

GUIDANCE NOTE

Climate, Peace and Security in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Introduction

“Climate change is not the source of all ills, but it has a multiplier effect and is an aggravating factor for instability, conflict and terrorism. We must address these challenges in an integrated manner and create a virtuous circle of peace, resilience and sustainable development”

UNSG’s remarks to the Security Council, 9 December 2021

From unprecedented floods to record-breaking heatwaves, the impacts of the climate crisis are more evident than ever. Rising temperatures, more severe and frequent extreme weather events, and erratic rainfall are driving biodiversity loss, affecting food prices, undermining livelihoods, and have been linked to increasing social and gender inequalities and large-scale displacement. In many coastal areas, sea level rise is fast becoming an existential threat and is raising questions regarding maritime boundaries and national identity. While we are only beginning to understand the wider impact of climate change on ecosystems, societies, institutions, and infrastructure, we know that it compounds structural weaknesses, has a differentiated impact¹, and hits hardest where coping capacities are already compromised. For example, 12 of the 20 countries most vulnerable and least prepared to adapt to ² were in conflict in 2020 and countries affected by violence receive less climate finance, on average.³

As the pace of climate change accelerates, so its impact on peace and security has become an important element of the broader discourse. Yet, the global evidence base on climate-related security risks remains limited, as do examples of initiatives at scale. This policy note takes a pragmatic approach to describing how UNDP might engage with climate, peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and identify possible points of entry.

1. What is Climate, Peace and Security?

“Climate, peace and security” is a lens that enables UNDP and its partners to anticipate, understand and act upon how climate change interacts with conflict, inequalities, power relations, and security dynamics with the ultimate aim of building societies’ resilience to multiple threats. It recognises that climate change is not a direct cause of new conflicts but may have a multiplier effect, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, inequalities, tensions and conflicts and increasing the risk of instability and violence.⁴ And it acknowledges a vicious circle in which greater conflict can worsen environmental degradation and impede climate action, thereby creating more instability.

UNDP’s work on climate, peace and security aims to convert this circle into a virtuous one that builds societies’ resilience through three areas of action; **climate-proofing** conflict and stability work; ensuring climate interventions are **peace positive**; and delivering gender-responsive **integrated programming** to provide co-benefits at scale. Recognising the need for an integrated and more systematized approach to climate-related security risks, UNDP co-founded the inter-agency Climate, Security Mechanism in 2018

¹ IPCC (2014), Summary for policymakers. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability.

Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1-32

² Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index : <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

³ UNDP (2021), Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts. New York: UNDP [Accessed here](#)

⁴ IPCC (2022), Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA,

and is leveraging its flagship [Climate Promise](#) and leading role in conflict prevention to align these related but, too often, separate agendas.

Box 1 Haiti - Peace-positive climate adaptation

Haiti is the most fragile country and the most vulnerable to climate change in LAC. It is affected by an ongoing security, political and humanitarian crisis whilst simultaneously dealing with decreased rainfall and rising temperatures, stronger storms and rising sea levels and the effects of deforestation and soil erosion. To better understand how these risks combine the Climate Security Mechanism, through UNEP in collaboration with UNDP, is undertaking a Climate Security analysis. This will help the UN Country Team, the UN Integrated Office for Haiti, and partners to identify entry points for building resilience to compound effects of the climate and security crises.

Meanwhile, UNDP has started to promote peace-positive climate adaptation through integrating conflict sensitivity into two water resources management projects – one in design, and one in implementation – that are financed through vertical funds. UNDP will do this through integrating local-level conflict analysis into delivery, adopting a community-based and flexible approach so that mechanisms for natural resource management address and manage different interests and perspectives while helping to reinforcing social cohesion as communities and authorities face multiple threats.

2. Climate, Peace and Security in Latin America and the Caribbean

Climate change will affect every region differently and so will its interaction with social and conflict dynamics. This paper attempts to trace what a particular “LAC” climate, peace and security agenda might look like through, firstly, considering some characteristics common to many countries in the region. Six characteristics, or factors, appear particularly relevant to understanding how climate, peace and security interrelate:

1. LAC will be hard hit by climate change

LAC is one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change; it holds 13 of the 50 countries identified as most affected by the climate emergency.⁵ The IPCC warns of both slow onset and increased extreme weather events involving warming temperatures, ocean and lake acidification resulting in coral bleaching, and

increasing frequency and severity of droughts in some regions, with associated decrease in water supply.⁶ Relative sea level rise is extremely likely to continue in the oceans around the region which will lead to coastal flooding in low lying areas and shoreline retreat along most sandy coasts. Agricultural livelihoods will be heavily impacted, contributing to migration, and increasing pressure on cities as sites of adaptation but also vulnerability to weather events such as landslides.

