



Working Group 3:

## **AFRICA: FOCUS ON SAHEL**

Extract from:

### **Planetary Security:**

Peace and Cooperation in  
Times of Climate Change and  
Global Environmental Challenges

### **Conference Report**

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## WORKING GROUP 3

### AFRICA: FOCUS ON SAHEL

*The complex dynamics that are compounding the region's security emergencies are often left out of the headlines. Poor governance, rapid population growth, and environmental pressures, like food insecurity, climate change, and poor natural resource management, all contribute to chronic crises and eroding the region's resilience to shocks and stressors. These interlinked challenges require integrated responses. This Working Group explored these connections making the link to climate change impacts and environmental challenges for the region, focusing on a solutions-oriented policy dialogue that addresses environmental challenges, demographic trends, food security, and peacebuilding.*

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#### 1. CHALLENGES

Located along the southern edge of the Sahara desert, the Sahel has been referred to as one of the harshest environments in the world and comprises parts of Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cameroon, The Gambia and Eritrea. Some 145 million people in 9 countries live in a region that is marred by complex and interlinked conflict systems

- Many Sahelian states are facing worsening insecurity in an increasingly fluid regional environment
- 20.4 million food insecure
- 5.8 million acutely malnourished
- 2.8 million displaced (1 million more than in 2014)

spanning the region and which is constantly challenged by chronic food and malnutrition crises that are both cause and consequence of violent conflicts. The Sahel region is considered the most threatened region on the continent. Climate change is contributing to changes in precipitation patterns, including more frequent droughts, floods, and storms. The sub-tropical zones have become more arid, and desertification continues in the Sahara. Security and development cannot be separated in this region

where the impacts of degrading soils, water scarcity, increasing demand for natural resources, growing populations and climate change drive and exacerbate social tensions, political unrest and brutal armed conflicts and violence.

Temperatures in the Sahel have risen by nearly 1°C since 1970, at a rate nearly twice the global average. The region faces increasingly variable rainfall, prolonged and more frequent droughts and storms. For many, it is a global hotspot for climate change. At the same time, the Sahel's highly fragile states have limited capacities to adapt to climate-related shocks. Moreover, the region's weak institutions, political instability, poverty, inequality and historical grievances have the potential to combine with climate change to exacerbate existing tensions and trigger new conflicts.

Violence threatens the lives of millions of people in the Sahel, increasing the food crisis and setting back progress that is being made. The rise of the conflict in northeast Nigeria has led to the displacement of more than 1 million people. Insecurity and conflict that have been occurring in Mali has also had a substantial effect on the country and region. In addition, Sahel areas are some of the poorest in the world, and host hundreds of thousands of people who have fled violent conflict in Sudan and the Central African Republic.

As a result of reliance on climate-sensitive activities like agriculture and fishing, Africa is projected to experience substantial losses in food production by as early as 2050. Many parts of Africa now face a number of security challenges concurrently, such as food and water stress, disease outbreaks, contests over state power, and conflict in some regions that, when combined with more frequent climate hazards, could overwhelm governments' capacity to meet the basic needs of their people. Furthermore, regional cooperation and capacity to address the fallout has weakened.

## 2. RESPONSES

It is crucial to address the impacts of climate change, which are threatening existing peacebuilding and development efforts in the region. All 5 pillars of the UN's current humanitarian appeal for the Sahel will be negatively affected by climate change: nutrition, conflict, epidemics (primarily vector-borne diseases like cholera and malaria), food security and natural disasters.

The condition of the 9 Sahel countries are closely linked. Crises that are climate or conflict induced, often impact the region as a whole. The Regional Response Plan aims to address the key vulnerabilities such as food insecurity, malnutrition, epidemics, conflict and displacement and natural disasters in an integrated fashion.

The UN's Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (2013-2020) focuses on 3 pillars: governance, security and resilience. All 3 are connected, and success in each can improve the ability of individuals, communities and countries to face the challenge of climate change. At the same time, climate change could undermine the strategy by: overwhelming governments and institutions and amplifying inequality and marginalisation, triggering conflicts and creating opportunities for radicalisation and criminal activities, increasing household vulnerability and food insecurity, and reversing development gains.

