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Migration and environmental security**Environmental security****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The purpose of the present note is to provide background information for discussion at the sixteenth regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, on the role of the environment in peace, conflict, destabilization and human insecurity. While the precise roles of the environment in these areas may differ from situation to situation, and as such are still being debated in relation to other security and conflict variables, there are growing indications that it is increasingly an underlying cause of instability, conflict and unrest. The note concludes by providing a number of recommendations on the way forward.

II. Background

2. Environmental security can be described simply as the process of establishing the security of those environmental factors – water, soil, air, vegetation, biodiversity, climate and others – that are prime components of a nation's environmental foundations that ultimately underpin all its socioeconomic activities, and hence its political stability.¹ Environmental security is central to national security, comprising the dynamics and interconnections among the natural resource base, the social fabric of the State, and the economic engine for local and regional stability.

A. Natural resources and conflicts

3. In Africa, natural resource sectors generate approximately one third of growth in gross domestic product, serving as a foundation for employment, food security and development. Unfortunately, natural resources have also financed or been a contributing cause of at least 14 conflicts in African countries in fragile situations.² Natural resources are therefore both a driver of conflict, if mismanaged, and a source of resilience, if managed well.

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¹ There is no universally accepted definition of environmental security. The term has been used in at least three ways. The first refers to the protection of an area's resource availability within the context of an ecosystem or natural resource being free from pollution, depletion, contamination or any other external deprivation. The second refers to assessments made about responsibilities of the national security community to incorporate environmental standards of behaviour into the management of bases of military operations. It has been argued in this regard that military operations divert resources from environmental operations, and they are destructive to the environment and often cause severe forms of land-based pollution and degradation. The third description of environmental security relates to how man-made stress on the environment can exacerbate the likelihood of conflict between individuals and between States. This note seeks to combine all three forms of environmental security to include the quality of protection of the environment, scrutiny of the military in planning operations of their policies, potential impacts on the environment, and the means through which a Government's use of natural resources and environmental conditions can give rise to conflicts between States.

² Examples where disputes over land have contributed to the onset of conflict in fragile States in Africa include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan (AU, AfDB, and UNECA 2010a);

B. Environmental vulnerability and displacement/migration

4. On the one hand, vulnerability to extreme events and the ability to move is related to social, economic and political capital. People with low to medium asset levels often become trapped in their homes during disasters or find that their vulnerability increases when they have been displaced following a disaster. On the other hand, migration is a common response to extreme vulnerability, which can result from hazards or erosion of resources over time. In fragile environments and for resource-based livelihoods, the effects of such pressures can be severe. Migration can therefore be a way to preserve life and satisfy basic needs.

5. Disasters triggered by rapid-onset natural hazards forced 1.1 million people from their homes in 33 African countries in 2015. Southern Africa was particularly hard hit, with more than 410,000 people uprooted. More than 386,000 people fled their homes in East Africa, and more than 190,000 did so in West Africa.³

III. Current situation

A. Natural resources and conflicts in Africa

6. Fragile States are disproportionately likely to be affected by conflict. Almost 80 per cent (15 of 19) of fragile States in Africa have experienced armed conflicts in the last 20 years, with 11 of these experiencing armed conflicts in the last 10 years.⁴ Conflict, in turn, increases State fragility. To break the conflict cycle and build resilience, fragile States must address the causes and drivers of conflict when designing and implementing strategies for State-building.

7. Natural resources often play a central role in the socioeconomic development of a country. In Africa, approximately one third of real gross domestic product growth comes from natural resource extraction, and commodities (generally unprocessed) make up more than 80 per cent of the continent's export earnings.⁵

8. According to the African Natural Resources Centre, in 2014 Africa lost \$60.25 billion to illicit trade of natural resources, about 2.5 per cent of its gross domestic product. The wider economic impact of illicit trading of natural resources is estimated at \$120 billion per year, which is 5 per cent of Africa's gross domestic product. An estimated 24 million jobs have been lost as a result, amounting to about 6 per cent of overall employment in Africa. By curbing such illicit activities, Africa could create 25 million more jobs. The annual loss in tax revenue is about \$3.6 billion.

B. Environmental vulnerability, displacement and migration in Africa

9. The scale of displacement and migration triggered by rapid-onset natural hazards is largely determined by the location of homes in areas prone to their impacts, and people's underlying vulnerability to shocks and stresses. These factors can make their homes uninhabitable, disrupt or destroy their livelihoods, and leave them with few safe and voluntary solutions to their predicament.