Particularly vulnerable areas are Central America (drought, floods and disasters), the Andes (water stress), the Caribbean (sea level rises, biodiversity loss and disasters) and the Amazon (drought and biodiversity loss). A major human impact of the above is likely to be displacement and migration as people choose, or are forced to move, to adapt to the impact of weather on their lives and livelihoods. The World Bank forecasts that up to 17 million people may be internally

⁵OECD et al. (2022), Latin American Economic Outlook 2022: Towards a Green and Just Transition, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5554fc-en>.

⁶ IPCC (2022a), Central and South America. In: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

displaced in Latin America by climate change by 2050,⁷ adding pressures to a region witnessing record levels of migration in recent years, including through the ecologically-fragile Darien gap. In the world's second most urban region, the most likely destinations are cities, which themselves can be at risk from climate change.⁸

The costs of both damage and responding to climate change are significant. The IADB estimates the former to rise to \$100 billion annually by 2050⁹, whilst the IMF considers the cost of reaching mitigation and adaptation goals to be approximately \$90-110 billion per year.¹⁰ Governments are yet to access the levels of international, private and public finance necessary to meet the scale of the challenge.

2. LAC is highly affected by Insecurity and transnational crime

Climate change will occur in one of the world's most dangerous regions. In 2017 the Americas had a homicide rate of 17.2¹¹ per 100,000, compared to the global average of 6.1¹² and housed 43 of the world's 50 most dangerous cities. Much of the region is affected by transnational and organised crime, which profits from drug production and trafficking, extortion, human trafficking and smuggling.

Violence and criminality are increasingly harming the environment with the Amazon a clear example. Up to 98% of recent deforestation might be considered illegal¹³ and the basin is increasingly home to an ecosystem of crimes from illegal gold mining and logging, through to land grabbing, illegal infrastructure and cattle ranching. The human cost of environmental crimes in the Amazon and other biodiverse areas is starkly visible in the threats and murders of

environmental activists, often from indigenous communities. One NGO estimates that of the 1,733 land and environmental defenders murdered between 2012 and 2021, two-thirds were from Latin America, with 342 killed in Brazil, 322 in Colombia, 154 in Mexico and 117 in Honduras.¹⁴ Women activists face particular threats, with 8 out of 10 experiencing violence in the Brazilian Amazon.¹⁵

3. Inequality

Climate change has differentiated impacts and is expected to worsen inequalities¹⁶. This matters particularly in LAC as it remains the second most unequal region in the world, according to the 2021 UNDP Regional Human Development Report Beyond income, other forms of inequality stubbornly persist. Women face gaps in labour market participation and unequal access to and control of natural resources where they are underrepresented in decision-making processes. In Latin America, almost 60 million women live in the countryside, but only 30% of them own agricultural land, only 10% have access to credit and only 5% to technical assistance programs.

4. LAC exhibits high levels of political instability and social conflict

Persistent inequality is partly linked to increasing political instability and the worsening of state-civil society relations and social conflicts, all of which might be further stressed by drastic environmental change. The region is seeing contested political transitions and swings along the political spectrum, with the majority of elections in the past three years seeing a change of political party. Voters are seeking new options – including anti-establishment candidates – rather than the traditional political parties¹⁷ but doing so even as trust in government is

⁷ World Bank Group (2018), Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

⁸ IPCC (2022a)

⁹ IDB Group and Climate Action: Position Paper COP 2026 accessed at <https://interactive-publications.iadb.org/increasing-climate-ambition/current-state-of-climate-action>

¹⁰ IMF (2021) [Ivanova et al.] Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean Challenges and Opportunities. October 28. Accessed at [Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and Opportunities \(imf.org\)](https://www.imf.org/en/~/media/Files/Publications/2021/09/Climate-Change-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean-Challenges-and-Opportunities-2021-09-28.pdf)

¹¹ To give an idea of scale, the World Health Organization (WHO) considers an epidemic to be when there are more than 10 homicides per 100,000 people.

¹² UNODC (2019), Global Study on Homicide: Executive Summary. Vienna, UNODC. <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf>

¹³ Igarape Institute (2022), Global Futures Bulletin : The Amazon Climate Bomb. Rio de Janeiro: Igarape Institute

<https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Global-Future-Bulletin-The-Amazon-Climate-Bomb.pdf>

¹⁴ Greenfield, Patrick. (2022) 'More than 1,700 environmental activists murdered in the past decade – report', The Guardian, 29 September

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/29/global-witness-report-1700-activists-murdered-past-decade-aoe>

¹⁵ Igarape Institute (2022) Guia de proteção a defensoras de direitos humanos e meio ambiente. Rio de Janeiro: Igarape Institute <https://igarape.org.br/temas/seguranca-climatica/defensoras-da-amazonia/>

¹⁶ IPCC (2022)

¹⁷ UNDP (2022), The Life of the Parties: The anger vote and the weakening of political parties. November 7.

