



Joint Statement

CLIMATE POLICY IS SECURITY POLICY

Why Climate Justice Is the Foundation of Human Security

The climate crisis threatens human security. It endangers the natural and socio-economic foundations of life, including water and food security, as well as health. It also exacerbates existing conflicts and increases pressure on societies and states. This makes one thing clear: security cannot be understood solely in military terms. A broader understanding of security is needed, one that puts prevention, resilience, justice and the protection of the foundations of human life at its core. The debate about a broader concept of security is also gaining political significance. However, the security implications and scenarios associated with the climate crisis are still neither systematically considered nor coherently translated into policy measures. In collaboration with the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations (CCRDA), representing over 500 Ethiopian NGOs, we demonstrate how forward-looking and equitable climate policies strengthen human security for people in our partner countries and in Germany. Examples from Ethiopia illustrate dynamics that can also be observed in other climate-vulnerable countries.

CLIMATE CRISIS IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is a striking example of how climate risks threaten livelihoods and exacerbate conflict. Droughts, irregular rainy seasons, floods and landslides coincide with poverty, food crises, internal displacement, fragile state structures and local fault lines. In predominantly pastoral regions such as Somali, Oromia, Afar and Borena, failed rainy seasons destroy grazing land and water sources, decimating livestock in the process. When herds have to move earlier, travel farther or enter areas not previously used for grazing, competition over water and pasture intensifies. In recent years, droughts, landslides and floods have increasingly triggered humanitarian crises, destroying livelihoods and exacerbating hunger and health risks while weakening people's ability to cope. As temperatures rise, particularly night-time temperatures, malaria is spreading into previously cooler highland regions. Meanwhile, flooding between 2023 and 2025 contaminated water sources in several regions, leading to severe outbreaks of cholera and acute diarrhoeal diseases.

The climate crisis is one of the greatest security threats of our time

The climate crisis exacerbates inequalities and vulnerabilities, putting increased pressure on natural resources. It contributes to food insecurity, displacement and humanitarian crises. The climate crisis becomes particularly destabilising when it coincides with poverty, autocratisation, state fragility, violent conflict and geopolitical tensions.

These developments illustrate why security cannot be understood in narrowly national or purely military terms. Security policy should focus on protecting life, health, water and food security, social cohesion and the right to live with dignity. The climate crisis threatens these foundations, thus undermining stability, state capacity and the international order. A future-proof security policy must therefore be guided by the concept of human security: freedom from fear, freedom from want and the freedom to live in dignity. Climate justice is not at odds with Germany's security interests; rather, it is a prerequisite for them. Climate risks that destroy livelihoods elsewhere, exacerbate hunger, fuel conflicts and reduce states' capacity to act also affect Germany through humanitarian needs, impacts on supply chains, price developments, geopolitical instability and supply insecurity. Investments in climate mitigation, adaptation, addressing loss and damage, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance can prevent foreseeable climate risks from escalating. Cuts to funding in these areas endanger people and livelihoods, shift risks into the future, make them even less predictable and increase the cost of addressing them. They also undermine Germany's credibility and its capacity to shape international affairs. Forward-looking and equitable climate policy protects those particularly at risk

and strengthens Germany's resilience and capacity to act internationally.

Prevention and resilience must be at the core of security policy

The most effective and cost-efficient security policy is to act before a crisis emerges. Investments in adaptation, preparedness and resilience, as well as measures to address loss and damage, protect livelihoods and stabilise societies. These include early warning systems, climate-resilient food, education and health systems, social protection, local disaster preparedness and conflict-

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Ethiopia is an example of how early warning systems for anticipatory action strengthen human security by combining timely warnings of impending hazards, such as droughts, floods or landslides, with concrete preparedness measures. Such measures include ensuring adequate supplies of feed and water for livestock, providing seeds and mobile healthcare services and setting up evacuation and protection plans. In the short term, cash transfers or public employment programmes can help households cope with climate-related shocks such as droughts or floods. This prevents households from having to sell their livestock, take children out of school, take on debt or migrate during crises. Such coping strategies can exacerbate poverty and vulnerability and increase the risk of conflict. In the medium and long term, universal and inclusive social protection systems can build resilience and prevent local tensions from escalating into larger crises and conflicts.

In fragile contexts, multi-hazard early warning systems should integrate climate- and conflict-related information. Drought warnings are particularly important when food prices are rising, livestock losses are increasing, migration routes are changing, tensions over water sources are growing, local violence is escalating, or humanitarian access is restricted. This enables risks of hunger, disease, displacement and local violence to be identified at an early stage, allowing targeted preventive measures to be initiated. Strengthening the capacity of affected communities to manage risks is essential so they can identify local risks themselves and help design and implement protective measures. Community-based disaster risk reduction strengthens social cohesion and the legitimacy of local governance by involving marginalised groups and reducing the risk of conflict over aid.

sensitive climate policy measures. Comprehensive preparedness must address not only extreme weather events, but also slow-onset processes and potential tipping points in the climate system. This will strengthen long-term climate resilience. At the same time, avoiding even a tenth of a degree of global warming reduces future security risks. Climate finance and energy and climate partnerships are therefore essential components of a forward-looking security policy.

