

The practice of the UN Security Council pertaining to the environment and armed conflict, 1945–2021

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Abstract

Contemporary ecological and climate crises have thrown into sharp relief debates around what roles and responsibilities, if any, international security bodies ought to have in addressing environment-related matters. Building on a wider catalogue of the United Nations Security Council's practice concerning the environment, in this article, we provide a snapshot of the Council's practice pertaining in particular to the environment and armed conflict. In addition to setting out key aspects relating to the personal, geographical and temporal scope of that practice, we identify four armed-conflict-related substantive themes arising in the Security Council's actions in this area: (1) relations between conflict and natural resources;

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(2) relations between conflict and adverse environment-related phenomena; (3) relations between conflict and chemical and biological weapons; and (4) adverse impacts of conflict on the environment. Through this examination, we aim in part to provide stakeholders with a more extensive and detailed basis on which to evaluate what actions the Council has taken – and, by inference, which actions it has not taken – with respect to the environment and armed conflict.

Keywords: Security Council, United Nations, environment, climate change, armed conflict.

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Introduction

War, peace and the environment have long been – and, in several significant respects, are likely to be increasingly – linked in numerous impactful ways. For example, scholars have set out links between a notion of environmental scarcity – that is, the paucity of certain natural resources – and the occurrence of conflict.¹ Resource capture by powerful groups and resultant competition over scarce resources might present opportunities for “violent collective action”, which may contribute to instability and conflict.² Environmental degradation and biodiversity loss have similarly been linked to the possibility of violent conflict.³ Furthermore, transnational environmental crime might serve as a source of financing for certain non-State actors implicated in conflict, including some characterized as terrorists.⁴ Conflict, in turn, may adversely impact the environment, including the availability of natural resources, potentially fuelling further instability.⁵ Arguably, the most prominent contemporary linkage involving war, peace and the environment may be located in the domain of climate-related concerns. Climate change and its associated effects have been described as some of “the top items on the security agenda of many states and international organizations”,⁶ not least the United Nations (UN). The characterization of climate change as a “threat multiplier” capable of exacerbating

1 See e.g. Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases”, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1994; Phillip Stalley, “Environmental Scarcity and International Conflict”, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2003, p. 54 (“Environmental scarcity is a security risk of considerable importance”). But see Ole Magnus Theisen, “Blood and Soil? Resource Scarcity and Internal Armed Conflict Revisited”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 45, No. 6, 2008.

2 See e.g. Val Percival and Thomas Homer-Dixon, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case of South Africa”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, 1998, pp. 286, 292–295.

3 See e.g. Lukas Rüttinger et al., *The Nature of Conflict and Peace: The Links between Environment, Security and Peace and Their Importance for the United Nations*, WWF International and Adelphi Consult GmbH, 18 May 2022. See also Foreign Policy Analytics, “Environment, Fragility and Conflict”, *Foreign Policy*, 12 January 2022, available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/12/environment-fragility-and-conflict/> (all internet references were accessed in September 2023).

4 L. Rüttinger et al., above note 3, p. 6.

5 *Ibid.* See also Halvard Buhaug and Nina von Uexkull, “Vicious Circles: Violence, Vulnerability, and Climate Change”, *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2021.

6 Michael Brzoska, “Climate Change as a Driver of Security Policy”, in Jürgen Scheffran et al. (eds), *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict*, Springer, Berlin and Heidelberg, 2012, p. 165.

existing conflicts has bolstered such security concerns.⁷ At the UN General Assembly's informal thematic debate in 2007 on "Climate Change as a Global Challenge", the representative of the Alliance of Small Island States stated that climate change was the "greatest threat facing their territorial existence".⁸ At least in the eyes of certain stakeholders, those security issues, among others, may shape views on the UN Security Council's roles and responsibilities related to addressing matters pertaining to the environment.⁹

To ensure prompt and effective action by the UN, member States have conferred on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.¹⁰ Broadly speaking, the Security Council addresses various country- and region-specific matters as well as certain thematic issues. The latter include children and armed conflict; protection of civilians in armed conflict; and women, peace and security.¹¹

The Security Council has met to discuss climate change and security issues under such agenda items as "[m]aintenance of international peace and security",¹² "[t]hreats to international peace and security",¹³ and a letter from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom containing an annexed concept note for an open debate on "Energy, Security and Climate".¹⁴ The Council has addressed issues concerning natural resources under several country- and regional-specific agenda items as well as under thematic agenda items such as children and armed conflict.¹⁵ Yet despite arguably extensive theoretical and practical linkages involving the environment and conflict,¹⁶ none of the sixty-six matters of which the Security Council is seized as of early July 2023, including its various thematic agenda items, pertain expressly to the environment.¹⁷ In recent years, the

7 See e.g. Hans Günter Brauch and Jürgen Scheffran, "Introduction: Climate Change, Human Security, and Violent Conflict in the Anthropocene", in J. Scheffran *et al.* (eds), above note 6, p. 6. See also United Nations, "Security Council Holds First-Ever Debate on Impact of Climate Change on Peace, Security, Hearing Over 50 Speakers", 17 April 2007, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2007/sc9000.doc.htm>.

8 United Nations, "Warning against 'Gloom And Doom' Scenarios, Under-Secretary-General Says International Community Has Tools to Combat Climate Change", 1 August 2007, available at: <https://press.un.org/en/2007/ga10609.doc.htm>.

9 See e.g. Emyr Jones Parry, "The Greatest Threat to Global Security: Climate Change Is not Merely an Environmental Problem", *Green Our World!*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 2007.

10 Charter of the United Nations, 1 UNTS XVI, 26 June 1945 (entered into force 24 October 1945) (UN Charter), Art. 24(1).

11 See UN Security Council, *Summary Statement by the Secretary-General of Matters of which the Security Council Is Seized and of the Stage Reached in Their Consideration*, UN Doc. S/2023/10/Add.26, 3 July 2023 (UNSG Statement); Security Council, "Thematic Items", available at: www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/repertoire/thematic-items.

12 See e.g. UN Security Council, *8864th Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.8864, 23 September 2021; UN Security Council, *8451st Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.8451, 25 January 2019.

13 See e.g. UN Security Council, *9345th Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.9345, 13 June 2023.

14 See UN Security Council, *5663rd Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.5663, 17 April 2007. See also UN Security Council, "Letter Dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council", UN Doc. S/2007/186, 5 April 2007.