<https://www.undp.org/latin-america/news/graph-for-thought/life-parties-anger-vote-and-weakening-political-parties-lac>

declining¹⁸. This discontentment is not seen just at the ballot box, LAC is experiencing an increase in social protests¹⁹.

Of particular concern to climate action is the persistence of socio-environmental conflicts, that, according to a 2016 survey, increased significantly over the past few decades²⁰. 40% of these are related to extractive industries – an issue relevant to the energy transition– but LAC remains vulnerable to historical tensions of natural resource management including land, water and forests. Water supply is expected to become an increasingly important political and policy issue as trade-offs emerge between households, mining, industry and agricultural sectors over consumption.

5. LAC is a biodiversity “superpower”

LAC is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, thus what happens to nature here matters for the environmental security of the globe. It holds a total of 46.5% of forested land area, two of the three largest coral reefs and 60% of all terrestrial life.²¹ The Amazon Forest alone plays a vital role as a carbon sink and regulator of global weather patterns and the whole region is characterised by a vast diversity of marine and land ecosystems. In many cases, biodiversity hotspots are located in indigenous and territories where communities are crucial allies in the fight to preserve nature and mitigate climate change.²²

At the same time, these same communities are frequently politically and economically marginalised and increasingly face encroachment onto their land by a variety of informal, criminal and legal actors. Despite relatively strong environmental laws and policies across the region, their implementation remains weak in many countries.²³ However, the ground-breaking Escazu agreement²⁴, offers a mechanism to strengthen these controls and the right of citizens to a healthy environment.

6. Latin America is key to the global energy transition

Latin America is home to over half the world’s lithium deposits in Bolivia, Argentina and Chile, as well as large deposits of other minerals crucial to the green transition such as cobalt and nickel. As the UN Secretary-General has set out, the challenge is to ensure that countries can take advantage of the 20–30-year window to capitalize on these trends and achieve economic and social benefits.

Ensuring a just transition, though, is not guaranteed. New extractive industries can bring jobs but also have direct and indirect negative social impacts. For example, women are disproportionately affected by negative externalities and, as described above, indigenous people already suffer from the incursion of extractive industries into their land. There may be increasing political competition and there is already increasing complicated geopolitical picture as countries look for secure access to critical minerals. To further complicate the issue in LAC, some critical minerals are located in areas of high importance for biodiversity and nature-based solutions.

Compound Risks

By considering the interaction of the above factors we can start to see what a climate, peace and security agenda looks like in LAC. For example, the combination of insecurity and climate change means paying close attention to the effect of weather change on citizen security, particularly in urban areas. The combination of mineral wealth with high levels of inequality and social conflict – particularly around natural resources – emphasises the need for a just transition, whilst the combination of organised crime, climate mobility and biodiversity requires careful consideration of how governance, security

¹⁸ Corporación Latinobarómetro (2021), Informe 2021

[Latinobarometro](https://www.latinobarometro.org/)

¹⁹ See monitoring undertaken by ACLED <https://acleddata.com/>

²⁰ Rodriguez et al. (2019), *Cuadernos de la Transformación 3: Conflictividad socioambiental en Latinoamérica*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Ciudad de México.

²¹ UNDP (2022), *The State of Climate Ambition: Regional Snapshot LAC*. New York: UNDP

²²FAO accessed on 10 July 2023 at

<https://www.fao.org/3/cb2953en/online/cb2953en.html>

²³ Duri, J. (2020), *Corruption and environmental crime in Latin America*. Bergen: U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute (U4 Helpdesk Answer 2020:14) Accessed at: [Corruption and environmental crime in Latin America \(u4.no\)](https://www.u4.no/en/2020/12/01/corruption-and-environmental-crime-in-latin-america)

²⁴ The Escazú Agreement is the first international treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean concerning the environment. It provides full public access to environmental information, environmental decision-making, and legal protection and recourse concerning environmental matters in signatory states and contains specific provisions on environmental defenders. It has been ratified by 14 states and entered into force in April 2021.

and justice deficits can undermine climate adaptation and mitigation.

The following section takes this analysis a step further to anticipate pathways for compound climate, peace and security risks in LAC, and steps to build resilience. It is based on anecdotal evidence from UNDP country offices, the limited

literature available and the application of the analytic framework set out in Figure 1. This considers **how climate change and environmental degradation affect peace, how conflict and insecurity affect climate and the environment** and how climate, peace and security programming can act to break this negative loop and create a virtuous circle.