Early warning systems provide the basis for anticipatory action. When droughts, heavy rainfall, crop failures or disease outbreaks are foreseeable, financing, social protection, preventive healthcare, water supplies and humanitarian assistance can be made available in time to prevent risks from escalating into acute crises.

Climate-resilient food systems combine climate adaptation and mitigation with human security. They strengthen the right to food, protect incomes and local supplies and reduce vulnerability to droughts, heavy rainfall and crop failures. This requires integrated approaches that address water and food security, soil protection, biodiversity, gender equality and local participation together. Diverse farming systems, soil conservation, sustainable water and pasture management and the restoration of degraded land strengthen ecosystems, promote soil regeneration and water retention and reduce emissions. Crucially, climate mitigation measures must not displace local food production; rather, they should strengthen food sovereignty, smallholder farming structures and regional value creation.

CLIMATE-RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

In countries such as Ethiopia, where 85 per cent of the population relies on rain-fed agriculture and livestock farming, climate-resilient food systems protect livelihoods. Climate-resilient food systems can protect livelihoods, for example through drought-resistant and early-maturing crop varieties, sustainable water management, the restoration of degraded land, climate-adapted livestock farming, livestock insurance and improved storage and market access.

Justice is what makes security effective and sustainable

An internationally credible climate security and foreign policy is based on justice, solidarity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the polluter-pays principle. It acknowledges historical responsibility and varying degrees of exposure and ability to act. By doing so, it creates the conditions for effective and legitimate action. Justice helps reduce climate-related risks early on, prevent conflict and strengthen societies' long-term stability. From a development policy perspective, resilience, adaptation and addressing loss and damage are key components of a forward-looking security strategy. Measures designed in a conflict-sensitive, peace-promoting and context-specific manner are more effective and sustainable.

For Germany, climate justice is also a matter of strategic reliability. International cooperation, a rules-based order and effective partnerships with climate-vulnerable countries all depend on trust. If commitments on climate finance, adaptation and addressing loss and damage are not fulfilled, this undermines Germany's partnerships, credibility and scope for action. An equitable climate security strategy therefore strengthens not only those most affected, but also the effectiveness of Germany's foreign, security and development policies.

A just energy transition as a security dividend

Fossil fuels pose a security risk. They exacerbate geopolitical rivalries, create dependencies on crisis-prone supply chains and turn energy supplies into a means of strategic pressure. Rising oil and gas prices hit vulnerable countries and people particularly hard by increasing the cost of transport, agriculture and food, as well as the operation of water pumps and cold chains and the provision of healthcare. Accelerating the phase-out of fossil fuels, improving energy efficiency and developing resilient, decentralised renewable energy systems reduce dependency and strengthen the security of energy supply. This is the security dividend of the energy transition: reducing geopolitical vulnerabilities strengthens societal resilience and can simultaneously improve access to sustainable, reliable and affordable energy. This potential is maximised when the transition is designed in a socially just and cooperative manner. This includes improving access to energy, reducing energy poverty, promoting local value creation and employment, ensuring public participation, protecting human rights and preventing new inequalities. International energy cooperation should therefore be based on genuine partnerships that strengthen local sovereignty and ensure that social, human rights and development objectives are firmly embedded. At the same time, it is crucial to ensure that the transition does not create new geopolitical dependencies or environmental and human rights risks along global supply chains.

Put affected communities at the heart of climate security and foreign policy

Systematically incorporating the perspectives of affected communities helps make priority-setting, preparedness, adaptation and international cooperation more effective and equitable.

The participation of affected populations, particularly marginalised groups, must therefore be firmly embedded in project planning, risk assessments, monitoring, grievance mechanisms and funding allocation. Participatory approaches, strengthening local actors and designing measures around local needs increase not only the legitimacy of climate mitigation and adaptation measures, but also their effectiveness and sustainability. These measures must not exacerbate existing social conflicts or create new inequalities. Early, conflict-sensitive planning, human rights risk assessments and binding safeguards are important foundations for this.

ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

For pastoral communities in Ethiopia, recognising mobility as an adaptation strategy is crucial, alongside infrastructure, social protection and healthcare. Climate adaptation measures can only be effective and contribute to peace if they take into account factors such as grazing routes, cross-border movements and local mediation mechanisms. Pastoralists' local knowledge helps identify changes in grazing land, water availability, animal health and conflict dynamics early on, enabling risks to be assessed and adaptation measures to be designed in a sustainable and conflict-sensitive manner. It is also important to consider differing levels of vulnerability. In rural areas of Ethiopia, women and children are often particularly affected by climate shocks as they are frequently responsible for collecting water and firewood, caring for children and tending livestock. When water sources dry up as a result of recurring droughts or forests are damaged by fires, the distances travelled and the time required increase considerably. This leaves less time for childcare, education and other tasks, while also increasing health and economic burdens.

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