15 See e.g. UN Security Council, *4207th Meeting*, UN doc. S/PV.4207, 13 October 2000; UNSC Res. 1314, 11 August 2000.

16 See above note 3.

17 UNSG Statement, above note 11.

question of whether certain environment-related issues, such as climate change and ecological crises, are matters of which the Security Council ought to be specifically seized has generated widely varying views among certain sets of States.¹⁸ The rejection on 13 December 2021 by the Security Council of a draft resolution concerning climate-related security risks – with Russia and India voting against, and China abstaining – is arguably the most prominent recent example of such contestation.¹⁹

From the present authors' perspective, a precondition for sound lawmaking and policy-making – in this and other areas – is access to reliable information. Further, the production and distribution of facts, not least on matters of international public concern, can provide a bulwark against misinformation and disinformation. However, access to evidence and knowledge with respect to the practice of the Security Council varies widely, perhaps especially among States.²⁰ That disparate access has arisen despite the fact that, in the UN Charter, member States have agreed both that, in discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council acts on their behalf²¹ and that member States shall accept and carry out the Council's decisions in accordance with the Charter.²²

In this article, we attempt to help contextualize and inform debates on the roles and responsibilities of the UN Security Council pertaining to the environment and armed conflict by outlining relevant Council practice. We aim in part to provide stakeholders with a more extensive and detailed basis on which to evaluate what actions the Council has taken – and, by inference, which actions it has not taken – with respect to the environment and armed conflict.²³ We draw on a catalogue of the practice of the Security Council concerning the environment from 1945 to 2021 (the Catalogue) that we edited for the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (HLS PILAC) and that was

18 UN Security Council, *The UN Security Council and Climate Change: Tracking the Agenda after the 2021 Veto*, Research Report, 30 December 2022.

19 See UN Security Council, *8926th Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.8926, 13 December 2021. The draft resolution is contained in Security Council, *Afghanistan, Albania, ... Uruguay and Vanuatu: Draft Resolution*, UN Doc. S/2021/990, 13 December 2021.

20 Recent efforts to collate, organize and make freely accessible at least some areas of Security Council practice and procedures include, among others, UN Security Council, *The UN Security Council and Climate Change*, Research Report, 21 June 2021, pp. 21–26; United Nations, *Interactive Handbook of the Working Methods of the Security Council*, available at: www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/interactive-handbook; Will Ossoff, Naz K. Modirzadeh and Dustin A. Lewis, *Preparing for a Twenty-Four-Month Sprint: A Primer for Prospective and New Elected Members of the United Nations Security Council*, Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict (HLS PILAC), December 2020, available at: <https://pilac.law.harvard.edu/primer-for-elected-members>.

21 UN Charter, above note 10, Art. 24(1).

22 *Ibid.*, Art. 25.

23 For a selection of Security Council language concerning, in particular, climate change and natural resources, see e.g. UN Security Council, above note 20, pp. 21–26; Peter Aldinger, Carl Bruch and Sofia Yazykova, “Revisiting Securitization: An Empirical Analysis of Environment and Natural Resource Provisions in United Nations Security Council Resolutions, 1946–2016”, in Ashok Swain and Joakim Öjendal (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding*, 1st ed., Routledge, London, 2018.

published in April 2023.²⁴ We proceed as follows. First, we briefly explain the impetus and objectives that drove this undertaking. Second, we set out the sources and methods that we used in creating the Catalogue. Third, we outline, in broad-brush strokes, the Security Council's practice concerning the environment in general as documented in the Catalogue. In much of that practice, the Council identified extensive linkages with conflict.²⁵ Fourth, we attempt to summarize the Council's practice pertaining to the environment and armed conflict. To do so, we first describe the definitional parameters that we use for the term "environment and armed conflict" and we then sketch Council practice across its material, personal, geographical and temporal dimensions. Finally, we briefly conclude with a call for more knowledge resources to help better inform stakeholders debating the roles and responsibilities of various bodies and institutions in addressing contemporary climate and ecological crises, not least as those crises pertain to peace and armed conflict.

Impetus and objectives

For at least a decade, the Security Council's involvement in addressing issues related to the environment – particularly as it pertains to the current ecological and climate crises – has been subject to contestation among certain sets of States. According to one perspective, the urgency and magnitude of the security implications associated with those issues highlight a need for the Council to assume a more robust, systematic and coherent role in this area.²⁶ On that view, the consequences of environmental matters "reach the very heart of the security agenda", necessitating the involvement of the Council in its capacity as the organ vested with primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.²⁷ A countervailing line of reasoning argues that a subsumption of environment-related matters within the framework of international security is potentially problematic and instead frames the environment as primarily a sustainable-development concern.²⁸ Under this approach, a "devol[ution] [of] responsibilities of a humanitarian or developmental nature" to security institutions may warrant concern.²⁹ The Council's limited size – with five permanent members and ten elected members – as compared to the more widely representative General Assembly may also be a relevant factor in shaping States' views on this issue. At one debate on climate change, for example, China's representative highlighted

24 Radhika Kapoor and Dustin A. Lewis, *HLS PILAC Catalogue of Practice of the U.N. Security Council Concerning the Environment, 1945–2021, with an Accompanying Finding Aid*, HLS PILAC, April 2023 (Catalogue and Finding Aid), available at: <https://pilac.law.harvard.edu/unscc-practice-concerning-the-environment>.

25 See the below section on "Material Scope".

26 See e.g. UN Security Council, above note 18, p. 3; UN Security Council, *9345th Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.9345, 13 June 2023.

27 UN Security Council, *5663rd Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.5663, 17 April 2007, p. 18.

28 UN Security Council, above note 18, p. 3.

29 See e.g. Corinne Schoch, *Rethinking Climate Change as a Security Threat*, Sustainable Development Opinion Paper, International Institute for Environment and Development, October 2011, p. 2.

that the Council did not allow for the kind of extensive participation that might result in “widely acceptable proposals”.³⁰ Similarly, India’s representative has asserted that the Council would be an inappropriate forum for addressing climate change, instead highlighting the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to which 198 States are party.³¹

Stepping back, the contemporary scholarly and policy focus on the Security Council’s potential “climatization” might risk obscuring significant aspects of the Council’s arguably expansive practice, since at least 1947, pertaining to additional issues related to the environment.³² Through the Catalogue and its accompanying Finding Aid, we have sought to develop a resource that systematically collects, organizes, and makes publicly and freely available the practice of the Security Council concerning the environment, including but not limited to the current ecological and climate crises. In so doing, we did not seek to adopt normative positions on the (il)legitimacy or (un)desirability of the Security Council’s involvement in addressing the environment or to critique or endorse extant approaches adopted by the Council or UN member States in this connection. Rather, we have sought to help contribute to an evidentiary and analytical basis for ascertaining and appraising what the Council has done and has not done in this area.

Sources and methods

At the outset, it bears emphasis that, while we consulted specialists in environmental science in the development of the Catalogue, neither the Catalogue nor its accompanying Finding Aid purport to reflect advanced technical knowledge of that field. In addition, two other aspects of the sources and methods that we developed in producing the Catalogue warrant mention. The first concerns the definition that we used of the term “environment”, and the second concerns the process that we used for including or excluding specific Security Council texts from the Catalogue.

