



The Hague International  
Model United Nations

**Forum:** GA1

**Issue:** Climate change: threats to international peace and security

**Student Officer:** Alannah Brown

**Position:** Deputy Chair

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## Introduction

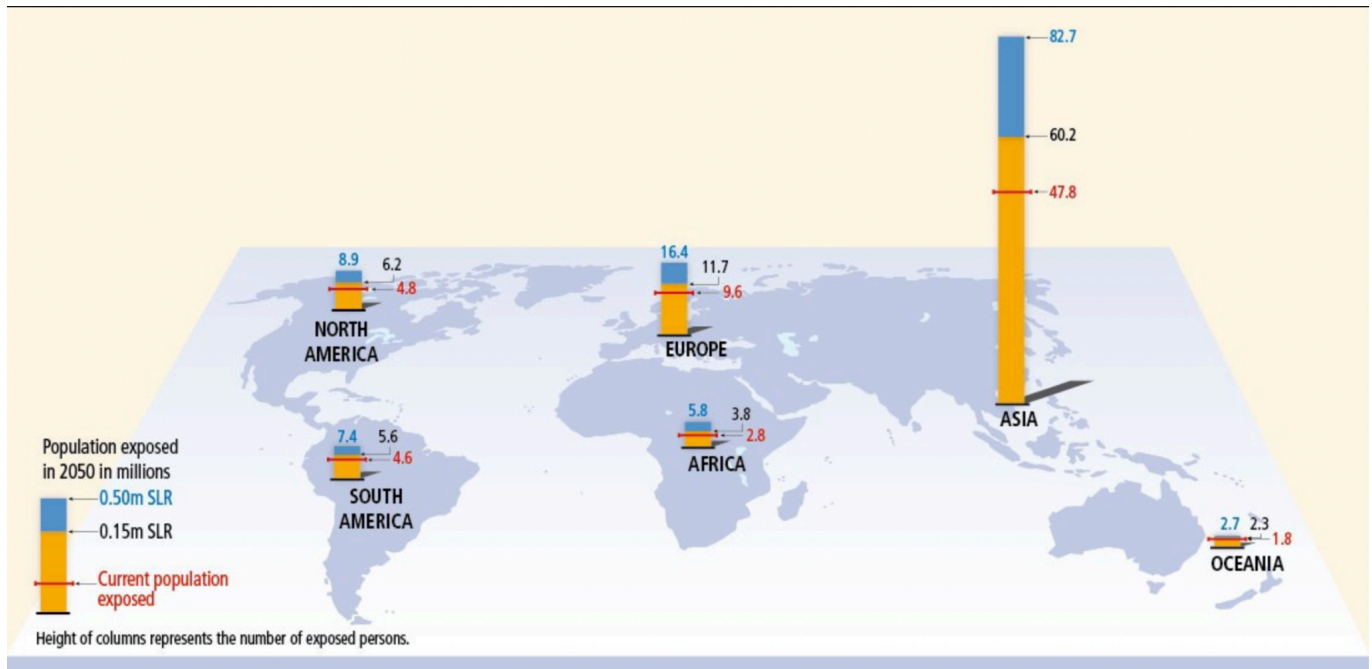
In the twenty-first century, climate change has shifted from being an environmental concern to being one of the most pressing threats to global peace and security. Extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and long-term environmental degradation have in history shaped political instability and socioeconomic resilience. This issue transgresses further for the international community, where the implications of climate change to global stability have become impossible to ignore. For states already grappling with limited resources or that are politically fragile, climate-related pressures completely undermine security institutions and weaken governance, in turn intensifying the risk of violence and instability.

At a national level, climate change only worsens existing challenges. Droughts devastate agriculture which intensifies competition over land and water, coastal erosion and rising sea levels threaten territorial integrity, and extreme weather conditions disrupt supply chains, transport networks and energy grids. With governments unable to respond in time, public trust deteriorates, and the presence of extremist groups and armed conflict becomes more likely.

Beyond internal instability, the security implications extend vastly. Climate change not only affects cross-border dynamics, but also the strategic ploy of states. When natural resources such as freshwater become increasingly scarce, transboundary rivers, such as the Nile, Mekong and Indus, become potential conflict zones. This same threat applies to the rapid melting of Arctic ice, where despite exposing valuable mineral reserves and opening new maritime routes, is prompting territorial claims and intensified military interest. These developments in climate change ultimately risk inflicting conflict in sensitive regions.