The European Union's (EU) strategy for the Sahel focuses on improving governance, addressing terrorism, and breaking up criminal networks. It also recognises climate change as a contributing factor influencing instability in the region. Moreover, EU member states have been at the forefront of the climate-conflict debate since its inception, with both Germany and Britain hosting Security Council debates on the subject. Recent European support for building resilience across the region (through the Global Alliance for Resilience), as well as EU and bilateral support for adaptation, should help to address climate-conflict links, but it does need to adapt to more recent changes emerging with the establishment of Islamic rule in northern Mali, the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria and post-Gaddafi Libya.

With its presence in every African country and its extensive network of partners across the continent, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided services to help African countries and regional institutions to respond to climate change by working on the following 4 areas:

- strengthening Africa's voice in the global climate change negotiations;
- helping Africa to develop comprehensive strategies to tackle climate change;
- unleashing Africa's low-carbon development potential; and
- helping the region to adapt to climate change.

In addition, through its participation in UN-REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), UNDP will be helping to monetise the carbon stored in forest to create incentives for African countries to protect forests. The resulting financial flows will not only significantly reduce carbon emissions but can support poverty reduction and help preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services. The programme is currently being piloted in the DRC, Tanzania and Zambia.

A 3-year (rather than 1-year) regional plan has been developed for the Sahel for the first time from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on behalf of Humanitarian Partners in the Sahel. The strategy provides a set of ambitious objectives and targets that will require a sustained, multi-year effort to achieve, and that could not be realistically contemplated on a planning horizon of merely 12 months. Working within this 3-year framework, annual review processes in each country – of priorities, of results, of number of people in need, of funding implications – will continue to be an essential part of the planning and reporting process. A new financing request will be generated on an annual basis and will be part of a formal annual ‘launch’ process for the region.