First, despite a proliferation of domestic and multilateral instruments and customary rules concerning the environment, we did not discern from those sources a single, authoritative definition of the term “environment” that we considered suitable for the project.³³ In that absence, we relied primarily on relevant international legal sources,³⁴ secondarily on regional and domestic legal

30 United Nations, above note 7.

31 Security Council, *8864th Meeting*, UN Doc. S/PV.8864, 23 September 2021.

32 See e.g. UNSC Res. 21, 2 April 1947, Art. 6. See, further, Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24.

33 See, further, Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, pp. 5–6.

34 See e.g. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1771 UNTS 107 (entered into force 21 March 1994); Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Declaration), 16 June 1972; *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Annex I: Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I), 12 August 1992; Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Uses of Environmental Modification Techniques, 1108 UNTS 151 (entered into force 5 October 1978); *Glossary of Environment Statistics*, UN Doc. ST_ESA_STAT_SER.F_67, 1997; UN Environment Programme, *From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment*, 2009, available at:

sources,³⁵ and subsidiarily on relevant scholarly and policy literature³⁶ to develop a definition of the term “environment” for the project. That definition then served as the basis for determining whether a specific Security Council text was included in the Catalogue. In reviewing those sources and determining the definitional parameters of the term “environment”, we were required to make several arguably subjective decisions.³⁷ Even slight substantive differences in those parameters may (and likely would) have produced a substantively different catalogue of Security Council practice. The definition we developed is reproduced below:

The definitional scope of the term “environment” may be understood as the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that constitute the natural world. As such, the environment includes the earth and its climate, biosphere, cryosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and outer space, encompassing – and, as applicable, along with – the natural resources of the earth, such as air, water, land, flora and fauna, bio-diversity, and all renewable and non-renewable sources of energy, and incorporating the interrelations between any of these systems or elements.

The scope of the term “environment,” for the purposes of this project, is limited to elements and systems of the natural world. However, this notion of the environment includes human modifications to the natural environment to the extent that the modified element or system shares dominant ecological characteristics comparable to its natural counterpart and can sustain itself after human intervention has ceased.³⁸

Second, to identify relevant Security Council practice, the research team³⁹ initially reviewed all resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council from its founding in late 1945 through the end of 2021⁴⁰ and assessed whether those texts materially addressed a salient aspect of the environment. To determine

<https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7867>; Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide, *Commentary and Core Text*, June 2021; UN Environment Programme, *Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework*, 2020, p. 8, available at www.unep.org/resources/report/un-environments-environmental-social-and-economic-sustainability-framework; Convention on Biological Diversity, 1760 UNTS 79 (entered into force 29 December 1993).

35 See e.g. Laos, Environmental Protection Law (Revised Version), 2013, Art. 2; Australia, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999, Section 528; Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, 2161 UNTS 447 (entered into force 30 October 2001).

36 See e.g. Andrew Brennan and Norva Yeuk-Sze Lo, *Understanding Environmental Philosophy*, 1st ed., Routledge, London, 2010; Marie-Louise Larsson, *Legal Definitions of the Environment and of Environmental Damage*, Scandinavian Studies in Law, Stockholm Institute for Scandinavian Law, 1999.

37 See e.g. Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, pp. 7–9.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

39 The following HLS PILAC research assistants contributed to the Catalogue: Aizhan Tilenbaeva, Ryen Bani-Hashemi, Nanami Hirata, Audrey MacKay, Ana Leticia Magini, Anum Mesiya, Shriya Nayyar and Juan Felipe Wills Romero. The following HLS PILAC research assistants contributed research support with respect to the Finding Aid: Sandy Alkoutami, Eoin Jackson, Jacquelyn Kantack, Ana Leticia Magini, Isa Rama, Zoe Shamis and Yen Ba Vu.

40 The Catalogue spans the period starting with the formation of the Council in late 1945 through to 31 December 2021.

whether those texts warranted inclusion in the Catalogue, at least one of the present authors then reviewed all texts provisionally nominated by the research team.⁴¹

Catalogue parameters

The Catalogue contains the following fields:

- the chronological order, date and UN-assigned symbol of the document;
- an indication as to whether the document was a resolution or presidential statement;
- the subject-matter-related aspects of the document's title as set out in the UN Digital Library;
- the primary environment-related theme(s) of the document, as well as the associated environment-related aspects of the document's context, as formulated by us;
- the relevant excerpt;
- a URL to an English text of the document; and
- an indication as to whether or not the document was expressly adopted under Chapter VI or VII of the UN Charter.

Security Council practice concerning the environment in general: A brief overview

The material scope of Security Council practice concerning the environment from 1945 to 2021 has spanned a diverse array of subjects, including:

- the protection,⁴² management⁴³ and exploitation⁴⁴ of natural resources;
- conduct related to biological and chemical weapons;⁴⁵
- adverse environment-related phenomena and associated effects;⁴⁶
- impacts of armed conflict on the environment;⁴⁷
- impacts of the activities of UN entities on the environment;⁴⁸
- the inclusion of environmental issues in wider policies or approaches;⁴⁹
- environmentally friendly practices regarding disposal or other processes concerning waste management;⁵⁰ and

41 See, further, Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, p. 10.

42 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2127, 5 December 2013, para. 16; UNSC Res. 810, 8 March 1993, para. 16.

43 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2190, 15 December 2014, para. 2; UNSC Res. 2188, 9 December 2014, Preamble.

44 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2612, 20 December 2021, para. 3; UNSC Res. 2611, 17 December 2021, Preamble.

45 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2325, 15 December 2016, para. 14; UNSC Res. 2298, 22 July 2016, para. 1. See also below notes 129–132 and corresponding text.

46 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2502, 19 December 2019, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2476, 25 June 2019, Preamble.

47 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2417, 24 May 2018, Preamble; UNSC Res. 571, 20 September 1985, Preamble.

48 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2113, 30 July 2013, para. 28; UNSC Res. 2100, 25 April 2013, para. 32.

49 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2119, 10 October 2013, Preamble.

50 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2231, 20 July 2015, JCPOA, Annex III: "Civil Nuclear Cooperation", para. 13; UNSC Res. 1929, 9 June 2010, Annex IV.

- liability in connection with causing environmental damage.⁵¹

In terms of personal scope, while the principal addressees of Security Council decisions are typically UN member States, relevant Security Council practice on the above-mentioned matters addressed or otherwise referred to a wide range of actors in addition to member States. That set of actors included:

- governments, such as the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in connection with addressing the illicit exploitation of natural resources;⁵²
- other national-level entities, such as Libya's National Oil Corporation in connection with maintaining control over oil resources;⁵³
- peoples of particular States, such as the people of Iraq with respect to controlling their own natural resources;⁵⁴
- parties to certain agreements or conflicts, such as parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan in connection with reaching agreement over natural-resource management, and parties to the conflict in the DRC in connection with cooperating with a group of experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in that State;⁵⁵
- international or regional organizations or communities or entities associated therewith, such as a fact-finding mission linked with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons investigating the use of toxic chemicals in Syria;⁵⁶
- international financial institutions, including in connection with working with the government of the DRC to establish a plan for effective and transparent control over exploitation of natural resources;⁵⁷
- companies, such as those involved in trading in rough diamonds in connection with making declarations not to trade in diamonds originating from certain conflict zones, including Sierra Leone;⁵⁸
- industries, including processing industries dealing with mineral products in the DRC, in connection with exercising due diligence with respect to mineral suppliers and the origin of the minerals;⁵⁹ and
- combinations of various types of such actors.⁶⁰

Geographically, the Council's practice concerning the environment covered, unevenly, most regional groups as classified by the UN's informal regional grouping.⁶¹ Notably, however, much of the practice was focused on African States and, to a lesser extent,

51 See e.g. UNSC Res. 692, 20 May 1991, Preamble; UNSC Res. 687, 3 April 1991, para. 16.

52 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2360, 21 June 2017, para. 19.

