WEATHERING RISK

Africa Climate Security Risk Assessment

Executive Summary

adelphi **a**

African Union

Executive Summary

Introduction

BACKGROUND

The effects of global warming in Africa are among the most serious threats to human security on the continent. Climate change impacts affect the security of African countries and societies both directly and indirectly by exacerbating existing political, peace and security, and socioeconomic and development challenges. These challenges particularly affect vulnerable social groups, such as women, young people, children, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, people with disabilities, and other minority groups.

While Africa is one of the lowest contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to the intersection of different socioeconomic, political and environmental challenges. The climate crisis has already caused significant harm to biodiversity, water security, food production, life, health and economic growth, and climate change impacts are projected to worsen significantly over the coming decades.

Given these challenges, the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), together with the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and African Group of Negotiators (AGN), agreed to advance Africa's priorities in ensuring effective and holistic responses to climate change at national, regional and continental levels. As part of these efforts, the AU Peace and Security Council (AU-PSC), through multiple decisions, encouraged all member states, and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution (RECs/RMs) to further enhance their climate change resilience and mitigation capacities, and develop credible climate early warning systems, as well as integrated responses to climate-related security risks. This is to be done in addition to expediting the finalisation of the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Study on the Nexus between Climate Change, Peace and Security on the Continent.

The AU-PSC requested the AU Commission conduct a study on the nexus through its Press Statement (PSC/PR/BR. DCCLXXIV) of May 2018 on "the link between climate change and conflicts in Africa and addressing the security implications." It subsequently reiterated in the PSC Communiqué of the 1051st Meeting of 26 November 2021 to expedite the finalisation of a climate-related security risks assessment study, in consultation with AU member states, and to define the varying security impacts of climate change on the African continent, while taking steps towards mobilising a Common African Position on Climate Change, Peace and Security.

GOAL

The Africa Climate Security Risk Assessment (ACRA) serves these functions, and analyses the interlinkages between climate, peace and security across the African continent. It provides the basis for the development of a chairperson report on the nexus between climate change, peace and security on the African continent, as well as the Common African Position on Climate Change, Peace and Security.