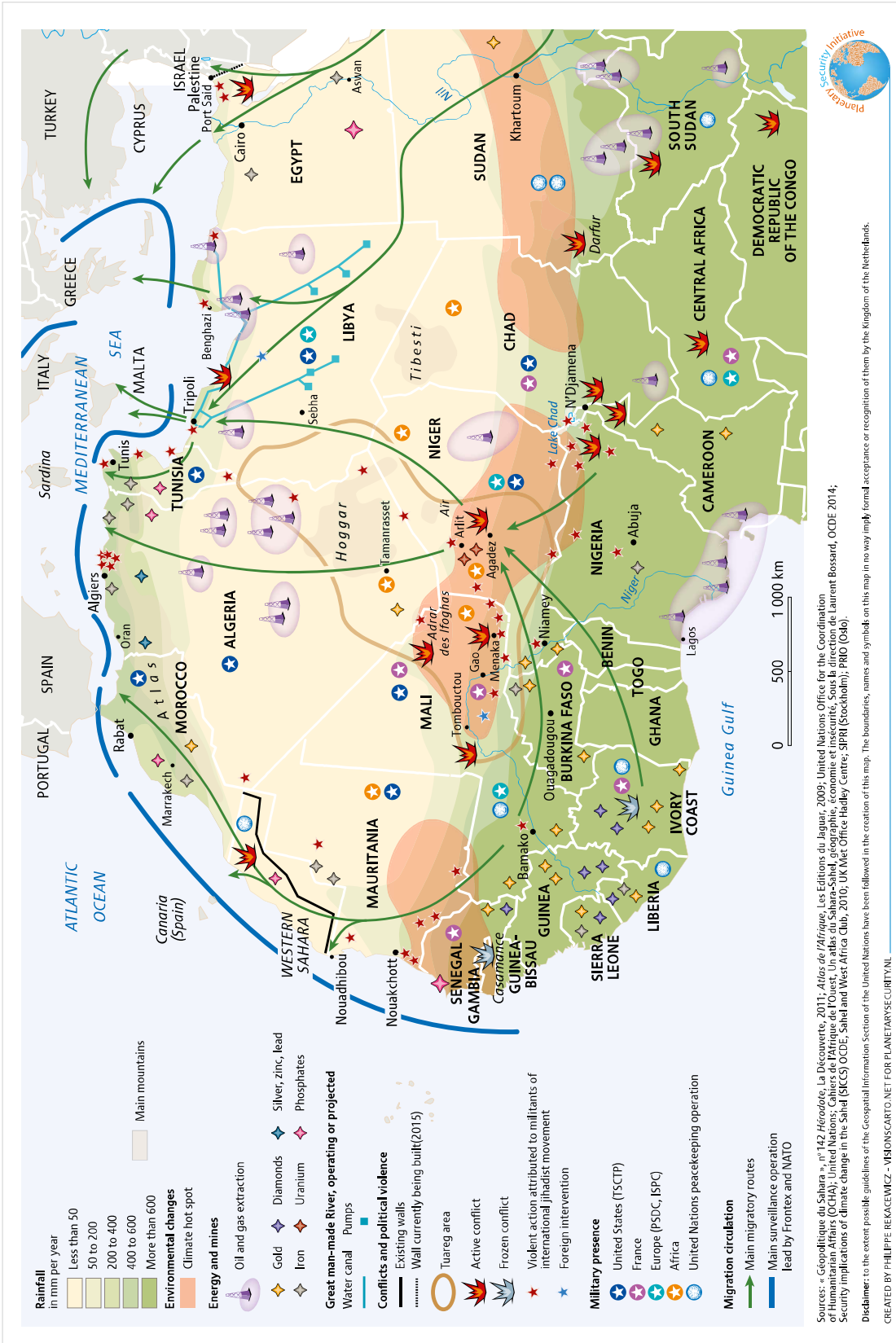
Over the next 3 years, humanitarian actors in the Sahel have agreed to work with partners towards 3 overarching strategic goals: track and analyse risk and vulnerability, integrating findings into humanitarian and development programming; support vulnerable populations to better cope with shocks by responding earlier to warning signals, by reducing post-crisis recovery times and by building capacity of national actors; and deliver coordinated and integrated life-saving assistance to people affected by emergencies.

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The humanitarian crisis calls for a focus on meaningful resilience building. Many displacements have aggravated long-standing ecological vulnerabilities and food insecurity, and in places heightened conflicts with host communities.

### 3. FURTHER READING

- Africa, Climate Change, Environment and Security (ACCES) Dialogue Process, *Climate Change and Security in Africa: Vulnerability Report* (December 2010) [http://www.envirosecurity.org/acces/docs/ACCES\\_2010\\_Vulnerability\\_Report.pdf](http://www.envirosecurity.org/acces/docs/ACCES_2010_Vulnerability_Report.pdf)
- Crawford A, *Climate change and state fragility in the Sahel* (June 2015) <https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/climate-change-and-state-fragility-in-the-sahel-fride.pdf>
- European Union External Action Service (EEAS), *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel* [http://eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf)
- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), *2014-2016 Strategic Response Plan: Sahel Region* (January 2014) (Executive Summary) [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/newsroom/docs/Regional%20Sahel%20SRP%20Final.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/Regional%20Sahel%20SRP%20Final.pdf)
- UNOCHA, ‘Sahel: An Interactive Summary of Humanitarian Action Needed in 2015’ <http://www.unocha.org/sahel2015/>



## 4. ANALYSIS

**The Sahel is a more extreme example of what is happening across the continent** with respect to climate change compounding development challenges, contributing to chronic food and malnutrition crises that are both cause and consequence of increasing insecurity, driving and exacerbating tensions and violent conflict. Some key challenges include the following:

**Appropriate scale of action:** A key underlying obstacle all actors face is in deconstructing the interlinked conflict systems spanning the Sahel, while ensuring that strategies reflect and respond to the risks and vulnerabilities in a coherent way. This poses a **challenge** for informing at what scale, what level we respond and where we act.