53 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2510, 12 February 2020, Preamble.

54 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1637, 11 November 2005, Preamble; UNSC Res. 1546, 8 June 2004, preambular para. 3.

55 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/ 2011/3, 9 February 2011, pp. 1–2; UNSC Res. 1493, 28 July 2003, para. 28.

56 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2209, 6 March 2015, Preamble.

57 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1856, 22 December 2008, para. 21.

58 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1306, 5 July 2000, para. 13.

59 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1896, 7 December 2009, para. 14.

60 See e.g. UNSC Res. 687, 3 April 1991, para. 16.

61 United Nations, "Regional Groups of Member States", UN Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, available at: www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/regional-groups.

Asia-Pacific States.⁶² Indeed, the Council’s extensive relative focus on States in Africa was especially evident, with a large number of salient provisions of resolutions and presidential statements referring specifically to three African States: the DRC, Liberia or Somalia.⁶³ Security Council practice concerning Asia-Pacific States was comparatively less sizable but nevertheless exceeded practice concerning other regional groups (aside from Africa). In many of those relevant decisions and presidential statements pertaining to Asia-Pacific States, the Council referred to one of the following States: Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq.⁶⁴

In its practice concerning the environment, the Security Council has made only a handful of express temporal references. Those that the Council did make arose in connection with:

- periods during which certain measures were applicable or operational, such as the renewal, until a specific date, of measures preventing the importation by any State of rough diamonds from Côte d’Ivoire;⁶⁵
- periods concerning environmental clean-ups, namely an estimate that an environmental clean-up in the wake of the termination of the mandate of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur would take six months;⁶⁶
- periods related to forecasting the effects of environmental degradation, namely that the possible adverse effects of such deterioration may, “in the long run”, aggravate existing threats to the stability of certain vulnerable States;⁶⁷ and
- periods pertaining to satisfying liability for environment-related damages, such as the reference, in a resolution on lifting certain economic sanctions on Iraq, to the non-applicability of privileges and immunities with respect to a legal proceeding in which recourse to certain proceeds or obligations is necessary to satisfy liability for damages assessed in connection with an ecological accident, including an oil spill, that occurs after the Council adopted the resolution.⁶⁸

Security Council practice pertaining to the environment and armed conflict

Definitional parameters

As noted above, the Security Council does not have a thematic area of work dedicated specifically to “the environment and armed conflict”.⁶⁹ As such, our

62 See Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, pp. 78–83.

63 See *ibid.*, pp. 78–81.

64 See *ibid.*, pp. 81–82. The classification of Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq as part of the Asia-Pacific region is based on the UN’s informal regional grouping: see above note 61 and associated main text.

65 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2045, 26 April 2012, para. 6; UNSC Res. 1893, 29 October 2009, para. 1.

66 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2559, 22 December 2020, Preamble.

67 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2518, 30 March 2020, Preamble.

68 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1483, 22 May 2003, para. 22.

69 See the main text in the Introduction at above notes 17–18.

summarization of the Council's actions seeks to categorize, organize and systematize a diverse set of practices that has spanned multiple agenda items, both thematic and region- or country-specific. To ascertain the scope of Security Council practice pertaining to the environment and armed conflict, we deemed it necessary as a threshold matter to determine the parameters of the term "environment and armed conflict". For "environment", we used the definition developed for the purposes of the Catalogue;⁷⁰ "armed conflict", for its part, is a concept set out in international law, and we relied on a range of sources to ascertain what situations may fall under that heading.⁷¹ For the purposes of this article, we considered any Security Council practice containing references to the environment⁷² arising in connection with armed conflict – including the causation, occurrence, perpetuation or termination of armed conflict – as constituting the Council's practice pertaining to the environment and armed conflict. In doing so, we made subjective determinations to ascertain whether an instance of Security Council practice included in the Catalogue bore a sufficiently salient linkage to armed conflict.

For example, in determining whether a particular text bore a sufficiently salient link to "armed conflict", we did not deem it necessary that the Security Council explicitly used the term "armed conflict". Rather, we considered references to "conflict over" an element or system of the environment, for example, to suffice.⁷³ We also included other references that we assessed as sufficiently conflict-related, such as the continuation of "hostilities",⁷⁴ the protection of civilians⁷⁵ and the use of toxic chemicals as weapons.⁷⁶ Similarly, we included references to "inter-communal conflicts" related to natural resources.⁷⁷

70 See the definition of the term "environment" in the above section on "Sources and Methods".

71 Among others: Geneva Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 31 (entered into force 21 October 1950), Arts 2, 3; Geneva Convention (II) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of the Armed Forces at Sea of 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 85 (entered into force 21 October 1950), Arts 2, 3; Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 135 (entered into force 21 October 1950), Arts 2, 3; Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287 (entered into force 21 October 1950), Arts 2, 3; Protocol Additional (I) to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, 1125 UNTS 3, 8 June 1977 (entered into force 7 December 1978), Art. 1; Protocol Additional (II) to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, 1125 UNTS 609, 8 June 1977 (entered into force 7 December 1978), Art. 1; International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*, Case No. IT-94-I, Decision on the Defence Motion for Interlocutory Appeal on Jurisdiction (Appeals Chamber), 2 October 1995, para. 70.

72 Throughout this article, any reference to the "environment" may be understood as encompassing any elements or systems of the environment that fall within the purview of the definition of "environment" developed for the purpose of the Catalogue. We relied on the Catalogue as the primary resource for Security Council practice referring to the environment. See the definition of the term "environment" in the above section on "Sources and Methods".

73 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/18, 21 September 2018, p. 86; UNSC Res. 2333, 23 December 2016, Preamble.

74 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1493, 28 July 2003, para. 28.

75 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2003/27, 15 December 2003, pp. 11–12.

76 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2235, 7 August 2015, paras 5, 8; UNSC Res. 2209, 6 March 2015, Preamble.

77 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2429, 13 July 2018, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2363, 29 June 2017, Preamble.

On the rationale that the absence of conflict may be considered a minimum precondition for the maintenance of peace, stability and security,⁷⁸ we considered references to the environment in connection with maintaining or achieving peace, stability and security⁷⁹ to be sufficiently conflict-related. On the basis that certain individuals or entities characterized as “terrorists” may be involved in an armed conflict, we also included references to the environment in connection with “terrorism” or “terrorist activities”. For example, at the time of writing, armed conflicts in parts of Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria and Yemen (among others) may involve entities characterized as terrorists.⁸⁰ Along similar lines, we also included references to the environment in connection with “armed groups”.