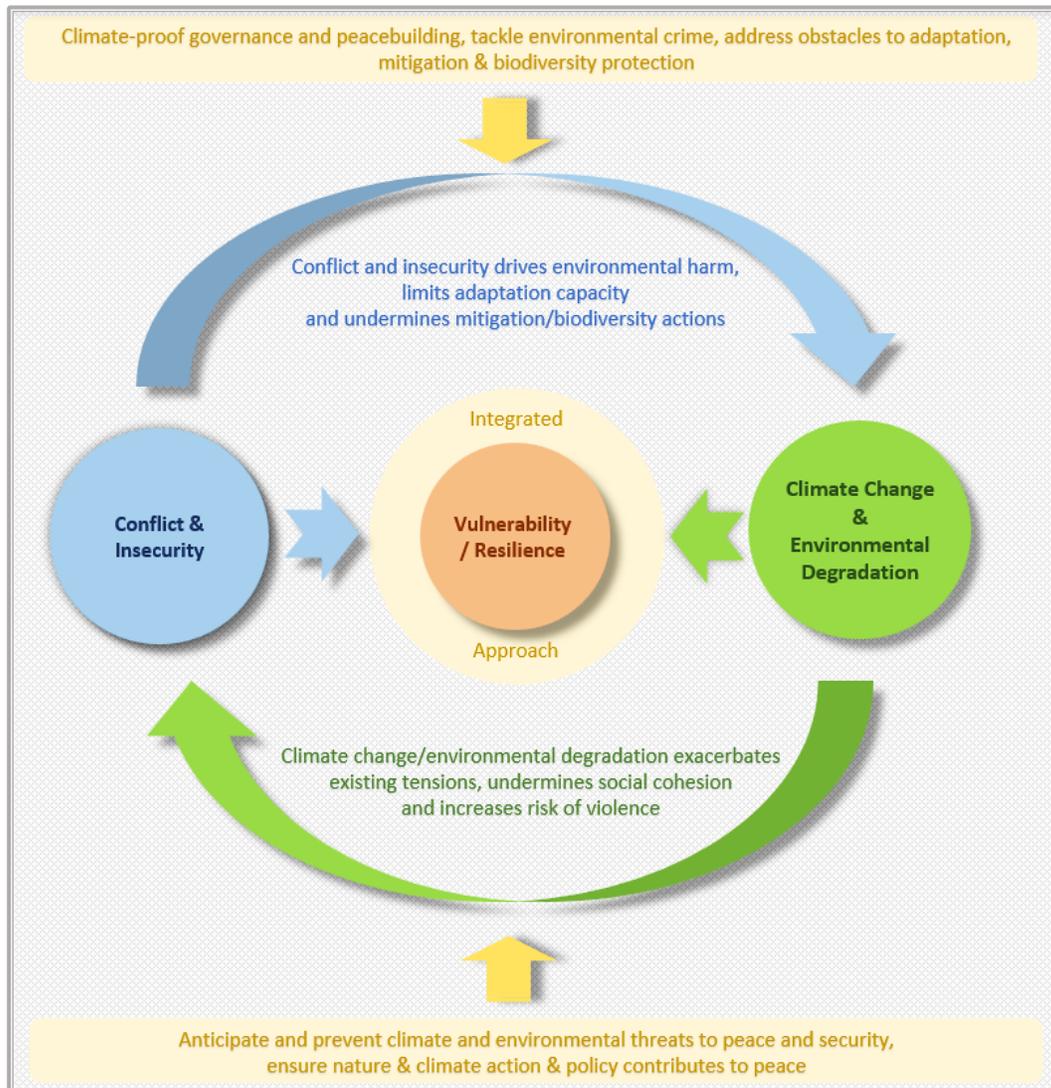


Figure 1: Visualizing Climate, Peace and Security. Source; UNDP²⁵

²⁵ Similar thinking can be found at adelphi/WWF (2022) REPORT: The nature of conflict and peace. Gland/Berlin: WWF/adelphi accessed at https://adelphi.de/system/files/document/WWF-adelphi_The%20Nature%20of%20Conflict%20and%20Peace_mid%20res_0.pdf and OCED/INCAF (2022) Common Position on climate change, biodiversity and environmental fragility accessed at

<https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/conflict-fragility/INCAF-Common-position-climate-change-biodiversity-environmental-fragility.pdf>