Climate-induced displacement is also becoming a significant international challenge, as it increases both the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events as well as slow-onset disasters. The World Bank projects that Climate Change could drive 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050, where hotspots of internal migration could even emerge as soon as 2030 (World Bank Group, 2021).<sup>1</sup> It is vital that the General Assembly projects immediate and concerted action, to support green, resilient and

inclusive development, as it is suggested such effort could reduce the scale of climate migration by 80% (World Bank group, 2021).<sup>2</sup>



*International Climate Impacts - Population Exposed in 2050 (millions)<sup>3</sup>*

## Definition of Key Terms

### Transboundary rivers

A river basin or water source in which crosses through one or more international borders. Transboundary rivers are shared by multiple countries, to which agreements surrounding its management must be cooperative due to shared hydrological, economic and social impacts.

### Climate-induced displacement

The forced movement of people from their homes due to severe climate change impacts that make their homes no longer habitable. Causes include extreme weathers (floods, fires) and slow-onset changes (sea-level rising, drought), where people must migrate usually within their own country, though sometimes across borders. This raises a crisis not fully covered by current refugee laws, but requiring urgent protection for vulnerable populations.

### Threat multipliers

A factor, most notably climate change, that worsens existing issues such as resource scarcity, poverty, disease and political instability, ultimately increasing the likelihood of migration and terrorism, all of which are emergent factors though the multiplier is not necessarily the root cause itself.

### Social cohesion

A society including participation, inclusion and trust in institutions, establishing a harmonious, peaceful environment where diverse groups are able to thrive and collectively solve problems.

### Internal migration

A common phenomenon where people move from one location to another that is within the same country. This is without crossing international borders, and often is a means to seek better employment opportunities, education or living conditions. Sometimes, however, this is due to forced displacement as a result of climate change or conflict.

### Ecologically fragile nations

Countries whose ecosystems are highly fragile to climate changes such as environmental disturbances and degradation, having a limited ability to recover from such shocks. This fragility is however often linked to the nation's capacity to manage multifaceted challenges, a notable example being intertwined environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

## Background Information

In 1977, the concept of climate change as a threat to global security emerged with Environmentalist Lester Brown of the Worldwatch, who wrote in a seminal paper, "Redefining National Security," arguing that "threats to security may now arise less from the relationship of nation to nation and more from the relationship of man to nature."<sup>4</sup> Correspondingly, the United Nations has in recent years become more attentive to the links between climate change and global security.

### Resource Scarcity and Competition

#### Sudan

In practice, at a local level the UNEP has worked directly with communities in Sudan and the Karnali River Basin, North Darfur and Nepal to integrate peacebuilding approaches and climate change adaptation. In Sudan, climate change acts as a threat multiplier to the ongoing civil war, exacerbating competition over dwindling resources such as arable land and water.

According to a study done by the United Nations Development Program and the International Food Policy Research Institute, farming activities in rural households in Sudan have been worryingly reduced. In Sennar and western Kordofan states, up to 60 percent of cultivating activities have ceased. In Khartoum state, this issue persists, where the loss reaches 68 percent. In effect, moderate or severe food insecurity is faced by 59 percent of rural households, extending economic instability. As a result of income losses in particular, many households have been pressured to ration their scarce financial resources towards medical treatment, leaving them vulnerable to starvation.<sup>6</sup>

