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## Human Rights Council

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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by International Action for Peace & Sustainable Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 January 2024]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Conflicts Amid Climate Crisis: A Human Rights Perspective**

Climate change is driven by conflict, and there exists a symbiotic relationship where conflicts fuel climate change, and environmental shifts, in turn, contribute to the intensification of conflicts. The complex relationship between climate change and conflict is increasingly evident on the global stage.

Conflict, often fueled by competition for vital resources, displacement of communities, and geopolitical tensions, serves as a decisive force in steering the course of climate change. The struggle for essential resources, such as water and land, leads to environmental degradation, while conflict-induced displacement triggers ecological shifts and alterations in land use patterns. Geopolitical tensions contribute to environmental stress through activities like militarization, amplifying the complex relationship between political strife and ecological impact.

The situation in Indian-Administered Jammu and Kashmir is a bit like a puzzle with conflict, military presence, and climate change all fitting together. This creates a big problem for the people living there. The presence of 700,000 Indian armed personnel and military infrastructure in ecologically sensitive areas of Indian-Administered Jammu and Kashmir has led to severe environmental degradation. This militarization has resulted in habitat loss, deforestation, pollution, and ecological imbalances. The marginalized communities are disproportionately affected due to their vulnerability and lack of resources.

The widespread presence of the military in Indian-Administered Jammu and Kashmir, especially in areas safe from floods and fertile orchards, has significantly changed how the land is used. This military presence has caused major problems, including people losing their ways of making a living, many being forced to move, and cities spreading into areas that are prone to flooding. The constant presence of the military around Indian-Administered Jammu and Kashmir's lakes, including the building of Naval Bases, has had a severe impact on the communities living by the lakes. Their traditional ways of life and jobs have been disrupted, leading to more people becoming poor. The delicate ecosystems of the lakes are in danger because of pollution, destruction of habitats, and the loss of different kinds of living things caused by military activities.

The impact of climate change further exacerbates environmental issues, including glacier melting and altered water flow patterns. The expansion of military facilities and activities has significantly contributed to the ecological challenges faced by the region.

### **Environmental Degradation and Forced Displacement**

One prominent consequence is deforestation, where armed conflicts may lead to increased demand for timber resources or create circumstances where logging occurs without proper oversight. This rampant deforestation not only results in the loss of crucial ecosystems but also diminishes the planet's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, a key driver of climate change.

Soil degradation is another notable outcome of resource exploitation during conflicts. Activities like unregulated mining or the improper disposal of hazardous waste can contaminate soil, rendering it less fertile and disrupting the natural balance of ecosystems. This degradation not only jeopardizes agricultural productivity but also contributes to the release of stored carbon in the soil, further exacerbating climate change impacts.

Conflict-driven resource exploitation often leads to pollution, as industrial activities and infrastructure development proceed without adequate environmental safeguards. The release of pollutants into the atmosphere can contribute to the greenhouse gas effect, intensifying the warming of the planet and amplifying climate change.

The displacement of communities due to conflict creates a dual crisis, impacting both humanity and ecosystems. Forced abandonment of homes results in significant changes in land use, driven by factors like urbanization, agriculture expansion, and resource exploitation. This transformation not only affects biodiversity and the overall resilience of ecosystems but also leads to broader environmental consequences.

Displaced populations often relocate, exerting additional pressures on new regions with increased resource demand and inadequate waste management. This contributes to environmental degradation, encompassing issues like deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution. These altered land use patterns disrupt the natural balance of ecosystems, initiating cascading effects on climate conditions. When plants and land properties change, it affects the local weather. This shows how conflicts displacing people, the environment, and the climate are all connected.

### **Interconnected Humanitarian and Environmental Consequences**

The convergence of conflict and climate change gives rise to a network of interlinked consequences, where humanitarian crises and environmental degradation are inseparable. A crucial outcome is the humanitarian fallout, marked by mass displacement, refugee situations, and compromised livelihoods. As conflicts compel communities to abandon their homes, ensuing refugee crises pose immense challenges to global stability. The profound upheaval of their entire way of life, coupled with the wrenching loss of homes and possessions, is the formidable challenge faced by displaced communities. This human tragedy is further compounded by the strain on host communities and the limited resources available to support those in need. The connection between humanitarian crises and environmental damage is vividly represented, as conflict-induced displacement directly contributes to changes in land use, exacerbating the vulnerability of ecosystems.

### **Role of International Organizations**

International organizations help the world work together and respond better to climate change caused by conflicts. Entities such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies possess the mandate to address multifaceted challenges arising from environmental stressors and conflicts. International organizations can facilitate conflict resolution, mediate resource disputes, and contribute to the development of frameworks that prioritize both human rights and environmental sustainability. Their involvement is instrumental in creating a collective approach to conflicts caused by climate, guaranteeing that affected populations receive adequate protection and support.

The conflict and climate issues mix, making everything more unstable and difficult for the people living in conflict zones. It also necessitates comprehensive strategies that integrate mitigation and adaptation measures. Mitigation efforts must prioritize conflict resolution, emphasizing diplomatic and peaceful solutions to mitigate the root causes of displacement and resource competition. Resource management plays a crucial role, in promoting sustainable practices that reduce environmental stressors and the likelihood of conflict over scarce resources.

On the adaptation front, communities need robust strategies to withstand the impacts of both conflict and climate change. This involves developing resilient infrastructure, ensuring access to essential resources, and implementing measures that safeguard vulnerable populations. Sustainable development practices, encompassing both environmental and social dimensions, become imperative for creating communities capable of adapting to evolving challenges.

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