**Role of non-climate stressors:** Deconstructing the interlinked conflict systems calls for identifying the key driving compound risks for the region and understanding the conflict dynamics. There is a degree of understanding of the non-climate stressors, but less so of how these non-climate stressors combine to exacerbate threats, of the political economy and poverty dynamics, and of how the dynamics of youthful age structures, lack of institutional capability, lack of government accountability, governance and economic inequality, interact.

**Underlying causes of resilience deficit:** A challenge to the development of conflict sensitive strategies for development, for climate change adaptation and mitigation, is that these require a good understanding of the resilience deficit in the region and what it looks like. As a result too often it is the symptoms, not the underlying causes that are addressed. Poor understanding of the underlying vulnerabilities and the lack of community resilience impacts on responses to recurring food crises, which in the Sahel are highly fragmented, dysfunctional and ineffective.

**Donor coordination:** Sustainable peace requires a comprehensive approach to security and one of the obstacles to achieving this is that of donor coordination. The region has challenges with donor coordination – as we consider the role of local actors, regional actors and international actors we should focus on improved coordination and partnership across strategies for the region – how can we build complementarity across strategies and find ways to entry points that are specific to the region, such as linking to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members or the joint planning cell approach that United States Agency for International Development (USAID) uses. A related obstacle is ensuring coordination of efforts necessary to bring together the military, civil society and the government, and likewise the question of whether we know and understand how African and external stakeholders are responding to addressing these vulnerabilities.

**Information and data that support anticipatory responses:** Risk mitigation strategies, preparedness and early-warning underpins the need for the anticipatory approaches for to be dynamic and include approaches to right course policies if they are having perverse effects or exacerbating conflictual trigger points. An obstacle to better preparedness is that while Africa is highly dependent on resources, the region lacks information and reliable data at an appropriate level to support the development of anticipatory strategies, which are particularly necessary for the flexibility necessary to manage increasing uncertainty (of climate and the political economy). By way of example, there is a large degree of uncertainty regarding weather forecasting across scales, resulting in a mismatch between global forecasting and downscaled, local level forecasting. This makes it more difficult to determine specific coping strategies and contributes to the resilience deficit. Information is also often delivered in a top-down way, which makes it difficult for policy makers to use in a practical way.



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**Migration forecasting:** A related obstacle is the need for improved migration forecasting, but which can be very tricky. Projections for unplanned migration are important in the region and overlaps with governance and security concerns. Action on this front requires us to also integrate humanitarian and development funding, but at the same time we should be careful about the predictive leverage of such projections for one region as they may not carry over to other countries/parts of the continent.

**Unintended consequences of good interventions:** An obstacle that donors face is not having sufficient in-depth appreciation for how well-intentioned interventions can drive other divisions. Donor interventions to address local grievances can put donors into conflict with the government or heighten local level conflicts (e.g. pastoralists/agricultural communities or refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities). A challenge is to be more transparent when well-intended actions have unintended consequences – actors too often avoid acknowledging failures and the policy implications. While there is a pressure to act timely, there is the risk of oversimplification. Issues are not always clear-cut and groupings not always homogenous so interventions and negotiations need to take into account the complexities of the context – of the variations across local communities and the conflict dynamics within and between those communities.

**Tricky diplomacy:** On the diplomatic side, negotiation with potential conflict actors is complicated by accounting for possible terrorist activities, ethnic complexities, and recruitment and when certain groups or sectors are blacklisted – it runs the risk of the military securitisation of development. One participant noted that at times environmental issues are low hanging diplomatic fruit that enable development actors to build trust to address harder issues. Another noted the importance of thinking of how development dollars need to be justified with domestic stakeholders.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address these challenges, the following recommendations were discussed:

**Integrate development and humanitarian work:** Overall strategic goals should focus on integrating development and humanitarian work through approaches that combine to address economic development, increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability: More specifically economic development policies should find the right balance between increasing robustness and reducing vulnerability and determining the right combination of those approaches at different points in time. Scenario planning can inform dialogue around better management of acute emergencies and securing long-term funding for integrating resilience responses into human and development planning. The opportunity to capitalise on increased funding during acute emergencies to secure funding for longer-term programming was recommended.