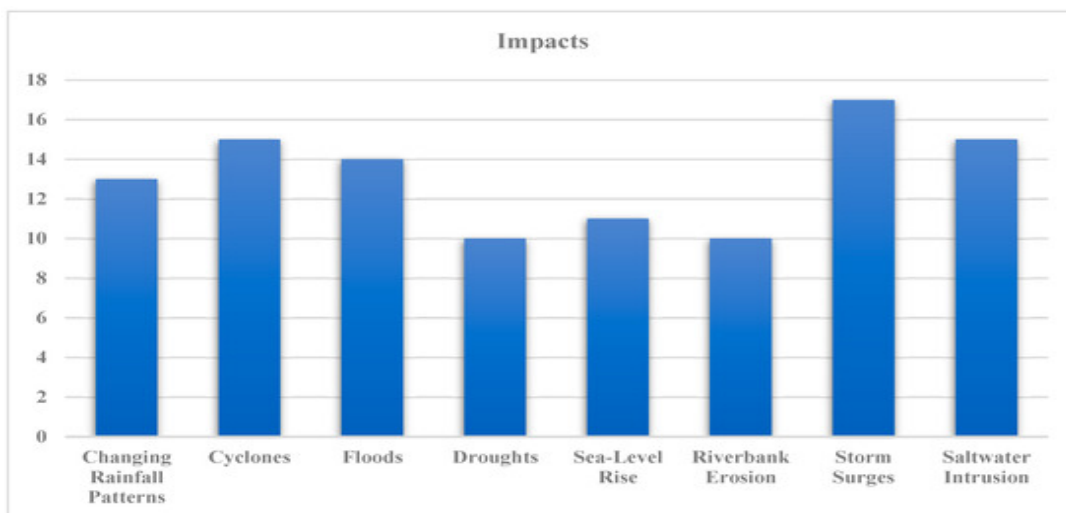
#### Egypt-Ethiopia Nile Dispute

Temperature projections across the Nile Basin have been increasingly consistent, indicating higher temperatures which will in turn cause more evaporation from bodies of water and across the landscape. This reduces water availability, and poses extreme threats to all those who live in the Nile Basin, especially due to the harsh weather events which it will bring.

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan share the waters of the Eastern Nile basin, where Ethiopia stands as the largest source of Nile water and correspondingly the largest user. In 1959, Sudan and Egypt signed a treaty which allocated the resources between the two nations, though providing no water quotas for upstream users. Technical cooperation among the Nile Basin countries has continued, primarily within the framework of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), a partnership among 10 countries.

### **Conflict over Displacement and Migration**

Migration can be divided into both voluntary and forced movements. The latter is often driven by factors linked to conflict or in various cases, environmental degradation due to climate change. Ultimately, people are forced to leave due to natural disasters or long-term climate change impacts. In South Asia, home to 25% of the world's population, this issue is particularly worrying. Approximately 1.8% of the population of South Asia has migrated due to climate-related factors.<sup>7</sup>



*Drivers and pressures of climate-induced migration - (MDPI,2025)<sup>11</sup>*

### **Weakening of State Capacity and Governance**

Climate change strains government resources, eroding legitimacy and increasing the risks of conflict and instability. Somalia in particular, has suffered many years in history from climate change and political instability. As the current drought has resulted in five failed rainy seasons in a row, the nation faces immense challenges with the drought's contribution to cycles of famine and humanitarian crises.

In effect, agricultural and pastoral activities have become challenging and unreliable, and Galmadug and Hirshabelle States have faced increases in migration and hence competition over scarce resources. These challenges place strains on social cohesion and community relations, impeding development efforts

and perpetuating cycles of violence and insecurity. Local and national elites moreover often manipulate natural disasters and local struggles to consolidate control over resources to the expense of weaker groups (SIPRI and NUPI 2022). Alongside such struggles, key government institutions, including the judiciary and law enforcement, lack the capacity to function effectively, in turn threatening their legitimacy.

### Arctic Militarisation

As a result of environmental change in the Arctic, it has evolved into an area of immense geopolitical competition. Condemning the growing militarisation of the Arctic, MEP's point to Russia's extensive military restructuring in combination with China's clear interest in the region. To contain Russia and China and ensure common security in the region, MEP's call for US-EU cooperation. (European Parliament).<sup>16</sup>

## UN and International Involvement

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - Signed in 1992 by 154 states at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), adopted at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, on the 9th of May 1992, with the ultimate aim of preventing dangerous human interference with the climate system.
- Paris Agreement of 2015 - Adopted by 195 parties at COP21 on the 12th of December 2015, the Paris Agreement aims to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” (United Nations)<sup>12</sup>
- UN Climate Security Mechanism - launched to respond to growing calls by member states, regional organisations, experts and policymakers around the world. The CSM has streamlined its work into four priority areas: (1) support to analysis and action; (2) advocacy, partnerships and convening; (3) knowledge co-generation and management; and (4) capacity building. (United Nations)<sup>13</sup>
- Previous efforts by the Security Council: when the council attempted a thematic resolution - UN Security Council Draft Resolution (S/2021/990) - to formally recognise climate change as a threat to international peace and security, the resolution was vetoed by Russia. Both India and Russia voted against initially and China abstained.

### Egypt and Sudan

Since 2011, the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has increasingly become a regional issue, with Egypt and Sudan both playing central roles due to their downstream dependence on Nile water flows. The filling and future operation of the dam have raised concerns that uncoordinated water management could intensify water scarcity, especially during climate-related shocks such as prolonged droughts. On the contrary, this water storage has potential to improve basin-wide climate

resilience. Though the dam was officially inaugurated in 2025, tensions between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan remain due to lack of a legally-binding agreement.

## Bangladesh

By 2050, if current trends persist, it is projected that 62 million people could be displaced.<sup>8</sup> Namely, Bangladesh faces severe internal migration as a result of climate change. The 50 million people living in the coastal areas, and in turn affected by riverbank erosion and rising tides, have been forced into climate-induced displacement. This mass migration led to overcrowded cities, social conflicts including tensions between locals and incoming migrants, and limited resources such as affordable housing.