3. Pathways and Entry Points

Climate Impact	Effect on Conflict & Security Dynamics	Programming/Policy Options
<p>Increased human mobility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of climate-induced migration and displacement exacerbates existing tensions and grievances in receiving areas, particularly urban centres. • Migrants forced to live in urban areas with higher levels of crime, low service delivery and greater exposure to extreme weather. • Organised crime strengthened through human trafficking, recruitment of young people, and extortion of people on the move. • People on the move are vulnerable to security threats, including gender-based violence • New horizontal conflict emerges as communities enter protected or indigenous territories to find new forms of livelihood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using early warning to enable seasonal and planned migration as climate adaptation response. • Identifying hotspots of fragility (particularly urban) where security/climate and migration coincide and modelling to help anticipate pressures of increased mobility on services. • Integrating climate-related mobility into national and sub-national adaptation plans and into climate adaptation programming. • Advocacy or awareness raising to reduce negative perceptions of human mobility in receiving areas. • Understanding security threats for those unable to move and integrating these into adaptation programming. • Anticipatory actions to prevent gender-based violence
<p>Frequency and intensity of extreme weather events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme weather can reinforce or create new social and gender inequalities and related grievances as poor and marginalised communities most vulnerable to displacement, livelihood loss and physical risks. • Overwhelmed and weak state response undermines confidence in state and democratic systems and/or offers organised crime opportunity to fill void and capture disaster assistance. • Disruption can undermine social cohesion or forge greater community cooperation in already fragile areas. • Urban heatwaves can increase risks of interpersonal and domestic – particularly gender based - violence. • Destruction of critical security and justice infrastructure (e.g. police stations, courts) and disruption of services. • Increase in gender differentiated mortality and mobility correlated with prevalent gender inequalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring disaster risk reduction reinforces and does not undermine social cohesion or increase gender inequalities. • Forecasting scenarios of extreme weather induced by climate change and anticipating and preventing security risks • Mitigating risks of capture of disaster risk assistance by non-state actors, particularly in urban areas. • Integrate climate/crime link into urban planning & services • Implementation of “green” social protection which considers water management as a key element to protect populations suffering from climate change impacts.

Climate Impact	Effect on Conflict & Security Dynamics	Programming/Policy Options
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in unpaid domestic responsibilities and workload associated with water management (collection and treatment) which mainly impacts women and girls • Increasing scarcity of water heightens conflicts between productive and domestic water use which can lead to gender-based violence 	
Water scarcity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritisation of increasingly scarce water resources creates socio-environmental conflict between winners (e.g. extractive industries) and losers (e.g. smallholders) • Increasing scarcity of water heightens existing socio-economic conflicts around water pollution effects of legal and illicit economic activity (e.g. mining, intensive agriculture) • Impact of drought on food prices can cause social unrest • Tension over management of cross-border water resources • Fragility of cities (social unrest, crime, weak governance) exacerbated by shortages of hydro-electric power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict-sensitive Integrated Water Resources Management to promote cooperation (inter or intra-state) and address socio-environmental conflicts • Assessing impact of water shortages on urban resilience, social cohesion and citizen security • Building early warning for water shortages into urban planning, agriculture and coastal areas where there is an assessed link between climate and security
Reduced livelihood options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resort to illicit livelihoods as a coping strategy (e.g. illicit crops, illegal mining, illegal fishing) • Unemployed young people vulnerable to recruitment by gangs and organised crime • Loss of income from tourism drives involvement in regular crime and has a greater impact on women • Competition over scarce resources, particularly in SIDS • Increase in food insecurity and malnutrition • Increase in care responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted integrated climate adaptation and peacebuilding/crime reduction programming to support sustainable, alternative livelihoods • Assessment of impact of climate change on key livelihood sectors (e.g. tourism), age and social groups and assessment of knock-on effect on social cohesion and citizen security. • Assessment of gendered impacts of climate change on livelihoods and how that affects security of affected persons. • Targeting green jobs at communities at risk of involvement in illicit economies or violence • Promoting resilient livelihoods, in areas of high migration, high climate risk, high environmental degradation and high inequality as a means to reduce migration • Ensuring specific programs that will benefit and increase livelihood options and resilience of women and vulnerable groups.

Climate Impact	Effect on Conflict & Security Dynamics	Programming/Policy Options
Energy transition and climate mitigation policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy transition triggers latent or existing socio-environmental conflicts over weaknesses in transparency, negative externalities or benefit sharing with host communities. • End to fuel subsidies to facilitate climate adaptation and/or mitigation causes civil unrest and protests. • Carbon markets and critical mineral extraction causes conflict with communities, particularly indigenous peoples, over land. • Energy transition (e.g. critical minerals) and new green economies reinforce existing patterns and grievances around elite capture, corruption and inequality causing social protest and polarisation • States favour militarized and conflict-generating approaches to conservation in order to preserve nature-based solutions and biodiversity (e.g. deforestation, illegal fishing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding peace and conflict considerations in Nationally Determined Contributions and related documents. • Implement IPCC 's 11 elements of a just transition to mitigate risk that the energy transition contributes to greater inequality, tension and civil unrest. • Integrating Do No Harm and consideration of governance challenges (e.g. supply chain transparency) into design of carbon markets and biodiversity credits. • Environmental peacebuilding through using nature-based solutions as a basis for dialogue between groups in conflict. • Comprehensive support to states to capitalize on demand for critical minerals in way that meets safeguarding concerns, is gender responsive and provides social benefits. • Strengthening capacity of state oversight bodies (e.g. ombudsman) to anticipate conflicts related to extractives and enhance transparency. • Promoting people-centered alternatives to militarized conservation approaches
Increased delivery of climate adaptation policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate adaptation that is insensitive to conflict and insecurity dynamics leads to inequitable outcomes (maladaptation) or Does Harm by exacerbating existing tensions and reinforcing existing inequalities. • In highly insecure contexts beneficiaries of material assistance may be targeted by criminal actors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed conflict and security issues climate policies such as National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions. • Systematically integrate conflict sensitivity into the project management cycle of climate adaptation through ensuring analysis and consideration of conflict at design and review phases, combining this with mainstreaming of gender, safeguarding and environmental standards. • Based upon analysis, see how adaptation can transform structural inequalities that underpin conflict and so contribute to peace. • Integrate conflict resolution into landscape approaches so that climate adaptation is not zero-sum and helps to manage competing uses of land.