Among the examples of practice that we excluded for not being sufficiently conflict-related were references to the possible endangerment of marine life⁸¹ or to risks of malnutrition caused by drought.⁸² Nor did we consider the Security Council’s extensive practice on sovereignty and ownership over natural resources, in itself, as part of the Council’s practice concerning the environment and armed conflict as such.⁸³ On the other hand, we did consider practice referencing linkages between natural resources, armed conflict and post-conflict situations⁸⁴ to be germane.

In view of the subjective nature of many of the above-mentioned determinations, it may be noted that a different approach might have yielded a different collection of Security Council practices pertaining to the environment and armed conflict.⁸⁵ A wider approach, for example, might have posited that, by its nature, every entry in the Catalogue pertains to armed conflict on the rationale that any substantive reference by the UN organ vested with primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security relates in at least some sense to the prospect of preventing or ending conflict.⁸⁶

78 See Anne Peters, “Ch. V The Security Council: Functions and Powers: Article 24”, in Bruno Simma *et al.* (eds), *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, para. 34.

79 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2079, 12 December 2012, para. 5(d).

80 See e.g. Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2023: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*, March 2023, available at: www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GTI-2023-web.pdf; Geneva Academy, “Non-International Armed Conflicts in Iraq”, *RULAC*, available at: www.rulac.org/browse/conflicts/non-international-armed-conflicts-in-iraq; Annysa Bellal, *The War Report: Armed Conflicts in 2018*, Geneva Academy, April 2019; Dustin A. Lewis, Naz K. Modirzadeh and Jessica S. Burniske, *CTED and IHL: Preliminary Considerations for States*, HLS PILAC, March 2020, pp. 29–30.

81 See e.g. UNSC Res. 540, 31 October 1983, para. 5.

82 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2014, 21 October 2011, Preamble.

83 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2608, 3 December 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2554, 4 December 2020, Preamble.

84 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/22, 25 June 2007, p. 1.

85 The determinations made throughout this article purport only to provide a snapshot of Security Council practice concerning the environment and armed conflict; they do not purport to constitute legal assessments, including with respect to the existence (or not) of an armed conflict as defined in international law in a particular context.

86 On the Security Council’s conflict-prevention responsibilities, see also UN Charter, above note 10, Arts 34, 36(1), 37(2), 1(1) (referring to “collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace”). See, further, e.g., UN Secretary-General, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*, UN Doc. S/24111, 17 June 1992, p. 203 (on identifying “at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict” and addressing them using preventive diplomacy); Paul Romita, *The UN Security Council and Conflict Prevention: A Primer*, International Peace Institute, 2011, p. 4.

Material scope

With respect to material scope, the Security Council has drawn a range of armed-conflict-related linkages in its practice concerning the environment.⁸⁷ In short, those linkages ranged from the prevention of armed conflict to its causation, perpetuation and impacts on the environment.⁸⁸ From our perspective, the material scope of the Security Council's practice pertaining to the environment and armed conflict may be conceptualized as spanning the following four themes:

1. relations between conflict and natural resources, including the illicit exploitation of such resources;⁸⁹
2. relations between conflict and adverse environment-related phenomena;⁹⁰
3. relations between conflict and chemical and biological weapons;⁹¹ and
4. adverse impacts of conflict on the environment.

Relations between armed conflict and natural resources

In terms of volume, armed-conflict-related linkages concerning natural resources far exceed those under the other three material themes. The following notions, many of which may overlap, arose in this substantive area:

- **Natural resources, or their management or illicit exploitation, as actual or potential causes of conflict.** For example, with respect to Sudan, the Council has referred to the “management” of specific natural resources, such as land and water, as one of the root causes of conflict.⁹² Further, the Council has

87 We use the term “conflict-related linkages” here as a shorthand to encompass references in Security Council practice to elements or systems of the environment arising in connection with conflict.

88 See the below sections on “Relations between Armed Conflict and Natural Resources”, “Relations between Armed Conflict and Environment-Related Phenomena”, “Relations between Armed Conflict and Chemical or Biological Weapons” and “Adverse Impacts of Armed Conflict”.

89 Throughout this article, we use the term “illicit” in connection with exploitation of natural resources to refer to all forms of illegal, illegitimate, unauthorized, banned or otherwise condemned use or exploitation of or trade in natural resources, including smuggling of or trafficking in natural resources. See, further, Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, p. 25.

90 In its practice concerning the environment, the Security Council refers to or otherwise addresses a range of forms or factors pertaining to adverse environment-related phenomena, including climate change, floods, droughts, environmental degradation, ecological changes, desertification, land degradation, energy poverty or energy access, increasingly frequent and extreme weather phenomena, lack of rainfall, forest fires, erratic precipitation, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, hurricanes, severe weather events and natural disasters, and locust upsurges or infestations – or a combination of such forms or factors. See e.g. UNSC Res. 2612, 20 December 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2607, 15 November 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2605, 12 November 2021, Preamble. The term “environment-related phenomena” is employed both in this article as well as in the Catalogue and Finding Aid to encompass each of these forms or factors as well as any combination of them. See, further, Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, pp. 40–41.

91 With respect to the inclusion of “chemical weapons” within the scope of the term “environment”, see below notes 129–130; Catalogue and Finding Aid, above note 24, p. 10.

92 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2363, 29 June 2017, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2429, 13 July 2018, Preamble.

characterized the notion of illicit exploitation⁹³ of natural resources as contributing to the outbreak of armed conflict.⁹⁴ Particularly with respect to certain States, including the DRC and the Central African Republic (CAR), the Council has described the illicit exploitation of natural resources as a cause of conflict.⁹⁵ Certain other references by the Council – including those to conflicts over natural resources in Sudan,⁹⁶ to the potential for conflict over natural resources in certain States, such as Liberia,⁹⁷ and to the possibility of specific resources, such as petroleum, acting as “driver[s]” of conflict in Somalia⁹⁸ – may also be conceived as falling under this sub-theme.

- **Risks of destabilization or other threats to peace and security from illicit exploitation of natural resources.** For example, the Council has drawn linkages with illicit exploitation of natural resources and risks of destabilization in certain States, such as Somalia and the DRC.⁹⁹ Relatedly, the Council has identified threats or other forms of endangerment to peace, stability or security in connection with illicit exploitation of natural resources in certain States, such as Libya and the CAR, as well as in certain (additional) parts of Africa.¹⁰⁰
- **Risks to peace, stability or security from those involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources.** For example, the Council has characterized certain non-State actors involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources as posing risks to the security and stability of certain States, such as Afghanistan.¹⁰¹
- **Illicit exploitation of natural resources with respect to the perpetuation, fuelling or continuation of conflict.** The Council has drawn linkages between illicit exploitation of natural resources and risks of escalation, perpetuation or fuelling of conflict, including in Africa and particularly in the CAR.¹⁰² In the context of the DRC, the Council has referred to the financing of conflict through the exploitation of natural resources¹⁰³ and the link between the continuation of hostilities and illicit exploitation of natural resources.¹⁰⁴ In the respective contexts of certain States, such as Liberia and

93 See above note 89.

94 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1625, 14 September 2005, Annex, para. 6; UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/22, 25 June 2007, p. 1.