10. There are both economic and political aspects to the vulnerability side of the equation. The poverty that affects around 330 million Africans means communities have few resources to invest in making their homes safe to remain in or in recovering quickly from displacement.⁶

Burundi (Brachet and Wolpe 2005); Chad (USAID 2010b); the Comoros (Larrabure and Ouledi 2012); Côte d'Ivoire (USAID 2011); Liberia (Hartman 2010); Mali (ARD 2010); Sierra Leone (USAID 2010c); South Sudan (Forojalla and Galla 2010); Sudan (El-Tayeb, Nimir, and ElHassan 2006). On water, see Pacific Institute n.d. (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea and Sudan); UNEP 2007 (Sudan), 2010 (Sierra Leone), 2011b (Democratic Republic of the Congo). On herder-herder and farmer-herder conflicts, see BBC 2011 (South Sudan); Bevan 2007 (CAR, Chad, Sudan); Jones-Casey and Knox 2011 (Mali); Djibouti (LOG Associates 2010); Manzubaze 2012 (DRC); WANEP 2011 (Côte d'Ivoire); World Bank 2005b (Somalia). Natural resources have financed conflict in countries such as Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan (UNEP2009a).

³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *2016 Africa Report on Internal Displacement* (Geneva, 2016).

⁴ Uppsala University 2011. (Between 2004 and 2013, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Liberia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan were affected by conflict. The four additional African countries affected by conflict between 1994 and 2013 were the Comoros, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.)

⁵ Africa Progress Panel 2011.

⁶ Kathleen G. Beegle and others, *Poverty in a rising Africa* (Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2016). Available from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/949241467996692059/Poverty-in-a-rising-Africa>.

11. Climate change, in tandem with other drivers of people's increasing exposure and vulnerability, is expected to heighten the risk of displacement globally in the coming years and decades, as extreme weather events become more frequent and intense.⁷ Projected weather patterns over the twenty-first century include an increase in drought and heavy rainfall in Southern and East Africa, more intense precipitation in West Africa and more frequent heatwaves in North Africa.⁸
12. Climate change, coupled with increasing population growth, has led to an increased risk of conflicts related to water demand and access. In most African countries, demand outstrips the available water resources. As water availability constantly declines, partitioning of water for domestic consumption, agriculture and other forms of water use is becoming a subject of serious concern. The failure of State actors to address growing water scarcity, relieve drought conditions and defuse communal tensions has contributed to a rise in insurgent groups, displacement and migration.
13. Displacement and migration associated with drought are becoming a big challenge. Drought is not only about rainfall, although it can be defined in relation to precipitation levels, as is the case with meteorological drought. Agricultural drought describes a situation in which soil moisture is insufficient to sustain crops, forage growth and pasture. Hydrological drought refers to below-average ground and surface water levels that affect activities such as urban water consumption, hydroelectric power production and ecosystem conservation. In the case of both agricultural and hydrological drought, there is no direct relationship with precipitation levels, and there may be a considerable time lag before effects are observed. Environmental drought is a combination of all these factors.
14. Displacement and migration linked to drought have an adverse effect on food security. As seen in several African countries in 2015, 2016 and 2017, unresolved displacement and migration can make food insecurity worse, because planting and harvesting are disrupted while farmers are absent from their land.⁹ This in turn increases the risk of further displacement and migration.

IV. Existing initiatives

15. The Africa Mining Vision was adopted by Heads of State and Government at the February 2009 African Union summit following the October 2008 Conference of Ministers Responsible for Mineral Resources Development. It was considered as Africa's own response to tackling the paradox of great mineral wealth existing side by side with pervasive poverty. It is also about mapping and assessing the performance of mining in Africa, by building an alliance for change between State and citizens – from conflict to common purpose.
16. Signed in November 2006, and launched in 2008, the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region promotes dialogue between member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on relevant issues. It also provides them with tools aimed at breaking the link between armed conflict and revenues from natural resources. The purpose of the initiative is also to provide for sustainable conflict-free mineral chains in and between member States, with a view to eliminating support to armed groups that sustain or prolong conflict, and/or otherwise engage in serious human rights abuses.
17. In November 2016, the Hugo Observatory for Environmental Migration at the University of Liege became the world's first academic entity dedicated to the topic of environmental migration.¹⁰ This reflects an increasingly advanced understanding of environmental displacement, as well as growing research and best practice in the fields of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
18. African Governments have made a series of commitments on collecting and sharing data as part of efforts to prevent internal displacement while also protecting and assisting internally displaced persons. Under these commitments, countries have pledged to incorporate the principles of

⁷ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymakers* (2014), pp. 10–12, 16.

⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014 – Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability: Part B: Regional Aspects*, Working Group II Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014), chap. 22, pp. 1210–1211.

⁹ FEWS NET, “Central African Republic remote monitoring update: Cropping season marked by reduced area planted”, August 2015. Available from <http://www.fews.net/west-africa/central-african-republic/remote-monitoring-report/august-2015>.

¹⁰ More information available from <http://labos.ulg.ac.be/hugo/>.

international law into national legislation and regional frameworks such as the Kampala Convention.¹¹ They have also committed to monitor and report on progress toward disaster risk reduction and development objectives, both nationally and internationally. Targets under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Africa regional strategy for disaster risk reduction, Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals are included in this monitoring and reporting framework.