Insecurity and Conflict impact	Effect on Climate Change and Environment	Programming/Policy Options
Armed Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment as a victim through effects of attacks on infrastructure (e.g. oil pipelines in Colombia). • Ecosystems damaged as displaced communities seek livelihood strategies. • Communities living in fragile and conflict affected regions receive less climate adaptation assistance due to conflict related challenges.²⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring natural resource management and conservation as opportunities for peace talks (environmental peacebuilding). • Technical assistance to enable peace talks to include discussion of natural resources and climate change. • Integration of environmental restoration into reintegration of former combatants and transitional justice. • Providing conflict-related expertise to climate adaptation teams
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised crime causes environmental degradation as direct result of activity (environmental crimes like logging, mining, illegal fishing) or indirect result (land grabbing for money laundering and territorial control, opening roads through protected areas). • Regulatory failures allow violations of criminal and administrative laws by multiple actors (e.g. private sector, officials, small-scale farmers) that degrade strategic ecosystems. • Crime and insecurity impede design and delivery of climate action in areas affected by violence and dissuades private financing for nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental rule of law and civilian enforcement of environmental regulations • Promoting integrated approaches to tackling illegal and illicit destruction of strategic ecosystems by aligning security and justice with institutional capacity, addressing structural factors and market drivers, and combining different funding mechanisms to deliver peace and environment co-benefits. • Integrated gender responsive and culturally appropriate action for nature-based solutions/protection of biodiversity and reducing control of organised crime through sustainable livelihoods
Threats to environmental activists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate mitigation harmed by silencing of indigenous peoples • Disproportionate targeting, including through gender-based violence, of women activists lessens effectiveness of climate action • Weaker enforcement of environmental regulations through reduced civil society input • Silencing of journalists reduces public demand for effective climate and biodiversity action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support adoption and implementation of Escazu agreement, particularly as it relates to environmental activists, particularly women defenders. • Supporting states to understand and analyse threats to environmental activists. • Building state capacities to better protect environmental activists and journalists through <i>inter alia</i> supporting legal frameworks, institutional coordination and early warning mechanisms, capacity building of security and justice duty bearers. • Analyse and support women environmental defenders to address differentiated threats that they face.

²⁶UNDP (2021) Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts. UNDP: New York

Insecurity and Conflict impact	Effect on Climate Change and Environment	Programming/Policy Options
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting self-protection mechanisms and design specific programs to protect women defenders and reduce gender-based violence.
Threats to indigenous people and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal occupation of indigenous lands for pursuit of illicit economies (e.g. gold mining) destroys strategic ecosystems critical to climate mitigation and biodiversity protection, and threatens the lives and livelihoods of communities. • Systematic targeting of indigenous leaders leads to the silencing of climate activists and ultimately reduces communities' and countries' resilience to climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting effective participation of indigenous peoples' organisations in advocacy and decision-making spaces related to their territorial rights. • Capacity building of indigenous peoples' organisations access necessary legal, financial and technical tools to protect their rights. • Technical assistance to monitor and report on environmental crimes. • Support self-protection mechanisms.
Socio-environment conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legacy of socio-environment conflicts prevents just exploitation of critical minerals (e.g., polarisation preventing necessary legislation, prior consultation failing, social protests) • Unresolved land conflict provokes resistance to carbon markets • Organised crime feed off state/society conflict to commit environmental crimes • Socio-environmental conflicts undermine sustainability of climate adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing citizen access to environmental justice (e.g. through implementation of Escazu agreement) to prevent conflicts related to the energy transition • Use climate mitigation and biodiversity action as an opportunity to resolve socio-environment conflicts • Strengthen consultation and feedback mechanisms • Support state/society dialogue, climate adaptation participatory environmental governance to resolve historical environment conflicts • land reform and agrarian justice reform in climate mitigation
Political instability and contested transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace agreements upon up new areas to environmentally damaging economies (e.g., deforestation) • Climate change and biodiversity policies becoming polarising issues preventing necessary action • No continuity of climate and biodiversity policies across political transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating climate change and biodiversity into peace processes and negotiations with non-state actors • Looking for co-benefits between climate action and implementation of peace accords by expanding and learning from examples in Colombia. • Anticipating and preventing unintended side effects in stabilisation of rural areas • Public awareness campaigns to counter false news and communicate facts of climate policies • Support dialogue mechanisms in relation to climate policies and legislation, to prevent conflict and polarisation of climate change.