95 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2605, 12 November 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2556, 18 December 2020, para. 14; UNSC Res. 2502, 19 December 2019, para. 14.

96 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2429, 13 July 2018, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2363, 29 June 2017, Preamble.

97 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/18, 21 September 2018, p. 86; UNSC Res. 2333, 23 December 2016, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2308, 14 September 2016, Preamble.

98 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2444, 14 November 2018, para. 40; UNSC Res. 2385, 14 November 2017, para. 24.

99 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2608, 3 December 2021, Preamble; UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/19, 20 October 2021, p. 4.

100 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2571, 16 April 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2605, 12 November 2021, Preamble; UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/21, 28 October 2021, p. 2.

101 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2611, 17 December 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2557, 18 December 2020, Preamble.

102 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2457, 27 February 2019, Preamble; UN Doc. S/PRST/2015/3, 19 January 2015, p. 3; UNSC Res. 2127, 5 December 2013, preambular para. 16.

103 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1376, 9 November 2001, para. 8.

104 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1493, 28 July 2003, para. 28.

Sierra Leone, the Council has identified the illicit diamond trade, in particular, as fuelling conflict.¹⁰⁵ Further, the Council has identified the following types of “linkages” with illicit exploitation of natural resources as factors that may “prolong armed conflict”: linkages between illicit trade in natural resources and armed conflict;¹⁰⁶ linkages between illicit trade in natural resources, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, cross-border abduction and recruitment, and armed conflict;¹⁰⁷ and linkages between illicit trade in precious minerals, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, other criminal activities, armed conflict, and terrorism.¹⁰⁸ The Council’s recognition of illicit exploitation of natural resources as a factor potentially enabling armed groups to operate in certain States, such as the DRC, may also be conceived as falling under this sub-theme.¹⁰⁹

- **Other linkages between natural resources and the trade in weapons.** The Council has referred to a linkage, “in the context of ... conflict”, between the illicit exploitation of natural resources and trafficking or trade in certain weapons.¹¹⁰
- **Financing of or other benefits to armed groups through illicit exploitation of natural resources.** The Council has identified a series of linkages between illicit exploitation of natural resources and the financing of certain armed groups. Those references include, for instance, linkages between illicit trafficking in wildlife and natural resources and the financing of certain armed groups, such as the Lord’s Resistance Army and Boko Haram,¹¹¹ as well as linkages between illicit fishing and Al-Shabaab’s ability to generate revenue in Somalia.¹¹² The Security Council has also identified “benefits” from the illicit exploitation of natural resources to some of those whom it has characterized as terrorists.¹¹³ In respect of certain States, such as Afghanistan and Libya, the Council has characterized illicit exploitation of natural resources as a form of “support” to certain sanctioned entities or armed groups. For example, with respect to Libya, the Council has referred to the provision of “support for armed groups or criminal networks through the illicit exploitation of ... natural resources”.¹¹⁴ With respect to Afghanistan, the Council has recognized that means of financing or supporting certain sanctioned individuals and entities may include proceeds derived from the illicit exploitation of natural resources.¹¹⁵ Relatedly, the Council has

105 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1478, 6 May 2003, Preamble; UNSC Res. 1446, 4 December 2002, Preamble; UNSC Res. 1343, 7 March 2001, Preamble.

106 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1314, 11 August 2000, para. 8.

107 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1539, 22 April 2004, para. 3.

108 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1379, 20 November 2001, para. 6.

109 UNSC Res. 2582, 29 June 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2528, 25 June 2020, Preamble.

110 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1533, 12 March 2004, Preamble; UNSC Res. 1499, 13 August 2003, Preamble.

111 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/17, 10 August 2018, p. 4; UN Doc. S/PRST/2015/12, 11 June 2015, p. 5.

112 UNSC Res. 2607, 15 November 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2551, 12 November 2020, Preamble.

113 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2610, 17 December 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2482, 19 July 2019, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2322, 12 December 2016, Preamble.

114 UNSC Res. 2571, 16 April 2021, Preamble.

115 UNSC Res. 2255, 22 December 2015, para. 4; UNSC Res. 2210, 16 March 2015, para. 15.

characterized the provision of support to armed groups or criminal networks through illicit exploitation of natural resources as a designation criterion under sanctions regimes applicable in relation to, respectively, the CAR and the DRC.¹¹⁶ The Council has also referred to other potential benefits aside from financing or fundraising; for instance, in respect of Liberia, the Council has identified a linkage between the illicit trade in diamonds and the supply of weapons, fuel or other prohibited materiel to rebel movements.¹¹⁷

- **Impacts of illicit exploitation of natural resources on the protection of civilians.** The Council has drawn a number of linkages with illicit exploitation of natural resources that concern, in at least some sense, aspects relevant to the protection of civilians. For example, the Council has recognized a linkage between illicit trade in minerals and conflict-related sexual violence.¹¹⁸ The Council has also referred to potential impacts of illicit exploitation of natural resources on the protection of (certain) civilians,¹¹⁹ including by characterizing illicit trade in natural resources as one of several cross-border activities “deleterious to children in ... armed conflict”.¹²⁰
- **Impacts of illicit exploitation of natural resources on conflict prevention.** The Security Council has recognized negative impacts of illicit exploitation of natural resources on “conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding [and] the consolidation of peace”.¹²¹
- **Exploitation or management of natural resources in connection with sustainable peace and security.** With respect to certain States, such as Liberia and the DRC, the Security Council has recognized transparent and effective management of natural resources as critical for sustainable peace and security.¹²² The Council has also referred to lawful, transparent and sustainable management and exploitation of natural resources as critical for maintaining stability and preventing a relapse into conflict.¹²³

Relations between armed conflict and environment-related phenomena

In Security Council practice, armed-conflict-related linkages with environment-related phenomena¹²⁴ arise primarily in respect of the (actual or potential) implications of those phenomena on peace, security and stability. For example, the Council has referred to the effects of certain environment-related phenomena – namely climate change, ecological changes and natural

116 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/19, 20 October 2021, p. 4; UNSC Res. 2399, 30 January 2018, para. 21(e); UNSC Res. 2262, 27 January 2016, para. 13(d).

117 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1343, 7 March 2001, Preamble.

118 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2467, 23 April 2019, Preamble.

119 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2003/27, 15 December 2003, pp. 11–12.

120 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1379, 20 November 2001, para. 13(c); UNSC Res. 1314, 11 August 2000, para. 16(c).

121 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/19, 20 October 2021, pp. 3–4.

122 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2198, 29 January 2015, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2188, 9 December 2014, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2128, 10 December 2013, Preamble.

123 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/22, 25 June 2007, p. 3.