**Facilitate, empower and reward joint planning across sectors:** While it was noted that there is a greater focus by actors on the security and development links, the breaking down of silos across various sectors within and between aid agencies represents another opportunity, and one that will be important to address climate security links in an integrated manner. It calls for a platform to assist joint planning across sectors and between actors, for knowledge sharing, for resilience building, development and humanitarian programming, diplomacy, philanthropy and policy.

**Explore targeted partnerships that overcome government bureaucratic limitations:** Discussants noted the importance of identifying opportunities to address challenges in more effective ways. Opportunity was seen to lie in instituting innovative partnerships that overcome structural and operational barriers. We should envision new types of partnership that would enable us to move beyond bureaucratic limitations within governments that would include government, other community based authorities, the private sector, private philanthropy, and the development sector. Building partnerships for collaboration furthermore, needs to link local strategies back to regional mechanisms. The approaches by African and external stakeholders to addressing vulnerabilities should be compatible.

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**Provide specific technical and diplomatic skills that address the specificity of the region:** To assist in strategic interventions, it was recommended that we determine whether we have the appropriate set of technical and diplomatic skill sets to address the conflict climate potential in the region. By way of example, “toolkits” do exist for reporting matrixes but these are not driven by an integrated perspective. To incentivise use of these they should be supplemented with information that enhances the value added of these tools for different actors in a variety of sectors.

**Recognise that resilience is not possible if security challenges are incorporated into such initiatives:** A recommendation was made for humanitarian agencies that are focusing on resilience building to also take into consideration the security dimensions of regional wide initiatives as not doing so could undermine resiliency efforts. It calls for a very specific resilience model for the Sahel, different to other regions, which must address chronic conditions, and reconcile short-term emergency interventions with long-term strategies.

**Focus on localised, specific contextualised solutions:** Another way to increase effectiveness of interventions is from a humanitarian perspective to focus on localised, specific contextualised solutions. The recommendation is to look at the areas that are chronically vulnerable, understand which proximate and underlying factors are driving vulnerability, and how competition and conflict over natural resources fit into this framework. Responses should focus on addressing local governance structures, ethnic identities, institutional strengthening and incorporating ways to build local conflict



mitigation and resolution strategies. The strengthening of institutions that can prevent or mitigate conflict over climate-affected natural resources is essential. With the growing “scramble” for land, water and pasture, recommendations were made for promoting and disseminating the existing laws and norms of stewardship over pastoral spaces and strengthening land commissions and reconciliation committees.

**Develop local level climate monitoring systems:** Given the challenges related to uncertainty of climate data, and the top down way in which it is often delivered, the need to develop local level climate monitoring systems to support anticipatory strategies that are driven by data and evidence was noted. These may not be immediately appealing to donors, but we will “have to learn how to manage uncertainty in practice” and put in place appropriate early warning.

**Forge science-policy links that inform forecasting and facilitate scaling up of successful initiatives:** Information and data, however, are not enough; it is critical that we scale up efforts at building resilience, creating anticipatory strategies. The opportunity lies in better science-policy links that can inform forecasting. One supportive action that will help this is to link the humanitarian, development and climate change communities – with a strong leadership role for social sciences and humanities communities.

**Use adaptive planning to address the unintended consequences of good interventions:** It was recommended that greater attention is given to the unintended consequences of interventions – for example the degree to which an influx of climate funding could be disruptive if there is a rush to access that funding. This calls for being deliberate about the ways climate financing might address conflict triggers, and it also important to make sense of interventions that fail and then to adapt policy accordingly – and to share lessons learnt.

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## Working Group 3

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