Insecurity and Conflict impact	Effect on Climate Change and Environment	Programming/Policy Options
Corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental degradation facilitated by collusion between state and illegal actors • Transparency and integrity of carbon markets and supply chain due diligence (e.g. deforestation-free cattle) compromised by fraud • Corruption creates risks that prevent climate finance investment • Climate adaptation financing diverted from vulnerable communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting anti-corruption measures targeted at sectors and geographic areas critical to the energy transition and climate mitigation • Investigative environmental journalism
Transboundary tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary cooperation on international waters, shared rivers, cross-border pollution and combatting environmental crime undermined by lack of willingness or frameworks for multilateral action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting frameworks for cross border natural resource management and governance (e.g. integrated water management, responsible fisheries, mechanisms to protect the Amazon) • Confidence building measures

4. Suggested Priorities

The table above shows just some of the entry points for addressing the links between climate, peace and security which start to emerge when considering the connections between different forms of risk. Whilst any of these may be relevant in a particular context, the following may be considered priorities for integrated action to help LAC confront its most urgent climate, nature, peace and security challenges:



1. Integrating climate change into peace and security policies and vice versa

As a first step UNDP can help states and societies integrate climate, peace and security into national and sub-national climate policies (e.g. Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, National Action Plans, City Adaptation plans), biodiversity policies and national security strategies. UNDP can leverage significant experience in supporting participatory formation of public policies, and their implementation, including [NDCs and peace](#). The National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) agreed at COP15 offer an opportunity to embed social cohesion, conflict prevention and security considerations into national decision making on sustainable use of biological resources.

Box 2 Colombia – Environments for Peace

In 2017, Colombia saw an end to a 50 year-long armed conflict between government the FARC-EP. In the process, some of the world's most biodiverse regions were opened up to scientific exploration, tourism and sustainable development, but also illegal deforestation and indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources. This threatens both the peace process and the realization of Colombia's commitments to climate mitigation, as recognised in its first NDC. Recognising the link between environment and peace, UNDP has undertaken a raft on initiatives including "[Environments for Peace](#)" in which former combatants of the FARC, local communities and the Ministry of Environment worked together to strengthen conservation, sustainable development and environmental governance building trust, but also tackling the threats to Colombia's tropical forests.



2. Integrating adaptation and environmental peacebuilding

As discussed, LAC is the site of significant levels of socio-environmental conflict over such resources as land, mining, water and forests, and these conflicts – often historic – may well be exacerbated by greater scarcity induced by climate change. These might create competing needs for climate adaptation that cannot be resolved through programming that takes a technical approach to the symptoms or proximate drivers of vulnerability, rather than underlying structural causes. UNDP can adopt area-based approaches to mapping and supporting dialogue over environmental conflicts, deploying environmental peacebuilding tools that use climate, peace and security as a common point of reference. Such a process can signpost how conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive climate adaptation can reduce the vulnerability of marginalised groups whilst also helping to address some of the structural causes of inequality and reduce tensions between different groups and sectors. UNDP's commitment to Social and Environmental Sustainability (SES) offers one important entry point, whilst ongoing innovations in the integration of environmental concerns into the delivery of Colombia's peace accords, offer examples of how to take this approach at scale. At the policy level, conflict resolution could be integrated into national adaptation plans.



3. Helping states to manage human mobility related to climate change

UNDP could support governments to understand, anticipate and plan for climate-related human mobility that is predicted to affect LAC and, if not properly embedded into development planning and policy, could have negative impacts on societies and people on the move. Work can be at both country and regional level addressing internal mobility and people moving across borders as an adaptation strategy.

Efforts can include providing evidence and forecasting to policy makers, integrating migration into the Climate Promise and climate adaptation, and direct programming to better protect people on the move, strengthen social cohesion in receiving areas reducing prevalent social and gender inequalities, and mitigate the risk of involvement by criminal gangs.

UNDP might assist cities that are particularly vulnerable to compound climate and security risks and which are likely to receive significant levels of climate-related migration. Specific attention can be given to helping cities predict and plan for expected increases in the urban population due to climate change, and forging interrelated strategies across urban planning, citizen security and disaster risk resilience.

Box 3 Mapping climate-related human mobility in LAC

Linking the climate promise, adaptation and governance, the UNDP regional hub in Panama is mapping hotspots where migration, displacement, climate change and fragility intersect, assessing how human mobility is and should be integrated into climate policies, and identifying entry points to help countries to start preparing for greater levels of migration. This work, funded through the Climate Promise and the GCF enabling facility, will help to set the foundations for broader work that can start to meet the scale of the challenge.



