security risks.

#### Objective

As work to understand climate security within the Arab region is advancing, the objective of the meeting is to take stock of this, while looking at next steps and how to operationalise this knowledge. The meeting will draw on the findings of the next edition of the ESCWA "Trends and Impacts" series which will cover

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<sup>1</sup> Author's elaboration based on fatalities data retrieved from Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and population data retrieved from UNFPA.

<sup>2</sup> Humanitarian needs and funding 2010-2021 dataset (downloaded Nov 2022) + Global Humanitarian Overview 2022/2023 dataset (downloaded Nov 2022/Jan 2023).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/somalia-emergency>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nupi.no/en/news/climate-peace-and-security-fact-sheet-somalia2>

climate change, security, and peace in the Arab region. It will also discuss ideas for future research and analysis, and deliberate on policy options, recommendations and best practises that serve to mitigate climate security risks and strengthen resilience. The discussion may inform potential future work.

### Participation, deliberations, and meeting format

The virtual meeting will convene key experts from academia, think tanks and the multilateral system working on various aspects of climate-related security risks. It will take place online and be conducted in English.

### Work programme

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| <b>15:00 – 15:05</b> | <b>Welcoming remarks</b><br>Carol Chouchani Cherfane, Cluster Leader, Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster, UN ESCWA  |
| <b>15:05 – 15:40</b> | <b>How to address climate, peace, and security risks in the Arab region</b><br>Chair: Youssef Chaitani, Coordinator, Risk Prevention, UN ESCWA<br>Presentation<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Joaquin Salido Marcos, Economic Affairs Officer, UN ESCWA</li> <li>– Sara Hess, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, UN ESCWA</li> <li>– Johan Schaar, Senior Fellow, SIPRI</li> </ul> Discussants<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Halvard Buhaug, Research Director and Research Professor, Peace and Research Institute Oslo and Professor of Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology</li> <li>– Nadim Farajalla, Programme Director, Climate Change and Environment Programme, American University of Beirut</li> <li>– Elizabeth Sellwood, Senior Programme Management Officer, UNEP</li> </ul> |
| <b>15:40 – 16:30</b> | <b>General Discussion</b> (with a focus on the recommendations)   |
| <b>16:30 – 16:45</b> | <b>Strengthening capacities to address climate-related security risks: Operationalizing Technical Assistance</b><br>Chair: Ziad Khayat, Coordinator, Integrated Water Resource Management, UN ESCWA<br>Panelists:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Martina Jaskolski, Climate Security Hub (CGIAR)</li> <li>– Walid Saleh, Chief Technical Advisor, FAO (Yemen)</li> <li>– Wadid Erian, Senior Advisor for Sustainable Development, League of Arab States</li> </ul>   |
| <b>16:45 – 17:25</b> | <b>Open Discussion</b>  |
| <b>17:25 – 17:30</b> | <b>Closing</b>  |