The ACRA provides an in-depth analysis of key climate security risks from a continental perspective and emerging good practices to address them. This comparative analysis is based on regional assessments for Northern Africa, Western Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa that include the main climate security risk pathways for each region, as well as regional responses and good practices. An additional focus is put on transregional geographies, in particular African island states, the Congo, Lake Chad Basin, transboundary waters and the Sahel. Figure 1 provides an overview of the outcomes of the different regional assessments that will be explored in the report. Finally, the report provides recommendations regarding how to better address climate-related security risks across the continent.
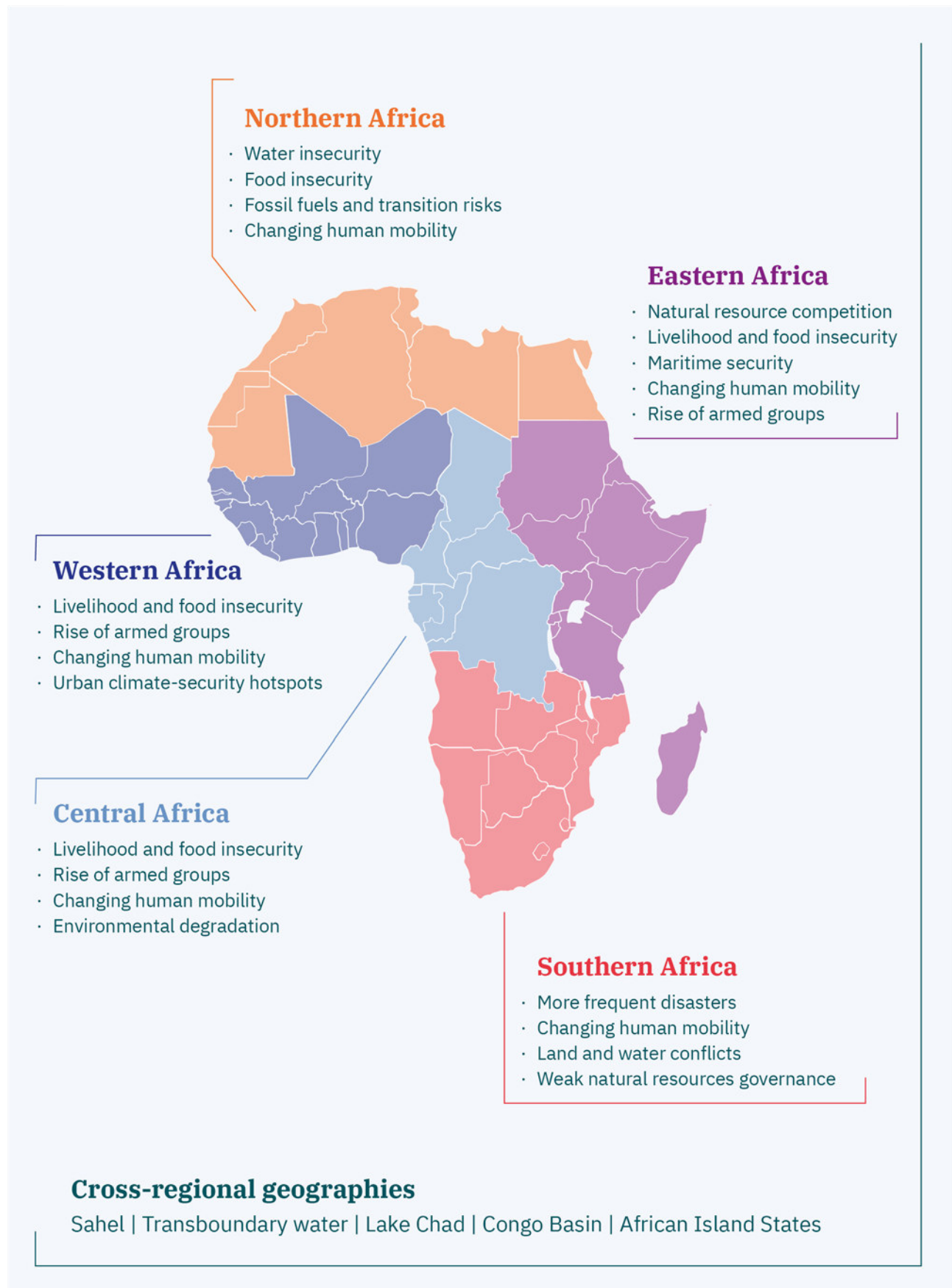
Key Climate Security Pathways

Northern Africa

· Water insecurity
· Food insecurity
· Fossil fuels and transition risks
· Changing human mobility

Eastern Africa

· Natural resource competition
· Livelihood and food insecurity
· Maritime security
· Changing human mobility
· Rise of armed groups

Western Africa

· Livelihood and food insecurity
· Rise of armed groups
· Changing human mobility
· Urban climate-security hotspots

Central Africa

· Livelihood and food insecurity
· Rise of armed groups
· Changing human mobility
· Environmental degradation

Southern Africa

· More frequent disasters
· Changing human mobility
· Land and water conflicts
· Weak natural resources governance

Cross-regional geographies

Sahel | Transboundary water | Lake Chad | Congo Basin | African Island States

Figure 1: Key climate security risk pathways across African regions and geographies (elaborated by adelphi)

11 insights on climate change, peace and security in Africa

The understanding of the links between climate change, peace and security has increased significantly over recent decades and Africa is one of the best researched regions in the world on this topic. At the same time, a lot of the action to address climate-related security risks has also been focused on Africa, providing a good basis to distil emerging responses and good practices. The following chapter summarises the main results of the ACRA structured along 11 insights on climate, peace and security. The first six insights focus on how and what kind of climate-related security risks Africa faces. These are followed by five insights on responses and good practices to address the security risks arising from climate change.

