Concept Note

PoC Week Side Event:
Triple tragedies: Conflict, Climate Change and Displacement

Friday, 28 May 2021 09:00am – 10:30am EDT
Meeting to be held virtually via Webex

Background

The convergence of conflict, displacement and climate risks has wide-ranging and far-reaching consequences. The evidence demonstrates that most countries grappling with conflict are concurrently contending with climate-related hazards, and the impacts of these dual challenges on displaced and affected populations, not least exacerbating food insecurity and health disparities, restricting access to essential services, and weakening the ability of governments and institutions to assist or build resilience. In 2020, 8 of the 10 countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change also had an inter-agency humanitarian appeal, among them Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Somalia and Sudan. In 2019, of the 50 countries and territories with new internal displacements associated with conflict and violence, 45 also recorded new internal displacement associated with climate related natural hazards, and in some situations can involve displacement across borders.

Efforts to enhance the protection of civilians must therefore increasingly address these intersections of conflict, climate-related shocks and displacement. Climate change and environmental deterioration may prompt violent conflicts between communities over diminishing resources, or exacerbate existing conflict situations, which in turn can trigger population displacement. Conversely, the effect of armed conflicts on the environment can imperil agriculture and drinking water, cause severe health problems, long-term habitat destruction, land degradation, harm wildlife and biodiversity and contribute to climate change through the release of pollutants and greenhouse gases. Through cause and effect, climate change and displacement undermine people’s resilience and exacerbate protection needs and vulnerabilities in situations of conflict, which can lead to further cycles of displacement, competition for resources, and violence.

Examples of this intersectionality are found around the world. For example, around ninety per cent of refugees come from conflict-affected countries that are the most vulnerable and least ready to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Meanwhile, these countries also host around 70 per cent of people internally displaced by conflict or violence. Examples also include the recurrent droughts and famine that have impacted Somalia, the Lake Chad basin and Afghanistan. Mozambique has been impacted by destructive storms, from Cyclones Idai and Kenneth to Chalane and Eloise in recent months, and concurrently conflict and related displacement in Cabo Delgado. Sudan is another example where drought, floods and land degradation add a profound layer of complexity that enhanced communal conflict over existing resources in some of its regions which resulted in environmental degradation, in addition to the displacement of about 1.6 million people because of the protracted armed conflict. Likewise, in the Sahel, the climate crisis and armed conflict reinforce one another, increasing pressure on
land and water and exacerbating the vulnerability of over 1 million IDPs, and triggering humanitarian consequences for civilians.

**Objectives and Questions for Discussions**

The event will seek to raise awareness on the interconnection between climate change, armed conflict and displacement and its implications on the protection of civilians. Panelists will share their views on how these intersections affect the vulnerability of people in affected regions and possible operational and policy steps needed to mitigate the impact on communities. In particular, they will reflect on the following questions:

- Which specific vulnerabilities are being exacerbated as a result of climate change, armed conflict and displacement? Do governments and international organisations have the necessary tools to understand and measure these and how they might fuel each other?
- What are the coping strategies of affected communities? Are these sustainable or on the contrary further fuelling armed conflict and the degradation of the environment?
- Which existing tools Member States, international organisations and civil society/NGOs could use to mitigate the impact of these interconnected challenges for protecting civilians and the environment? What are the gaps and are there some policy changes required?
- How can likeminded governments and the UN mobilise Member States, international organisations, the civil society and affected communities to address the issue?

**Format**

Niger, the United States, UNHCR and OCHA will convene a virtual side event to the annual UN Security Council open debate on the Protection of Civilians examining the intersections of conflict, climate change and displacement. Representatives of Member States contending with the triple challenge, representatives of the UN and civil society will explore means to improve the protection of civilians in countries contending with conflict, climate change and displacement, and future policies and responses.

**Facilitator**
- Ms. Grainne O’Hara, UNCHR Director for Protection

**Speakers**
- H.E. Mr. Abdou Abarry, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Niger to the United Nations
- H.E. Ms. Elsabeth Millard, Acting Representative of the United States to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
- Mr. Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator
- Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- Mr. Robert Mardini, ICRC Director-General
- Dr. Nadia Ali Eltoum, Executive Director, Almanar Organization, Sudan
- Mr. El Hafiz Mohamed, Displaced Representative, Darfur