## India

In India, floods, cyclones and other severe weather conditions have led to increased climate-induced internal migration. Between 1990 and 2016, 235 square kilometres of land were lost due to coastal erosion, forcing residents to relocate.<sup>9</sup> If such weather circumstances persist, by 2050, up to 45 million people in India may be displaced by climate emergencies, notably three times the number of people that are already fleeing due to extreme weather events (MPI).<sup>10</sup>

## China

China is an influential country in terms of international climate negotiations, but has resisted framing climate change as a matter for the UN Security Council, arguing it should remain a developmental issue. China is however the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, responsible for 30-35% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. China's emissions trajectory directly influences threats to international peace and security.<sup>14</sup>

## Russia

Russia accounts for around 5% of greenhouse gas emissions and is one of the world's largest emitters of methane due to its fossil-fuel-based economy. These emissions contribute significantly to near-term warming, which ultimately increases the likelihood of climate-related instability, globally. As a permanent member of the UN security council, Russia consistently opposes climate change as a direct threat to international peace and security, limiting international consensus.<sup>15</sup>

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1972	UN conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm). First global conference to link environmental degradation with international stability.
1992	Rio Earth Summit (UNCED) Conference where the UNFCCC is signed by 154 states. This sets the foundation for global climate governance.
11 December 1997	Kyoto Protocol Adopted (COP3). First binding international agreement that required



developed nations to cut emissions.

17 April 2007	First UN Security Council Debate on Climate Change. The UK convenes the first UNSC session on climate security, framing climate change as a threat multiplier.
20 July 2011	UNSC Presidential Statement under Germany's presidency, on Climate-Security (S/PRST/2011/15). The council issues its first ever formal statement recognising climate change's potential to threaten peace.
11 July 2018	UNSC debate highlights climate risk in Lake Chad (Nigeria and Chad). Countries in the Lake Chad Basin warn the Council that drought and shrinking water resources fuel recruitment for Boko Haram and increase community violence.
22 April 2020	Arria Formula Meeting on climate security (led by Germany, Niger and Tunisia). Niger and Tunisia describe how climate pressures damage food systems and ultimately drive rural instability in the Sahel. Over 60 countries endorse stronger UN climate-security integration.
14 February 2023	UNSC debate on sea level rise (Pacific Islands + Japan). Pacific Island States warn that sea-level rise threatens territorial integrity, maritime boundaries, and could trigger future displacement crises. Japan highlights the impacts on global trade routes.
2024	Climate Security Mechanism Report highlights the instability within the Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger). The Sahel remains one of the world's most climate-fragile regions, where climate-related crises reinforce armed group recruitment and undermine state authority.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Previous international attempts to address climate change as a threat to global peace and security have been primarily led by the United Nations, as well as multilateral agreements. The UN Security Council has held multiple debates recognising climate change as a threat multiplier, and UN bodies such as UNEP and UNDP have integrated climate risk into peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts. However, attempts to formally embed climate change within the Security Council's mandate, including a resolution in 2021, failed due to opposition from Russia and India and an abstention from China. Parallel efforts such as the Paris Agreement (2015) aim to reduce long-term security risks, though these frameworks remain largely voluntary.

## Possible Solutions

To address climate change as a driver of conflict and insecurity, the international community should prioritise coordinated, UN-led responses across key risk areas. In regions facing resource scarcity, the UN could establish water-sharing frameworks in high-risk basins, expand UN peacekeeping mandates to include the monitoring of climate-related resource tensions, or moreover launch a resource resilience fund, targeting conflict-prone areas such as the Sahel or South Asia.

To alleviate conflict surrounding displacement and migration, a UN framework surrounding climate-induced displacement could be established, building on the Global Compact for Migration. As a means to support states dealing with sudden migration surges, nations could work to strengthen UNHCR and IOM coordination.

With increasing risks to state security and governance, UN climate-security advisers could be deployed to fragile states, building risk assessment and disaster-response capacity. To reduce corruption linked to state governance, UNDP governance programs could be strengthened, alongside integrating climate-resilience into peace-keeping missions.

With Arctic tensions rising over melting glaciers, it is also vital that international cooperation aids in ensuring transparency on resource extraction and navigation. Launching a joint Arctic-climate monitoring system and establishing a UN backed Arctic peace zone could prevent military exercises in ecologically fragile areas. Furthermore, preventing disputes could be achieved through a UNCLOS based settlement of territorial claims.

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