1. **Natural resource management conflicts are an increasing and complex challenge**
   Increasing competition over natural resources is a key climate security challenge across the African continent, especially because many Africans are directly dependent on natural resources for food and livelihood security. Climate impacts are compounding other pressures on natural resources such as land, water and forests, and are affecting access to and the availability of resources. Where small arms are readily available, histories of conflict or social and ethnic cleavages exist, groups are marginalised, and natural resource and conflict management institutions are dysfunctional. This competition can turn into violent conflict. Tensions and conflicts over resources are increasing – mostly on a local level, but also in interstate competition.

2. **Livelihoods, and food, water and energy security are under pressure**
   Livelihoods, and food, water and energy security are under pressure across the continent. Climate impacts are increasingly aggravating other challenges around food, water and energy security. Today, 1.34 billion Africans experience water insecurity, 20 per cent of Africa's population are affected by hunger, and access to cheap and reliable energy is often lacking (FAO et al. 2023). Particularly, in already unstable situations, livelihoods, and food, water and energy insecurity can drive a number of security-related challenges. Effects include public discontent over food prices, declining government legitimacy after weather-induced disasters, maladaptive practices such as small-scale mining and charcoal production, and the recruitment into non-state armed groups.

3. **Climate-induced human mobility creates opportunities and risks**
   Human mobility has been an integral part of the way of life for many communities across Africa for centuries. It remains an important part of livelihood activities, and coping and adapting to change. Climate impacts are increasingly playing a role in these dynamics and are accelerating a number of mobility trends: mostly migration within countries and into cities, but also regional and international migration. The risks for both migrants and host communities increase when movements are forced, sudden, irregular and/or unplanned, or occur at a larger scale. Mobility-related demographic pressures can drive tensions and conflicts. However, if migration is well-managed and coordinated, it is and will remain an important driver of economic development and resilience.

4. **Non-state armed groups are actively exploiting climate security risks and governance issues**
   Climate-related security risks are providing a fertile breeding ground for non-state armed groups, such as militia, terrorist and criminal groups, in Africa. Climate impacts are also affecting their tactics. In particular, where state institutions are weak and corrupt, these groups can fill the gaps left by the state to provide services and governance. Climate impacts, through their effects on livelihoods, are also contributing to the ability of these groups to recruit new members. Armed groups can weaponise natural resources by attacking infrastructure and benefit operationally from climate-related hazards. In turn, their operations exacerbate environmental challenges when extracting resources and committing environmental crimes.

5. **Climate-related security risks in Africa have a geopolitical dimension**
   Climate-related security risks in Africa are highly dependent and influenced by a number of external factors. Geopolitics and policies in other parts of the world, especially with regard to food trade and food security, extrac-

tive resources, energy, trade, and migration. Geopolitics shapes climate insecurity drivers and Africa's ability to adapt to climate shocks. Interactions with international actors can help to strengthen food security and economic development, but can also drive conflict. Similarly, multinational companies can play an important role in offering socioeconomic opportunities, but can also exacerbate climate security risks, especially when they engage in corruption and rent-seeking practices that drive environmental degradation.

6. **Climate-related security risks are intersectional**

There are a number of individual risk factors that shape climate-related security risks, including gender, age, disability and socioeconomic status. Marginalisation, inequality and exclusion are experienced differently depending on how these factors intersect. In general, the more vulnerable an individual, the more they are impacted by climate-related security risks. Social groups that have historically been marginalised, such as women, young people, children, IDPs and refugees, people with disabilities, and other minorities, tend to be more affected by the compounding impacts of climate change as they often lack access to resources, opportunities or services necessary for coping and adapting. In particular, gender-based violence (GBV) in the aftermath of disasters is a key climate security risk across the continent.

7. **Early warning and early action systems are well developed, but key challenges remain in integrating the climate-conflict nexus**

Early warning analysis to inform planning and action is a major component of addressing climate-related security risks. These systems are also at the heart of prevention strategies, both in terms of preparing for natural hazards and addressing violent conflict or other threats to human security. Even though many African actors at different levels have developed extensive early warning and early action systems, some key challenges in terms of mainstreaming the climate-conflict nexus remain. In particular, African early warning systems require greater horizontal integration between climate and weather-focused early warning, and conflict early warning, as well as vertical integration across continental, regional, national and local levels.

