



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF ESTONIA TO THE UN



Permanent Mission  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
to the United Nations  
New York



Permanent Mission of the  
State of Kuwait to the United Nations  
New York



*Permanent Mission of Peru  
to the United Nations*

## CONCEPT NOTE

### ARRIA-FORMULA ON “PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT DURING ARMED CONFLICT” 9 DECEMBER 2019, 3:00PM – 6:00PM – TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL CHAMBER, UNHQ

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#### I. Summary

With growing awareness of the linkages between environmental degradation, the climate crisis, and the impacts they have on the livelihoods of conflicted-affected communities, discussing the conflict-environment nexus deserves more scrutiny from States. Building on the success of last year’s Arria-formula meeting on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict (PERAC) hosted by the State of Kuwait and the Federal Republic of Germany, it has become apparent that further in-depth discussion is warranted. Discussing this within the UN Security Council, as the only body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the UN Charter, on a regular basis will build awareness on recent developments in this field and provide experts and States with a forum for dialogue.

In order to explore further options for improved international responses to the risks posed to the environment by the activities of armed forces in conflict, the Republic of Estonia, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Kuwait, and the Republic of Peru will convene an Arria-formula meeting on 9 December 2019.

#### II. Background

As the world watched more than 600 burning oil wells in Kuwait blackening the horizon during the first Gulf War in 1991, it was a reminder of the obvious impact of military activities on the environment and the people depending on it. That is why November 6 was declared the [International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict](#) in 2001. Numerous examples from conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia, South America, and Africa have showed us how ecosystems can be damaged from military toxins, how forests disappear as a result of war-economies, how the targeting of water infrastructure damages agriculture and livelihoods, and how the collapse of environmental governance in conflicts results in large waste management problems and communicable diseases, among other issues.

There have been small steps to make progress to address the responsibilities of warring parties concerning the environment, to improve humanitarian responses and include environmental restoration and protection in post-conflict reconstruction. The International Law Committee published its [draft legal principles](#) on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict (PERAC), the International Committee of the Red Cross is working to update its [guidelines](#) for the military on the environment, while also calling for more [attention](#) on the links between warfare and the environment.



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In November 2018, the Governments of Kuwait and Germany [hosted](#) the first Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on the topic of protection of the environment in armed conflict to coincide with the annual “International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict” adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution [A/RES/56/4](#). The presentations by experts and statements delivered by Council Member provided a useful starting point to explore the conflict-environment nexus. The public health concerns born from large scale damage to water infrastructure, pollution and wider environmental issues affecting biodiversity warrants further exchange of ideas and information sharing with and among UN Security Council Member States.

A follow-up Arria-formula meeting will allow for more specific issues to be considered, including highlighting relevant challenges and possible solutions to tackle environmental degradation resulting from armed conflicts and/or which poses the risk of sparking future conflicts or worsening current ones. Council Members would benefit from an opportunity to explore in-depth the linkages between environmental degradation and resulting security implications of the activities of State and non-State armed actors in conflict situations presently on the Council’s agenda.

Although State practices on these linkages have been developed over the last decade, there continues to be a lack of clear mechanisms to address the wide-range of security implications in the wake of destruction of the environment in armed conflict. Existing international environmental agreements are not sufficiently implemented or are limited in their scope, which has led to a fragmented and ineffective international approach. This requires an overarching framework to respond effectively and efficiently to environmental security risks and necessitates further discussion to help identify areas of greatest concern and explore options for how the international community may take concrete steps to address them.

### **III. Objectives**

The meeting will provide a platform for Members of the Security Council to address the interlinkages between the environment and armed conflict, building from the initial discussions on the PERAC agenda and delving more deeply into current needs for language and cooperation in response to previous and ongoing degradation of the environment caused by armed forces in conflicts on the Council’s agenda. During the meeting, Council Members may wish to focus their statements by addressing the following questions:

- What measures can the UN and its Member States, in particular the Security Council, take to strengthen and/or implement international environmental agreements and response mechanisms to prevent and address damage to the natural resources and the wider environment, e.g. conventions on chemicals, cross-boundary pollution and disaster risk reductions?



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- How can identification, monitoring, data collection with frontier technologies and sharing of data through existing platforms on environmental impacts of crisis be improved to facilitate faster and more efficient responses from States and the international community and ensure accountability for infractions?
- How can the UN, and the Security Council in particular, improve protection of affected individuals and communities and their rights from environmental degradation in the light of conflict and the climate crisis, including through mainstreaming this agenda throughout conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding measures?
- What are recent trends and patterns that occur in conflict areas that risk leading to larger ecological catastrophes, e.g. threats to oil infrastructure, targeting of agriculture lands, food security, and natural resources?

#### **IV. Meeting Format:**

The Arria-Formula meeting will be open to attendance to all UN Member States, accredited NGOs, and media, without the right to make interventions. The meeting will commence with brief statements by our main panelists, followed by interventions by current and incoming Security Council members.

Please note: the meeting will begin without interpretation. However, interpretation will be available once Security Council subsidiary organ meetings are finished.

#### **V. Panelists:**

1. Mr. Satya Tripathi - Assistant Secretary-General, Head of New York Office at United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
2. Mr. Willem Zwijnenburg – Humanitarian Disarmament Leader at PAX