124 See above note 90.

disasters – on the security or stability of certain States, such as Sudan and other member States of the African Union, and regions, such as West Africa and the Sahel.¹²⁵ The Council has also recognized the “security implications” of environment-related phenomena such as climate change,¹²⁶ as well as ecological changes and natural disasters, including in certain States, such as Mali.¹²⁷ Further, the “changing global context of peace and security” includes, according to the Council, the impacts of climate change.¹²⁸

Relations between armed conflict and chemical or biological weapons

From our perspective, the scope of the term “chemical weapons” may include all toxic chemicals, “regardless of their origin or of their method of production”,¹²⁹ presumably including naturally occurring chemicals.¹³⁰ Accordingly, we considered references to “chemical weapons” to fall under the definition of the environment that we used for this project. Along similar lines, we considered the scope of “biological weapons” to include “microbial or other biological agents”,¹³¹ thereby falling within the purview of “biotic factors” in terms of the adopted definition of the environment.¹³² In Security Council practice, armed-conflict-related linkages with chemical weapons arose primarily in the context of Syria and concerned the use of toxic chemicals as weapons,¹³³ as well as civilian injuries and deaths from toxic chemicals.¹³⁴ The Council has also referred to means of preventing the proliferation of chemical or biological weapons.¹³⁵

Adverse impacts of armed conflict

The Security Council has recognized certain adverse impacts of armed conflict on the environment, including on livestock-grazing areas, fishing grounds and

125 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2579, 3 June 2021, Preamble; UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/3, 3 February 2021, p. 3; UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/21, 28 October 2021, p. 7; UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/16, 17 August 2021, p. 2.

126 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/15, 20 July 2011, p. 1.

127 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2423, 28 June 2018, para. 68.

128 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2242, 13 October 2015, Preamble.

129 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, 1974 UNTS 45, 3 September 1992 (entered into force 29 April 1997), Arts II(1)(a), II(2). Exceptions include toxic chemicals and their precursors “intended for purposes not prohibited under this Convention, as long as the types and quantities are consistent with such purposes.”

130 See, further, Miguel A. Sierra and Roberto Martínez-Álvarez, “Ricin and Saxitoxin: Two Natural Products that Became Chemical Weapons”, *Journal of Chemical Education*, Vol. 97, No. 7, 2020.

131 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, 1015 UNTS 163, 16 December 1971 (entered into force 26 March 1975), Art. I(1).

132 See the definition of the term “environment” in the above section on “Sources and Methods”.

133 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2319, 17 November 2016, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2314, 31 October 2016, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2209, 6 March 2015, para. 1.

134 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2319, 17 November 2016, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2314, 31 October 2016, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2235, 7 August 2015, Preamble.

135 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2325, 15 December 2016, para. 14.

agricultural assets.¹³⁶ The Council has also referred to negative impacts of conflict on aspects of the environment in specific contexts, including:

- the negative impacts of armed conflict on natural areas in the DRC;¹³⁷
- attacks on “natural assets” in the context of “escalat[ing] ... conflict” in Libya;¹³⁸
- the destruction of livestock as a result of acts of aggression and armed incursions by South Africa against Angola;¹³⁹
- the depletion of natural resources in “Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem”;¹⁴⁰ and
- environmental damage and the depletion of natural resources as a result of Iraq’s unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait.¹⁴¹

In terms of preventing possible adverse impacts on the environment, the Council has called for compliance with international legal obligations applicable during armed conflict related to sparing farms, water systems, foodstuffs, crops, livestock and agricultural assets.¹⁴²

Personal scope

With respect to personal scope, in its practice concerning the environment and armed conflict, the Security Council has primarily addressed or otherwise referred to States, including all States,¹⁴³ specific States¹⁴⁴ and combinations of certain States.¹⁴⁵ The Council has also addressed or otherwise referred to a range of parties, including all parties in Syria in connection with cooperating with investigation and accountability processes concerning the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria;¹⁴⁶ parties to the conflict in the DRC in connection with cooperating with an expert panel on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the DRC;¹⁴⁷ parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Liberia in connection with maintaining the government’s authority over natural resources;¹⁴⁸ parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan in connection with reaching agreement over natural-resource

136 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2417, 24 May 2018, Preamble.

137 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/19, 20 October 2021, p. 3; UNSC Res. 2612, 20 December 2021, para. 16; UNSC Res. 2556, 18 December 2020, para. 16.

138 UNSC Res. 2238, 10 September 2015, para. 5; UNSC Res. 2213, 27 March 2015, para. 4.

139 See e.g. UNSC Res. 571, 20 September 1985, Preamble; UNSC Res. 475, 27 June 1980, Preamble.

140 See e.g. UNSC Res. 465, 1 March 1980, para. 8.

141 See e.g. UNSCR 692, 20 May 1991, Preamble; UNSCR 687, 3 April 1991, para. 16.

142 UN Doc. S/PRST/2020/6, 29 April 2020, p. 1; UNSC Res. 2417, 24 May 2018, para. 1.

143 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2325, 15 December 2016, para. 14; UNSC Res. 1925, 28 May 2010, para. 8; UNSC Res. 1643, 15 December 2005, para. 6.

144 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2101, 25 April 2013, para. 25; UNSC Res. 2005, 14 September 2011, para. 9; UNSC Res. 1941, 29 September 2010, para. 4.

145 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1493, 28 July 2003, para. 28; UNSC Res. 1417, 14 June 2002, para. 15.

146 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2235, 7 August 2015, para. 4; UNSC Res. 2209, 6 March 2015, para. 6.

147 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1341, 25, 22 February 2001, para. 24; UNSC Res. 1332, 14 December 2000, para. 16.

148 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1521, 22 December 2003, para. 14.

management;¹⁴⁹ and, in general, all parties to armed conflict in connection with sparing, during armed conflict, certain objects, including farms, water systems, foodstuffs, crops, livestock and agricultural assets.¹⁵⁰ Further, the Council has addressed or otherwise referred to the UN in connection with considering the security implications of adverse effects of environment-related phenomena, namely climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters;¹⁵¹ supporting national-level peacebuilding efforts, including management of natural resources;¹⁵² and helping post-conflict governments manage their natural resources better or more lawfully, transparently and sustainably.¹⁵³ References to the UN Secretary-General in particular arose in the context of reporting on rights violations against children during armed conflict, including in connection with the illicit exploitation of natural resources,¹⁵⁴ and in the context of supporting investigation processes concerning the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria.¹⁵⁵ The Council has referenced UN missions, including peacekeeping operations in such conflict-affected contexts as the CAR and the DRC, in connection with managing the environmental impacts of UN activities in respect of those situations.¹⁵⁶ The Council has also referred to a UN mission in Guinea-Bissau with respect to making efforts to reduce the impacts of that mission's closure on that State's environment.¹⁵⁷ The Council has referenced panels or groups of experts, UN missions and UN committees in connection with linkages it has drawn between natural resources and conflict, including with respect to:

- reporting on the role of the exploitation of natural resources in fuelling conflict in the DRC;¹⁵⁸
- recommending measures to prevent such exploitation from financing armed groups and militias in the eastern DRC;¹⁵⁹
- reporting on the contribution of revenue from such exploitation to the income of armed groups in the eastern DRC;¹⁶⁰
- reporting on the role of forests and other natural resources in contributing to peace and security in Liberia;¹⁶¹
- assisting governments in preventing illegal exploitation of natural resources from fuelling conflicts;¹⁶²

149 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/3, 9 February 2011, pp. 1–2.