8. **Nature-based solutions and integrated natural resource management approaches have proven effective in addressing climate-related security risks**

Across the continent, nature-based solutions and integrated approaches that link livelihoods, natural resource management and peacebuilding have proven to be effective in addressing many climate-related security risks and building resilience. The lessons they provide can guide future programming and upscaling. In particular, if done in a conflict-sensitive, bottom-up, participatory and inclusive way, using local and traditional knowledge and practices combined with an intersectional approach, nature-based solutions and environmental peacebuilding can have broader stabilising impacts, and build more resilient and sustainable livelihoods.

9. **Local, traditional and indigenous knowledge and solutions are key success factors for addressing climate-related security risks**

Local, traditional and indigenous practices, knowledge and institutions are often important success factors when it comes to sustainable natural resource management, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and environmental protection. Many communities deeply understand their local ecosystems and practices adapted to their specific environments, which can be effective in helping communities cope with the impacts of climate change. Having often been disrupted by colonialism, traditional institutions and practices are also key for preventing and resolving conflicts peacefully. At the same time, with increasing climate pressures, certain traditional and customary practices are no longer effective or viable. Furthermore, in some cases, these practices can hinder climate adaptation, for example, by reinforcing gender inequalities. Thus, it is important to thoroughly assess and support existing practices, and reconcile them with science-based approaches.

10. **Africa is leading in institutional innovations and cross-sectoral cooperation to address climate-related security risks**

Recent years have seen an impressive increase in the creation of dedicated institutions and cross-sectoral cooperation mechanisms to address climate-related security risks. Globally, Africa is a leader when it comes to innovation in this area. In Western and Eastern

Africa, regional organisations and the United Nations have been at the forefront of institutional innovations. At the same time, there has been an increase in continental initiatives, such as the Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace initiative launched by the Egyptian COP27 presidency and the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative created in 2021.

11. **Responses are lagging behind risks**
While there has been a lot of progress in addressing climate-related security risks, responses still lag far behind the scale of risks Africa faces. Huge financing gaps remain across the continent for both climate action, and peacebuilding and conflict prevention. While there have been significant improvements in terms of strengthening capacities to assess and address climate-related security risks, significant capacity gaps remain across Africa. These capacities are still mostly lacking on the local and national levels. Strategies addressing climate-related security risks mainly focus on the regional level, while similar national-level strategies often do not exist or fail to apply a climate security lens. The implementation of policies is hampered due to a lack of clarity regarding ownership and coordination, as well as a lack of harmonisation between peace and security architecture on the one hand, and the climate and development pillar on the other hand.

Recommendations

Climate-related security risks are increasing across the African continent, particularly around natural resource competition, access to food, water and energy, migration and displacement, and armed groups. At the same time, insecurity and conflict are further driving environmental degradation, and hindering climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

In order to break this vicious cycle of increasing climate change impacts, environmental degradation, insecurity and instability, ambitious action is needed. This includes, first and foremost, ambitious mitigation action to reduce GHG emissions and keep warming to a minimum following the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. At the same time, efforts to adapt to climate change and directly address climate-related security risks must be massively scaled up. Address-

ing the links between climate change, peace and security is a key building block for broader development, and fostering a stable, peaceful and prosperous continent. The intersection between climate security and development forms a crucial nexus that presents opportunities to solve tensions between environmental stability and socioeconomic progress. The following six recommendations outline key areas that can help to better address climate-related security risks in Africa.

AFRICAN CHALLENGES NEED AFRICAN SOLUTIONS

While there are important commonalities in terms of the climate-related security risks that African countries and societies are facing, the pathways or specific ways they play out and their dynamics are always highly localised and context specific. Histories of conflict, marginalisation, identity, the behaviour of political, traditional and business leaders, the underlying political economy and power structures, and governance structures and institutions are all decisive in translating climate risks into security and conflict risks. These factors are highly contextual, and change from region to region, country to country and community to community. This means that, in order to address climate-related security risks, the following areas should receive particular attention:

- **Strengthen analysis, research and data collection:** To inform appropriate solutions, African analysis, research and data collection capacities have to be improved to provide more contextualised analysis of how climate-related security risks play out.

