

INCAF Common Position on climate change, biodiversity and environmental fragility

PURPOSE

Addressing the causes of fragility is essential to effective action on climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation in fragile contexts. Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation fuel fragility and in turn, fragility makes it hard to adapt to climate change, reduce and manage climate-related risks, and cope with the impacts of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. Supporting the 2021 *DAC Declaration on a new approach to align development cooperation with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change*, this International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) Common Position establishes four good practice principles for better knowledge, analysis, financing and strategies to drive more effective approaches to climate change, biodiversity and environmental fragility in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

THE CASE FOR A COMMON POSITION

The impact of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation places additional demands on fragile contexts that are already struggling to cope with multiple pressures, crises and shocks. Fragile and conflict-affected contexts harbour some of the world's biodiversity hotspots, which are critical to regulate the world's climate. Climate and human-induced disruptions affect the root causes, drivers and risks factors of multidimensional fragility and conflict, and will cascade across living and social systems, often in complex and unpredictable ways. Similarly, conflicts can cause extensive damage to the environment, cause biodiversity loss and amplify the effects and impacts of climate change with a consequent increase in fragility. For most fragile contexts, and for those also facing conflict, addressing these realities will require working across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, integrating climate resilience and adaptation strengthening activities, conflict prevention, humanitarian aid, DRR, including through anticipatory action and other policy priorities as required.

INCAF recognises that each context presents unique opportunities and challenges and that the general principles articulated in the Common Position must be rooted in context. The Common Position recalls relevant prior instruments and agreements and supports the ambition to make humanitarian, development and peace approaches more coherent through the following principles:

Principle 1: Integrate responses to fragility and to climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation for more effective approaches

This includes:

- 1. Analysing multidimensional fragility for effective responses to climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.** *As the world tries to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C and aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, building preparedness to climate-related hazards and strengthening resilience against their impacts depends on environmentally aware, flexible, adaptive and anticipatory ways of working - financially, programmatically and operationally. This means linking environmental resilience, regeneration, protection, restoration of biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation – notably through the use of nature-based solutions and eco-DRR (ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction)- to approaches for conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding in fragile contexts.*
- 2. Building nature- and ecosystem-based programming and investments for fragile contexts, including for eco-DRR.** *Donor support should focus on approaches integrating nature-based¹ and regenerative solutions with strong environmental and social safeguards across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to foster resilience, build peace, contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and provide a range of economic and social benefits. This includes conflict-sensitive green growth, circular economies, adaptation and resilience-focused investments.*
- 3. Fostering the leadership of women, marginalised groups and local communities in fragile contexts.** *Women, indigenous peoples and local communities are key agents of change and sources of solutions in climate change adaptation, biodiversity protection, social cohesion, and resilience efforts. The effectiveness and sustainability of preparedness and responses to biodiversity loss, environmental and climate change will depend on context-specific and localised approaches, including through local decision-making power and resources, and on the ability to transform barriers of discrimination into levers of change and empowerment for women, girls and other marginalised groups. Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation affect women and girls disproportionately, and centering the leadership of women is crucial to effective and sustainable climate mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk management.*
- 4. Identifying the links between drivers of fragility and the dynamics of energy transitions in fragile contexts.** *Fragility and energy poverty are closely interlinked. Scaling energy access, securing clean energy and managing energy transitions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts represent an opportunity for positive transformation, and require looking at vulnerabilities, preparedness and coping capacities of individual contexts. Working with*

¹ UNEA Resolution 5/5 on Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development (2022)

partners to mitigate unintended harmful consequences on conflict and on the environment, and create inclusive dialogue on energy solutions is essential for building resilience, mitigating socio-economic uncertainty, and reducing the potential for conflict.

5. **Addressing conflict risk through inclusive resource management.** *Identifying the connections between fragility, scarcity of and access to resources also helps identify entry points for resilience and conflict prevention. Integrating responses to water and land stress, and natural resource scarcity, including food and maritime resources, is essential for effective outcomes. Tailored approaches across natural – renewable and non-renewable - resource management, dispute resolution, and conflict mitigation are central to reducing risk and preventing deepening fragility and conflict.*

Principle 2: Strengthen local data, knowledge and systems to respond to the disproportionate impact of climate change and environmental degradation in fragile contexts.