V. Challenges

A. On natural resources and conflicts

19. Environmental scarcity is determined by environmental change, population size and growth, and unequal distribution of (or access to) resources. Of these factors, unequal access to resources is not bound by physical limits alone. It is also a reflection of societies' preferences, beliefs and norms. With regard to natural resources, the precise roles of the environment in peace, conflict, destabilization and human insecurity may differ from one situation to another, and as such are still being debated in relation to other security and conflict variables. However, there are growing indications that it is increasingly an underlying cause of instability, conflict and unrest.

B. On environmental vulnerability, displacement and migration

20. Population growth is leading to more people living in environmentally vulnerable areas.¹² Already, approximately 26.4 million people are displaced from their homes by natural disasters each year.¹³ According to the *2016 Africa Report on Internal Displacement* (see footnote 3), floods displaced more than 14 million people in Africa between 2009 and 2015. Disasters triggered by floods were the main cause of displacement each year, always accounting for at least 90 per cent of the people who fled their homes.

21. The interlacing trends of climate change, population growth, rising consumption and environmental degradation may lead to greater numbers of people being displaced in the future. This is particularly likely if these trends occur in the context of inadequate responses from Governments and the international community to build the resilience of countries and communities to these changes. The most commonly cited figure is that, globally, there could be as many as 200 million people displaced for environmental reasons by 2050.¹⁴

VI. Conclusion

22. Natural resources can play four key roles in fragile States:

- (a) They can be an asset for peacebuilding and livelihoods;
- (b) Their management practices can be a contributing cause of conflict;
- (c) They can be a source of financing for conflict;
- (d) Drivers that lead to natural resource-related conflicts include competition over scarce resources, poor resource governance and transboundary dynamics.

23. In order to address environmental security and its linkages with sustainable natural resources management, human and ecosystem vulnerability, displacement and migration, Governments in Africa will need to:

- (a) Increase environmental transparency and access to information (particularly in the extractive sector). In certain countries, financial transparency is already promoted, but it is often social

¹¹ African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, adopted 23 October 2009.

¹² Herbert E. Huppert and R. Stephen J. Sparks, "Extreme natural hazards: population growth, globalization and environmental change", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A*, vol. 364, No. 1845 (15 August 2006). Available from <http://rsta.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/364/1845/1875> (accessed 19 May 2017).

¹³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters* (Geneva, 2015). Available from <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2015/global-estimates-2015-people-displaced-by-disasters/>.

¹⁴ While estimates of the numbers of displaced people by 2050 vary from 25 million to 1 billion environmental migrants, 200 million is the most frequently cited number (Oli Brown, "The Numbers Game", *Forced Migration Review* (October 2008)). A more detailed discussion on the various numbers that have been proposed can be found in D. Ionesco, D. Mokhnacheva and F. Gemenne, *The Atlas of Environmental Migration* (London, Routledge, 2016) pp. 12–15.

and environmental impact that drives conflict. Companies and Governments must provide easy access to environmental data;

(b) Inform citizens and involve them in environmental decision-making, planning and monitoring using, among others, digital technology. This includes understanding resource development and reporting illegal exploitation or pollution;

(c) Invest in environmental risk mitigation and mediation to stop disputes from escalating, and identify common interests. This can create a significant change in the quality of stakeholder engagement, trust and benefit sharing. Such investment needs to expand nationally and locally, with systematic involvement of youths and women;

(d) Combine regional efforts to prevent escalation of conflict, fragility or politicization, and rebuild trust in supporting mediation processes through sound natural resources governance;

(e) Increase transboundary cooperation, especially on those resources that cross borders – including water, minerals and biodiversity – and invest in conflict avoidance as well as prevention of illicit trade.

24. The environmental community has an important role to play in building awareness of the ecological drivers of displacement and migration, strengthening the capacity of communities and countries to withstand shocks and environmental change, and helping to plan the relocation of communities likely to be displaced by unavoidable environmental change.

25. In this regard, it is important to have:

(a) Reliable data on population movements, which is vital for ensuring a timely and well-targeted operational and policy response. Evidence of the multiple causes of displacement/migration and its impact on development priorities – such as food security, education, health and the protection of vulnerable groups – can inform more holistic action by Governments and aid agencies;

(b) Information about the numbers and situation of internally displaced persons in urban or other host communities, as distinct from organized camps and sites, and about the length of time people have been displaced, which enables interventions to be better tailored to needs. During recurrent or protracted displacement, evolving risks, needs and vulnerabilities require regular monitoring in order to adapt responses and revise resource projections;

(c) Early warning systems and disaster risk reduction, preparedness and management systems, which also rely on credible data. Baseline information and consistent monitoring can build up an understanding of the needs and coping strategies of people in gradually deteriorating conditions, such as those brought on by drought, which in turn can inform the development of prevention and preparedness plans. The identification of unusual or intensified displacement/migration patterns can serve as an indicator of the need for interventions at least to mitigate a crisis;

(d) Good data, which is also important for understanding past and future displacement and migration trends and their many underlying drivers. It is also the basis for investing effectively in measures to avert disasters, mitigate their effects and support sustainable recovery.