- **Use local and traditional knowledge and institutions:** Using local, traditional and indigenous knowledge and institutions are important success factors for climate security interventions and should be a key part of an integrated approach.

- **Harness the potential of the younger generation:** With access to appropriate tools, younger people can drive rapid development and innovation. However, this will require a strong foundation of education and employment opportunities.

- **Ensure African island states are not left behind:** Island states need specifically designed solutions, access to finance and capacity building. This should include enhancing maritime awareness and enforcement capacities, investing

in early warning and disaster risk reduction, developing an integrated approach to water, food and energy security, and regular dialogue and knowledge-sharing platforms.

FINANCING CLIMATE SECURITY ACTIONS

In order to address climate-related security risks in their whole breadth, and build more resilient and sustainable economies, societies and states in Africa, access to finance will be key. There are a number of specific areas that need urgent action:

- **Close the adaptation financing gap:** There is an urgent need to invest in risk prevention and resilience building if the worst climate-related security risks are to be avoided. This includes better and easier access to finance, and investment in absorption capacities. In addition, operationalising an international loss and damage mechanism is necessary to compensate for destruction already caused by climate change.

- **Reach the most vulnerable, conflict-affected and fragile contexts:** Financing for these contexts has to be ramped up and easily accessible, while capacities to manage these funds need to be strengthened, especially at the country level.

- **Strengthen African financing facilities:** Access to the African Risk Facility has to be improved and the African Peace Fund could play a pivotal role in addressing climate security risks on the continent. However, it urgently needs to be scaled up.

- **Provide integrated financing to scale up climate security actions:** With substantive dedicated climate security funding schemes, the initial experiences of addressing climate-related security risks and the emerging good practices documented in this report should be scaled up and further developed.

INSTITUTIONS, COOPERATION AND CAPACITIES FOR PREVENTIVE ACTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING

Climate-related security risks will increase significantly over the coming years and decades. In order to prevent the worst impacts, there is a need to move away from a reactive, responsive approach to a more proactive, anticipatory approach that focuses on prevention and resilience building, and supports sustainable development more broadly. In order for this to happen, the following areas could serve as important entry points:

- **Mainstreaming climate security into strategies and policies:** Climate, peace and security should be fully mainstreamed in all relevant strategic and policy frameworks, including national adaptation plans, nationally determined contributions, climate change action plans, peace plans, interventions and architectures, defence strategies, stabilisation frameworks, and sectoral policies such as water, agriculture and energy.

- **Continue to strengthen the climate-conflict nexus in early warning and early action:** It is important that such systems draw clear linkages to indirect, cascading risks related to climate change and environmental stress by incorporating a clear set of climate security indicators. In addition, such systems should link to and build upon local institutions, indigenous knowledge and civil society.

- **Foster cross-sectoral cooperation:** The goal is to improve operational responses, in particular, by making peacebuilding and conflict prevention climate-sensitive, and climate action conflict-sensitive. As part of this effort, institutions must provide strong leadership and incentives to nurture such cooperation.

- **Develop and strengthen climate security capacities and institutions:** Organisations need dedicated climate security specialists, and vertical and horizontal cooperation and coordination structures. In addition, organisations and institutions at all levels should establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability. To nurture these developments, there needs to be a concerted effort towards exchanging experiences, providing training and building capacity in this field, for example, through an AU-led training facility for climate security.

- **African cities as transformative force:** African cities should leverage their human capital, increase efforts to tackle rising inequality and exclusion, and provide an enabling environment for the green transition. A particular focus should be put on improving cross-sectoral cooperation to foster localised solutions that address social, economic, environmental and political challenges in an integrated manner, such as through inclusive urban planning and development initiatives.

A STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY IS RESILIENCE

Civil society is at the forefront of addressing climate-related security risks. Civil society actors are advocates and catalysts for necessary change, and indispensable partners in building more resilient societies and states, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. In order to play an effective role in addressing climate-related security risks, the following areas are key:

- **Build capacities and awareness:** More climate security capacities for civil society will be pivotal to fill the action gap concerning these risks on the local level. To enable civil society action on climate-related security risks, it will be important to raise awareness, provide good practices, and finance training and capacity building.

- **Partner for implementation:** Efforts to harness the strengths of civil society should be scaled up to ensure delivery on the ground. This includes leveraging civil society experiences in implementing projects in challenging environments, networks and implementation structures, and local contextual knowledge and analytical capacities to establish effective partnerships and address climate security risks.

- **Protections for those at the forefront of climate security risks:** Environmental defenders and human rights activists require greater engagement, awareness and protection mechanisms. This includes prioritising investments in the protection, empowerment and capacity of environmental defenders.

- **Engage the private sector:** In collaboration with the private sector, civil society can facilitate the private sector's constructive involvement in addressing climate-related security risks. This may include ensuring that infrastructure developments are sensitive to both conflict and climate concerns, and yield tangible benefits for local communities.

INTERSECTIONALITY IS KEY TO ADDRESSING VULNERABILITY

The most vulnerable individuals and groups are the most affected by climate-related security risks. Gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation combine and shape risks on an individual level. In order to ensure that the most vulnerable are reached, the following areas of action are key:

- **Understand differences:** It is imperative that when data is collected, it is disaggregated by gender, age and other factors that shape risk and resilience. In addition, climate security assessments need to critically reflect these factors and use an intersectional research lens. Climate security action needs to be tailored to also include the most vulnerable.

- **Ensure broad inclusivity:** To effectively address climate-related security risks, it is important to broaden participation and ensure that the voices of the most marginalised are part of the decision-making process from policies to projects on the ground. This includes programmes to enable and empower effective participation, developing leadership skills and establishing inclusive platforms.

- **Focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable:** Climate security action needs to focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable. This means that actions should be targeted towards women, children, young people, IDPs and refugees, people with disabilities, and other minority groups to ensure that interventions are inclusive and specifically address the root causes of marginalisation.

- **Address gender-based violence**: Action on GBV needs to be integrated across climate security programming and scaled up in general. This includes improving the legal, social and physical protection of women and girls on the move.

NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE

Addressing climate-related security risks is closely linked to ensuring climate justice. Africa is globally one of the worst-affected continents in terms of climate impacts, conflicts and their interlinkages, while being one of the least responsible in terms of causing climate change. This injustice needs to be addressed. In terms of climate-related security risks, this includes the following:

- **Amplify and unify African voices:** While some African countries have used the international stage to underline the urgent need to act on climate-related security risks, Africa's collective voice has not yet reached the level it should. A common position on climate, peace and security could be a key step in this regard. In addition, joint African diplomatic initiatives and capacities to urgently address climate-related security risks should be developed.

- **Ensure a just transition:** African countries and international partners need to ensure that there is sufficient investment into the green transition on the African continent, thereby enabling equal opportunities for growth and development. This includes developing local value chains for green technologies to address the perception that African countries are simply providers of valuable raw materials for the rest of the world.

- **Foster environmental justice:** Climate-related security risks must be addressed through an environmental justice approach, which includes recognising the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as promoting the realisation of environmental protection and restoration through a rights-based approach. This includes integrating conservation efforts with ecosystem services, local livelihoods, and conflict prevention and resolution.

- **Reduce external risks:** Climate-related security risks are shaped by policies that are devised by countries outside of Africa. As such, non-African countries have a responsibility to ensure that key policies on food, migration, corruption, minerals and development cooperation are climate security-sensitive and do not exacerbate risks on the African continent.

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AUTHORS
Lukas Rüttinger (adelphi), Lukas Destrijcker (adelphi),
Héctor Morales-Muñoz (adelphi), Adrian Foong (adelphi),
Jakob Gomolka (adelphi), Lisa Binder (PIK),
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Century Issues), Anna Belli (CGIAR), Matthew Brubacher,
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Michel Saraka (ECOWAS), Barbora Šedová (PIK) and
Victor Villa (CGIAR)

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