150 UN Doc. S/PRST/2020/6, 29 April 2020, p. 1; UNSC Res. 2417, 24 May 2018, para. 1.

151 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2423, 28 June 2018, para. 68.

152 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2109, 11 July 2013, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2057, 5 July 2012, Preamble; UNSC Res. 1996, 8 July 2011, Preamble.

153 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/19, 20 October 2021, p. 4; UN Doc. S/PRST/2015/3, 19 January 2015, pp. 3–4; UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/4, 11 February 2011, p. 2.

154 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1460, 30 January 2003, para. 16(b).

155 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2235, 7 August 2015, para. 5.

156 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2612, 20 December 2021, para. 45; UNSC Res. 2605, 12 November 2021, para. 44.

157 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2512, 28 February 2020, para. 7.

158 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1493, 28 July 2003, para. 28; UNSC Res. 1417, 14 June 2002, preambular para. 15.

159 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1698, 31 July 2006, para. 6.

160 UNSC Res. 1698, 31 July 2006, para. 6.

161 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2079, 12 December 2012, para. 5(d); UNSC Res. 2025, 14 December 2011, para. 5(d).

162 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/22, 25 June 2007, p. 2.

- seeking solutions to stop cross-border flows of natural resources that threaten peace and stability in the DRC;¹⁶³ and
- assessing the role of diamonds in the conflict in Sierra Leone and the link between trade in Sierra Leone diamonds and trade in arms and “related *materiel* [sic]”.¹⁶⁴

The Security Council has also referred to a fact-finding mission associated with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in connection with reporting on the use of toxic chemicals for “hostile purposes” in Syria.¹⁶⁵ Further, the Council has addressed or otherwise referred to “importers and processing industries” in connection with adopting policies, practices and codes of conduct to prevent support to armed groups through the exploitation of natural resources in the DRC.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, the Council has included corporations – along with foreign governments and nationals – in a list of parties having experienced potential harm, in relation to environmental damage and the depletion of natural resources, as a result of Iraq’s “unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait”.¹⁶⁷

Geographical scope

In terms of geographical scope, a significant portion of Security Council practice concerning the environment and armed conflict pertained to States and regions in the African States regional group. The Council has referred to Africa or African States in general¹⁶⁸ as well as to particular regions and States in Africa. References to particular States included those in connection with Angola,¹⁶⁹ the CAR,¹⁷⁰ Côte d’Ivoire,¹⁷¹ the DRC,¹⁷² Liberia,¹⁷³ Mali,¹⁷⁴ Sierra Leone,¹⁷⁵ Somalia,¹⁷⁶ South Africa,¹⁷⁷ South Sudan¹⁷⁸ and Sudan.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, relevant Council practice also concerned States and regions in the Asia-Pacific States regional group, particularly Afghanistan,¹⁸⁰ Iraq,¹⁸¹

163 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2612, 20 December 2021, para. 26.

164 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1306, 5 July 2000, para. 12.

165 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2209, 6 March 2015, Preamble.

166 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1896, 7 December 2009, para. 16.

167 See e.g. UNSC Res. 687, 3 April 1991, para. 16; UNSC Res. 692, 20 May 1991, Preamble.

168 See e.g. UN Doc. S/PRST/2020/5, 11 March 2020, p. 3; UN Doc. S/PRST/2021/10, 19 May 2021, p. 3.

169 See e.g. UNSC Res. 571, 20 September 1985, Preamble.

170 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2605, 12 November 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2552, 12 November 2020, Preamble.

171 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2153, 29 April 2014, para. 25.

172 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2463, 29 March 2019, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2348, 31 March 2017, Preamble.

173 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1521, 22 December 2003, para. 14.

174 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2531, 29 June 2020, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2480, 28 June 2019, Preamble.

175 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1306, 5 July 2000, para. 12.

176 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2607, 15 November 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2551, 12 November 2020, Preamble.

177 See e.g. UNSC Res. 571, 20 September 1985, Preamble.

178 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2521, 29 May 2020, para. 15; UNSC Res. 2514, 12 March 2020, Preamble.

179 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2524, 3 June 2020, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2579, 3 June 2021, Preamble.

180 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2611, 17 December 2021, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2557, 18 December 2020, Preamble.

181 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2299, 25 July 2016, Preamble; UNSC Res. 2233, 29 July 2015, Preamble; UNSC Res. 687, 3 April 1991, para. 16.

Kuwait¹⁸² and Syria.¹⁸³ The Council has made comparatively few references to States in other regional groups; those few references arose, for instance, in connection with the adverse impacts of certain environment-related phenomena on the depletion of natural resources in “Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem”.¹⁸⁴

Temporal scope

Express references pertaining to temporal scope in Security Council practice concerning the environment and armed conflict include those in respect of time limits regarding processes for the identification of those involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria;¹⁸⁵ the provision of information on the funding of illicit arms trade from natural resources in the DRC;¹⁸⁶ and the formulation of recommendations on measures to prevent the financing of armed groups and militias through illicit exploitation of natural resources in the DRC.¹⁸⁷

Conclusion

The Security Council has expressly or impliedly recognized certain diverse connections involving the environment and armed conflict. The Council’s practice in this area spans multiple agenda items, including many armed conflict contexts, and arguably reflects a relatively non-systematic approach on the part of the Council with respect to identifying and addressing issues involving the environment and armed conflict. The question of whether the Security Council ought to expressly and systematically address climate change, ecological crises or other environment-related matters – including those pertaining to armed conflict – on its agenda implicates a wide array of complex issues. From our perspective, additional reliable and accessible information relating to the following matters (among many others) may help stakeholders gain a wider and deeper perspective from which to formulate policy, allocate resources and, where warranted, develop law in this area:

- factually grounded analyses of the (in)effectiveness of the Security Council’s actions pertaining to the environment and armed conflict, including in terms of the extent, if any, to which those actions have contributed in practice to safeguarding the environment and protecting affected populations;

182 See e.g. UNSC Res. 687, 3 April 1991, para. 16; UNSC Res. 692, 20 May 1991, Preamble. As with Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, the classification of Kuwait as part of the Asia-Pacific region is based on the UN’s informal regional grouping: see above note 61 and associated main text.

183 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2235, 7 August 2015, para. 4; UNSC Res. 2209, 6 March 2015, para. 6.

184 See e.g. UNSC Res. 465, 1 March 1980, para. 8.

185 See e.g. UNSC Res. 2235, 7 August 2015, para. 5.

186 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1807, 31 March 2008, para. 18(d).

187 See e.g. UNSC Res. 1698, 31 July 2006, para. 6.

- relevant practice and the corresponding (in)effectiveness of other UN principal organs, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the International Court of Justice, as well as of regional organizations, such as the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation;
- situation-specific studies on the effects of peace and armed conflict in relation to the environment in general and to climate change and ecological crises in particular; and
- systematic studies of the (in)sufficiency of existing fields of international law to satisfactorily safeguard and protect the environment, including in relation to armed conflict.

In our view, any such information and analysis ought to take into account the extensive scientific evidence compelling the need to address climate change and ecological crises on an urgent basis.