

# Climate and Conflict in the Sahel: a Rule of Law Perspective

Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2020, Part II

Zoom webinar hosted by IDLO

15 September 2020

17:00-18:00 CEST (GMT+2)

Co-organisers:



Federal Foreign Office



## Concept Note

There is increasing recognition of the complex link between climate change and human security, particularly in relation to violent conflict. Climate change is often considered a threat multiplier, disrupting livelihoods, increasing migration and displacement, and undermining state capacity to ensure human security, including due to an increased scarcity of natural resources which can drive violence and conflict. Additionally, changes in climatic conditions risk exacerbating factors that can trigger violence, such as increasing inequality and economic shocks. Understanding the intersection between climate change and other risk factors for violent conflict is critical to design effective strategies to address both security and climate risks.

The risk for climate change to indirectly trigger violent conflict is especially high in fragile contexts. Vulnerability results from weak institutional capacity and legitimacy for resource allocation and dispute resolution, and insecure land rights. Evidence suggests that responsive and people centered institutions as well as effective conflict resolution mechanisms are essential to prevent tensions over natural resource management from escalating into violent conflict. The rule of law, encompassing fair laws and policies, effective, accessible, and accountable institutions, and equal access to justice for rights realization, has a key role in reducing instability in fragile contexts. The rule of law enables effective pathways to manage natural resources equitably, prevent or resolve conflict, and maintain peace.

Among fragile contexts, the Sahel, a semi-arid region stretching from Senegal to Ethiopia, is particularly vulnerable to both climate change and conflict. The Sahel is prone to drought conditions, which have increased in intensity over the last decades as a result of climate change. Along with the gradual expansion of farmland to the detriment of grazeland, this has destabilized local agro-pastoral systems and resulted in increasing tension between farmers and herders regarding the use of land and water, particularly in the central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger). In a context where neither state nor traditional institutions have proved effective in land governance and providing peaceful dispute resolution pathways, tensions increasingly escalate into violent conflict. As the region is expected to experience unprecedented climate change by 2040, rule of law enabled good governance is a precondition for peace, justice, equality, and inclusion.

The panel will discuss how rule of law approaches, including legal empowerment, fair laws and policies, and legitimate justice mechanisms and institutions can help address inequalities, grievances, and root causes of conflict in the Sahel, producing beneficial effects for development goals, while fostering stability and peace.

The following questions will be addressed:

- How is climate change affecting human security and violent conflict in the Sahel?
- What contribution can the rule of law provide to address security and climate risks in the Sahel?
- What are the main challenges in strengthening the rule of law in the Sahel?

## Agenda

Timing: Tuesday 15 September 2020  
17:00-18:00 CEST (GMT+2)

16:58 Webinar will be live

17:00 Moderator welcome

- **Mr. Romualdo Mavedzenge**, Regional Program Manager, Africa, International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

17:10 Panel presentations

- **Mr. Thomas Ritzer**, Political Affairs Officer, UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
- **Ms. Esther Obaikol**, Land Governance Expert, Intergovernmental Authority on Development
- **Mr. Marco Lankhorst**, Sahel Program Advisor, IDLO
- **Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote**, Professor of Law, University of Nairobi

17:30 Questions and answers

17:55 Concluding remarks

- **Mr. Romualdo Mavedzenge**, Regional Program Manager, Africa, IDLO

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