

A New Climate for Peace

Two Page Summary

Climate change is a global threat to security in the 21st century. We must act now to limit future risks to the planet we share and the peace we seek.

Achieving a robust international agreement to reduce emissions is of paramount importance. Yet the relentless momentum of change means that, despite future emissions reductions, the physical impacts from anthropogenic climate change are already visible and will continue for decades to come.

Climate change is the ultimate “threat multiplier”: it will aggravate fragile situations and may contribute to social upheaval and even violent conflict. The problem is the compound risks that emerge when the impacts of climate change interact with other problems that weak states already face. The combination can overburden them. The consequences of fragility may prevent those that are most vulnerable to climate change from adapting successfully to it, thus trapping them in a vicious cycle.

But even seemingly stable states can be pushed towards fragility if the pressure is high enough or shock is too great. We all share the risks—and thus we share the responsibility for tackling them.

“A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks”, an independent report commissioned by members of the G7, identifies seven compound climate-fragility risks that pose serious threats to the stability of states and societies in the decades ahead:

1. Local resource competition

As the pressure on natural resources increases, competition can lead to instability and even violent conflict in the absence of effective dispute resolution.

2. Livelihood insecurity and migration

Climate changes will increase the human insecurity of people who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods, which could push them to migrate or turn to illegal sources of income.

3. Extreme weather events and disasters

Extreme weather events and disasters will exacerbate fragility challenges and can increase people's vulnerability and grievances, especially in conflict-affected situations.

4. Volatile food prices and provision

Climate change is highly likely to disrupt food production in many regions, increasing prices and market volatility, and heightening the risk of protests, rioting, and civil conflict.

5. Transboundary water management

Transboundary waters are frequently a source of tension; as demand grows and climate impacts affect availability and quality, competition over water use will likely increase the pressure on existing governance structures.

6. Sea-level rise and coastal degradation

Rising sea levels will threaten the viability of low-lying areas even before they are submerged, leading to social disruption, displacement, and migration, while disagreements over maritime boundaries and ocean resources may increase.

7. Unintended effects of climate policies

As climate adaptation and mitigation policies are more broadly implemented, the risks of unintended negative effects—particularly in fragile contexts—will also increase.

Policy Analysis:

The Need for an Integrated Agenda

The best way to diminish the threat posed by these climate-fragility risks is to mitigate climate change. However, changes to the climate are already underway, so we must take steps to manage and minimize these risks today.

Single-sector interventions alone will not deal with compound risks. Integrating policies and programs in three key sectors—climate change adaptation, development and humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding—is necessary to help strengthen resilience to climate-fragility risks and realize significant co-benefits.

To break down the sectoral barriers that hamper efforts to address climate-fragility risks, we need to address key policy and institutional gaps in three areas:

- **Climate change adaptation:** programmes help countries anticipate the adverse effects of climate change and take action to prevent, minimize, and respond to its potential impacts.
- **Development and humanitarian aid** programmes help states and populations build their economic, governance, and social capacities and improve their resilience to shocks.
- **Peacebuilding** and conflict prevention programmes address the causes and effects of fragility and conflict by reducing tensions and creating an environment for sustainable peace.

Recommendations:

A New Commitment for Resilience

It is time for a new approach and new leadership from the highest level. We recommend that the G7 governments commit to designing and implementing integrated responses at several levels:

- 1. Integration begins at home: Make climate-fragility risks a central foreign policy priority**
G7 governments can begin by integrating climate-fragility responses into planning, implementation, and evaluation processes across their departments. This requires new capacities within departments and new cross-sectoral policy processes.
- 2. Come together for a new dialogue: Enhance G7 cooperation**
Problems that do not respect national borders can best be addressed by inter-governmental action. A G7 task force of senior officials could jump-start closer coordination between G7 members.
- 3. Set the global resilience agenda: Inform multilateral processes and structures**
Acting together, G7 governments can help break down the sectoral barriers and siloed approaches that have kept multilateral processes and institutions, such as the post-2015 development agenda, from comprehensively addressing climate-fragility risks.
- 4. Partner for resilience: Engage widely to ensure global actions produce local results**
Strengthening links between partners will help ensure that global initiatives improve local resilience to climate-fragility risks. In particular, the G7 should partner with governments and NGOs in countries facing fragile situations and provide support for addressing climate-fragility risks.

Pursue action in five key areas to build resilience against climate-fragility risks

GLOBAL RISK ASSESSMENT: G7 governments should establish a unified, shared, and accessible risk assessment methodology for identifying climate-fragility risks and generating actionable conclusions.

FOOD SECURITY: In addition to developing resilient food systems, the risks posed by food insecurity can be mitigated by better information, by keeping markets operating during crisis and by market access.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: Development partners should work together to invest in crisis prevention by integrating disaster risk reduction, peacebuilding, and climate change adaptation.

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER DISPUTES: A three-pronged approach can help ensure that transboundary waters become points of peaceful cooperation: stronger institutions, better dissemination of knowledge and encouraging cooperation between governments in transboundary river basins.

BUILDING LOCAL RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RISKS: G7 governments can embed support for resilience throughout their aid programmes and encourage others to do the same.

The Foundation for a More Peaceful and More Resilient Future

Responding to the global strategic threat posed by climate change is too great a task for any single government. This year, the G7 has a singular opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to tackling the challenges of climate change. The G7 foreign ministers can begin by committing to respond to one of the great challenges of our time: building resilience to climate-fragility risks.