4. Strengthen civilian, security and justice institutions to tackle environmental crime and protect environmental defenders

As described above, LAC's biodiversity and capacity to mitigate climate change through nature is under severe threat from crime and illicit economies- whether conducted by organised crime or a network of actors, some of whom may not realise their activities are prohibited. UNDP can complement the work of other actors (e.g. UNODC) by supporting a developmental and holistic approach to preventing environmental crime. This might include capacity building of civilian and justice institutions, empowering and protecting environmental defenders and indigenous activists to report crimes, and supporting implementation of legislative and policy tools (e.g. relevant security strategies, Escazu treaty), whilst aligning this work with much bigger existing efforts to tackle the structural and economic drivers of deforestation.



5. Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into climate and biodiversity action

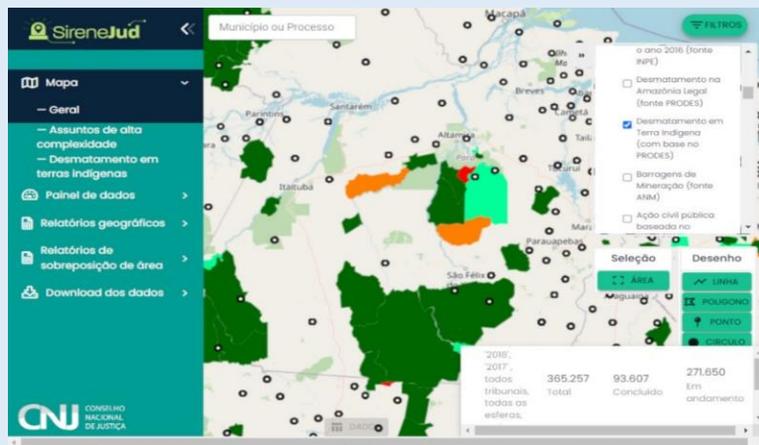
Although precise figures are hard to obtain, LAC is the site of significant levels of climate action, whether funded from multilateral, bilateral, national or private sources. High levels of biodiversity also draw in large amounts of finance for nature. Despite examples of good practice, climate and biodiversity action does not systematically demonstrate conflict sensitivity; risking doing harm, missing opportunities to create enabling conditions and potentially undermining the sustainability and effectiveness of interventions. UNDP can use its position as a major implementor of environmental vertical funds²⁷ in LAC to demonstrate a more effective and institutionalized approach to investing climate and biodiversity finance in areas affected by insecurity and conflict. This would involve adapting and applying existing conflict sensitivity guidance to the specific processes of vertical funds, upskilling staff and partners, exploring more adaptive and flexible programming modalities and integrating conflict sensitivity into monitoring and evaluation. In so doing it would apply recommendations from the Global Environment Facility's own evaluation of its support to fragile and conflict-affected situations.²⁸

²⁷ In particular, the [Global Environment Facility](#) and [Green Climate Fund](#)

²⁸ Independent Evaluation Office - Global Environment Facility (2020), Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. Accessed at <https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/fragility-2020>

Box 4 Brazil – Tackling environmental crime

UNDP and the Brazilian Judiciary have developed an electronic tool, SireneJud, to help tackle illegal and illicit drivers of deforestation. The tool overlays and cross-references data to show where environmental harm is taking place, what judicial processes are underway and generate alerts on environmental crimes. The intention is to strengthen the response of judicial and executive branch actors and inform evidence-based public policies and justice-sector interventions for environmental protection. As an open tool, Sirenejud assists civil society monitor deforestation contribute to the monitoring of Brazil's international commitments to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss. The tool can be accessed at <https://sirenejud.cnj.jus.br/mapa/geral>



5. Toolbox

Jointly with partners, the Climate Security Mechanism has developed a toolbox to help foster a shared approach to the analysis of climate-related security risks and shape integrated and timely responses. The toolbox is available to all practitioners and contains the following guidance documents:

- Overview ([en/fr/sp](#))
- Briefing note on climate security ([en/fr/sp](#))
- Conceptual approach to risk assessments ([en/fr/sp](#))
- Relevant data sources ([en/fr/sp](#))
- Checklist to help climate-proof political analysis ([en/fr /sp](#))

Other related tools and publications

- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) [The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean \(Escazu Agreement\)](#)
- EU, UN, World Bank [Guidance for Post Disaster Needs Assessments in Conflict Situations](#)
- Global Environment Facility [Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations](#)
- UNDP and CSM [Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts](#)
- UNDP [A typology & analysis of climate-related security risks in the first round NDCs](#) with UNFCCC
- UNDP [Social and Environmental Standards Toolkit](#)
- UNDP [Environmental Justice: Technical Paper](#)
- UNEP, UN Women, DPPA and UNDP [Gender, climate and security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change](#)



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