

United Nations Security Council
Arria-formula Meeting

Water, Peace and Security

Friday, October 26, 2018, 3:00-6:00 pm, ECOSOC Chamber
Organized by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cote d'Ivoire, Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and Italy



Introduction

In his briefing to the Security Council on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace on 25 April 2018, UN Secretary-General Guterres stated that *"the human and financial cost of focusing our efforts on responding to crises is unsustainable."* In order to maintain international peace and stability, the Security Council cannot ignore the importance of prevention of conflict. The UN Secretary-General furthermore argued that *"most critically, building and sustaining peace requires addressing the root causes of conflicts and crises."*

The root causes of conflict are manifold and intertwined. Political, social and economic factors can all affect stability, as can environmental developments and the availability of natural resources. In this regard, the security risks related to climate, water stress¹ and environmental changes – either as root causes or threat multipliers – are often overlooked. Water stress threatens communities directly, and it can contribute to the outbreak of violent conflict and instability within and among societies.

A high level of water stress can affect economic development and food security. It puts water-related ecosystems under threat and can increase competition and potential conflict among users and result in displacement and migration. More than 2 billion people live in countries experiencing high water stress, and levels of water stress are likely to increase. The effects of climate change on water could increase, resulting in more frequent and severe extreme events and disasters such as droughts and floods.

Water is seldom the only driver of conflict, but is often among the important contributing factors. This calls for strengthened global monitoring of developments relating to water quantity and quality and strengthened water diplomacy, as it represents a major contribution to maintaining international peace and security.²

Water in the United Nations Security Council

The Security Council is starting to prove that it is responsive to the security impact of water stress. The Council discussed the growing threat of water scarcity to social, economic and political gains and the issue of water as a driver of conflict at an Arria-formula meeting and debate respectively, both organized by Senegal in 2016. At a briefing on Preventive Diplomacy in Transboundary Waters, initiated by Bolivia in 2017, the UN Secretary-General stated that, *"Water, peace and security are inextricably linked."* Members underlined the need for timely information-sharing and early warning and agreed that the topic should be part of the prevention agenda of the Council.

At a debate organised by Germany in 2011, the UNSC recognized the importance of including security implications of climate change, as possible driver of conflict, in conflict analysis and

¹ Water stress refers to a situation of water scarcity, a surplus of water or water pollution, which can cause drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity.

² See, for instance, the United Nations SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation.

contextual information (S/PRST/2011/15). During an 'Arria' on climate change (organized by Italy in 2017), a briefing on the Lake Chad Basin (initiated by the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2018) and a debate on climate-related security risks (organised by Sweden in 2018) briefers and Council members alike urged the United Nations to carry out adequate risk assessments and develop risk management strategies accordingly.

Additionally, the Security Council has reflected its concern about security risks of water stress regarding several country-related and regional situations, *"including through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity, and emphasise[d] the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations relating to these factors (resolution 2349 (2017))*. It expressed similar concerns with regard to West Africa and Sahel (PRST/2018/3), Somalia (2408 (2018) and 2431 (2018)), Sudan (2429 (2018)) and Mali (2432 (2018)).

With regard to Central Africa, the Council additionally, *"requested that such information be taken into consideration by UNOCA in its activities"* (S/PRST/2018/17). The Council requested the UN and Government of Sudan *"to provide information of such assessments in mandated reporting as appropriate"*. In his latest report on UNOWAS in July 2018, the UN Secretary-General touched upon these security implications.

Objectives

This Arria-formula meeting serves to further explore ways for the UN system to implement the abovementioned mandates, for the UN Security Council to be provided with information on risk assessments related to climate change and water stress, and for the Council to make timely and informed decisions to ensure root causes of conflict, including water related security risks, are addressed.

During this meeting, participants could:

- identify ways for the UNSC to be timely informed on potential threats to international peace and security and to ensure preventive action is taken (early warning, early action);
- define the capacity and coordination the United Nations need to better understand and respond to security risks related to water stress.
- ensure that the United Nations and the International Community as a whole take water related security risks into account when addressing root causes of potential conflicts.

Participants could consider the following questions:

- How can the UN respond more effectively and coherently to early warning signs?
- What kind of reporting, risk analysis and risk assessment should be provided and when?
- How can the UNSC be adequately and timely informed about potential areas for instability and conflict, including hotspots related to water stress?
- Which options does the UNSC have to ensure concrete action is taken to address water related security risks?
- How can we encourage cooperation on prevention of conflict and monitoring of root causes of conflict, including water stress, between the UNSC and other relevant UN agencies and the international community?

Panelists

- Dr. Danilo Türk, Chair Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace [confirmed]
- Mr. Miroslav Jenča, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs [confirmed]
- Mr. Manish Bapna, Executive Vice President and Managing Director of the World Resources Institute on behalf of the Water, Peace and Security Initiative [confirmed]

Moderator: Ambassador Lise Gregoire-van Haaren, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Format

Following introductory remarks by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the panelists will make presentations of 8 minutes each. The floor will then be opened for Security Council Members, co-hosts, and Member States to speak and ask questions to the panelists for a maximum of 3 minutes each. Should there be questions to the panelists, and if time permits, the panelists will be able to address questions from the audience.

The organizer invites all Member States, as well as permanent observers and non-governmental organizations, to attend. The meeting will be open to the press. Interpretation will be available for all official languages of the United Nations.

Follow up

A report of the meeting will be drafted and shared with the UN Secretariat and other interested parties. Specific recommendations from the Arria will be suggested to relevant parties, including Member States, think tanks and knowledge hubs, in order to strengthen coordinated awareness-raising, analysis and action on water, peace and security.