

REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE SECURITY: NORTH AFRICA & SAHEL (Summary)

MOROCCO, Rabat

As part of its membership in the UN Security Council in 2019/2020, Germany has emphasised the need to address the security implications of climate change and is liaising with partners globally to seek advice on their perspectives and priorities in this realm. To this end, **adelphi** and the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**, with support from the **German Federal Foreign Office** and the **Government of the Kingdom of Morocco**, hosted the **Regional Dialogue on Climate and Security: North Africa and Sahel**, on the 29th of November 2019 in **Rabat**.

The Dialogue brought together high-level representatives from governments across the region, international and regional organisations - including the 3S Initiative, the G5 Sahel, UMA, and the African Union - as well as European partners - to share their experiences and insights on climate security risks at the national and regional level, and to discuss potential strategies for addressing them. The discussions underscored that there is an urgent need for action, especially at the local and national level, but also for international recognition and support for integrated responses.

CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RISKS IN THE REGION

Against the backdrop of a climate-fragility risk brief on North Africa and the Sahel region produced by the [Climate Security Expert Network](#), participants in the Dialogue offered a clear perspective of the challenges at hand:

- **Development, security, and climate pressures already interact** across and within state boundaries in North Africa and the Sahel.
- The fast-changing climate interacts particularly with challenges such as population growth, land and water management issues, decreasing opportunities for livelihood diversification, and increasing youth unemployment rates.
- The impacts of climate change can exacerbate ongoing conflicts between herders and farmers, contribute to migration and associated social conflict, intensify water shortages that might worsen tensions over transboundary water resources and, with livelihoods changing or disappearing, could increase frustration with governments and support for armed non-state groups.
- Climate change acts as a **risk multiplier**, worsening existing conflicts and compounding situations of fragility.

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ENTRY POINTS FOR RESPONSES

Based on this assessment of regional and local security risks compounded by climate change, discussions at the Regional Dialogue identified three areas for action:

1. Holistic climate-fragility risk assessments need to be carried out and supported by early warning systems.
2. The recognition of climate impacts on security needs to result in local and national action, supported by international and regional actors.
3. Building resilience in the region requires greater investments into capacity-building.

1 Given the non-linear and complex relations between climate change and conflict, participants underlined the need for **regionally specific assessments**. An extended knowledge base can help secure the broad recognition of climate-fragility risks and serves as an invaluable starting point for action on the ground. This knowledge can feed into early warning systems at the national and international level, supporting government capacity and responsiveness. Mechanisms like the OPIDIN early warning system for annual floods in the Inner Niger Delta already do so today, offering an opportunity to account for climate-security risk.

2 Meanwhile, responses on the ground need to connect the different elements affecting climate-fragility challenges. **Integrated responses to climate-fragility** are the most effective way of securing a lasting impact. Where climate change disrupts farmers' livelihoods and increases the risk of communal conflicts, water and land management solutions play as big a role as responses to unemployment and migration. While participants highlighted a lack of comprehensive solutions to date, the approach of G5 Sahel can serve as an example of a strategy connecting development, security and climate change.

3 The implementation of such approaches requires **increased capacity** of local stakeholders and governments in particular. Financial resources play a central role in the hurdles that North African and Sahelian countries face in addressing climate-fragility risks. As a result of ongoing conflict, G5 Sahel countries still dedicate large parts of their budget to defence expenditure; this severely hampers the capabilities of states and regional organisations to implement measures addressing human security challenges. Participants argued for the need to place greater emphasis on development and livelihood resilience. For example, the Government of Niger has targeted water management in order to reduce poverty and herder-farmer conflict. With the support of the African Development Bank, it has invested in the construction of small-scale water harnessing structures to promote flood recession cropping and irrigation.

Local action needs support from the international community. To this end, Dialogue participants welcomed the **Berlin Call for Action**, launched at the Berlin Climate and Security Conference in June 2019. Participants noted that its priorities of improving risk-informed planning and increasing capacity for action and operational responses correspond to the wishes and needs of the region. Beyond this, they emphasised that the role of climate impacts on security needs to be integrated into the mandate of international organisations, replicated across international and regional institutions on a structural level - as done at the UN through the Climate Security Mechanism - and acted on locally, through partners such as the 3S Initiative and others.

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The **Climate Security Expert Network**, which comprises some 30 international experts, supports the **Group of Friends on Climate and Security** and the **Climate Security Mechanism of the UN** system by synthesising scientific knowledge and expertise, advising on entry points for building resilience to climate-security risks, and helping to strengthen a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities of addressing climate-related security risks.

www.climate-security-expert-network.org

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