This includes:

1. **Developing and sharing data and knowledge on the impact of environmental change in fragile contexts.** *Building the evidence base on the impact of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation on specific groups – such as women, children, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities – is essential for informed and effective actions in fragile contexts. Supporting local initiatives to analyse, understand and address knowledge gaps, drivers and risks in biodiversity loss, climate and environmental change provides the basis for informed debate on policy responses². This includes initiatives such as forecasting, collecting weather, ecosystem status and natural resources data, developing early warning systems and climate-related data ecosystems³. Collecting, analysing and sharing information and data for dialogue on climate, the environment and fragility supports effective communications, trust, and accountability on actions to address climate-related risks. Understanding the links between conflict and biodiversity loss, environmental and climate change is key to inform a peaceful transition.*
2. **Targeting local priorities and supporting local systems.** *As first responders to rising tensions, affected populations and local actors should contribute to defining and prioritising needs, addressing societal and systemic changes in an inclusive, peaceful and sustainable way. Climate change adaptation, and mitigation and measures that address biodiversity loss are particularly weak in many fragile and conflict-affected countries where environmental and climate change, as well as biodiversity loss, are risk multipliers for conflict. Building partnerships can help address specific points where coping-capacities and risks converge.*

² By emphasizing the added value of multidimensional fragility analysis for effective action, this Common Position complements the priority areas of action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks outlined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

³ Envisioning a climate change data ecosystem - A path to co-ordinated climate action | Paris 21

Integrating an ecological perspective into analysis and programme design can address the points of overlap between climate-related risks and drivers of fragility affecting livelihoods, gender inequality, migration and mobility, security and governance.

Principle 3: Increase and tailor financing to address climate change, biodiversity and environmental fragility in fragile contexts.

This includes:

- 1. Increasing investments targeting the environment, addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and building resilience, while promoting peace.** *Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are not often a priority for governments in fragile contexts faced with multiple drivers of fragility, who also have constraints on the volume of ODA and private finance they receive to address these issues. Proportionally lower greenhouse gases emitters, fragile contexts have nevertheless extremely high pressure to adapt to climate change, experience relatively higher levels of environmental fragility and will bear significant impact from climate-related losses and damages. Efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, manage climate-related risks and loss and damages, and address other sources of environmental fragility will require actions that are balanced and informed by efforts to address the root causes of fragility. Given the complexity of programming for climate change or biodiversity, and acknowledging the multi-dimensional challenges facing fragile contexts, donors can work to ensure better access to conflict sensitive climate- and biodiversity-related development finance, as well as promote local access to global policy frameworks and norms, for instance through accessible formats.*
- 2. Tailoring financing approaches to work in fragile contexts and support debt sustainability.** *Especially in terms of environment and climate funds, many existing funds rely on lending and nationally driven strategies and processes that are administratively heavy for countries with limited capacities, and little or no space to carry further debt. Adapting financial tools to the reality of limited local capacity can help to support more sustainable and comprehensive solutions in the longer term. This could include for instance exploring options to open up fiscal space by linking debt and other fiscal discussions to progress on climate, biodiversity and environmental goals, as well as blended finance and impact investment options.*
- 3. Linking financing and policy development dialogue.** *As evidence increases on the complex interlinkages between environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change impact, disasters and fragility, donors must adapt to address compound and cascading risks. Joined-up donor policy and financing can have a significant impact on climate change factors in fragile contexts, in which the potential for peace outcomes can be explored. Donors are committed to scaling up climate- and biodiversity-related development finance, seeking a balance between climate change adaptation and mitigation and reflecting country-driven strategies.*

4. **Investing in financial preparedness for shocks.** *This is particularly acute in fragile contexts where the impact of climate and other environmental hazards can necessitate rapid responses to address issues such as disasters, food insecurity, weaknesses in social safety nets, and government fiscal risks. When shocks do occur, look for opportunities within the crisis to promote climate and environmental resilience as a priority, but also climate-aware and nature-based solutions that promote conflict prevention, crisis management and response, peacebuilding and reconstruction.*

Principle 4: Devise regional strategies to respond to environmental fragility acknowledging the transnational drivers of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.

This includes:

1. **Building diplomacy on environmental fragility.** *Addressing context-specific environmental causes of fragility can be vital for conflict prevention, mediation, crisis management and peacebuilding as a means to cross-border and regional programming aligned with conflict prevention, mediation, crisis management and peacebuilding. Supporting participation of representatives from fragile contexts in international and other negotiations can help address their specific needs. Partnerships with regional organisations like the African Union, ASEAN, ECOWAS, CILSS and regional development banks, as well as the G7 Climate, Environment, Peace and Security Initiative⁴, can help address transnational drivers of fragility and support collective responses that address aspects of environmental fragility at scale, including by drawing on the experiences of environmental peacebuilding, eco-DRR and the application of international environmental law.*
2. **Highlighting cross-border/trans-boundary environmental fragility and shared resources.** *Effective solutions to trans-boundary environmental issues and shared resources require regional approaches. In turn, effective regional responses require a holistic analysis and inclusive dialogue on transboundary impacts. This can be supported by building awareness of the regional impact of environmental and ecosystem degradation and the impacts of human activities like the construction of dams, mining, irrigation, fishing and transboundary grazing practices.*
3. **Addressing the fragility associated with climate-change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and impacts in coastal areas and small island developing states.** *Rising sea levels resulting from climate change and other environmental fragilities will primarily affect small island states and low-lying coastal states, including through coastal erosion and salinization of fresh water sources, and degradation of marine ecosystems. Environmental fragility in these areas cascades into other dimensions of fragility, with economic, political, and societal consequences that in turn require holistic, multi-sectoral responses.*

⁴ Announced by G7 Foreign Ministers in May 2022