Conflict and Environment Observatory

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Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change

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We welcome the invitation by the Special Rapporteur to provide input for the preparation of their thematic report on the specificities, challenges and good practices related to access to information on climate change and human rights.

Our work aims to increase awareness and understanding of the environmental and derived humanitarian consequences of conflicts and military activities. This includes highlighting the contribution of military activities to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and the climate impacts of armed conflicts. In collaboration with academic partners, we established www.militaryemissions.org to highlight data gaps and the need to address the failure of countries on transparency and action around reducing their military GHG emissions. Militaries are significant users of fossil fuels, we have estimated military emissions to account for around 5.5% of total global emissions. However, the reporting of military emissions to the UNFCCC is voluntary and underdeveloped.

We recommend that the upcoming report by the Special Rapporteur address the importance of greater transparency and access to military GHG emissions data and specifically the need for countries to:

- **meet the reporting requirements on military fuel use emissions to the UNFCCC;**
- **commit to improving the standard, scope, frequency and transparency of their military GHG reporting;**
- **publish and implement military climate mitigation plans;**
- **incorporate military GHG emission reductions into their Nationally Determined Contributions;**
- **support the inclusion of the emissions from conflict into the framework of the UNFCCC.**

Our responses to the consultation questions:

1. What kind of information should be collected and shared to identify and prevent negative impacts on human rights arising from climate change and climate change response measures? What kind of information can be particularly challenging to access and why?

Our work focuses on the environmental impact of wars and military activities. Militaries are huge consumers of fossil fuels, with large and complex supply chains. It is estimated that the military are responsible for around 5.5% of total global GHG emissions, and if the world's militaries were

a single country, it would have the fourth highest carbon footprint. However, and as the latest UNEP Emissions Gap report noted, military emissions 'remain insufficiently accounted under UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reporting conventions.' This is because reporting military emissions is voluntary, and very few states provide disaggregated data to the UNFCCC. When countries do report their military GHG emissions, there are often gaps and the overall datasets are poor.

In spite of large global military expenditure – which reached a high of around US$2.43 trillion in 2023 - there is a lack of transparency around the military's contribution to climate change. This makes accurately predicting the global military contribution to emissions difficult, and fails to hold governments to account for contributions from their military.

2. Are existing approaches to collect, share and monitor information on climate change and human rights sufficient for the public to assess the magnitude of actual and potential negative impacts on their human rights, and the adequacy of States' responses to these risks? How can these approaches be improved?

Current mechanisms in place to collect and monitor military GHG emissions are inadequate, and significant improvements are needed. There is no agreed international methodology or comprehensive reporting requirements under the UNFCCC for military or conflict-related emissions. In 2023, NATO published its methodology for mapping GHG emissions but this explicitly excludes emissions from NATO-led operations and missions, and other activities such as training and exercises. There is also no mention of emissions from warfighting itself, which can be highly destructive to the environment. The 5.5% estimate of military global emissions does not include emissions from fighting wars.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the war in Gaza have highlighted the significant climate impacts, as well the huge humanitarian and societal impacts. Estimates of GHG emissions attributed to the first 18 months of the war in Ukraine are 150 million tonnes of CO_2e,[1] similar to the annual emissions of an industrialised country like Belgium. In Gaza, the enormous rebuilding needs will dominate the GHG emissions from the conflict, with estimates at around 60 million of CO_2e for the first four months of the war. Conflict-related emissions need to be properly addressed by the UNFCCC to highlight the scale of these otherwise hidden emissions and ultimately, accountability for the climate damage caused.

The comprehensive military or conflict-related emissions reporting must be incorporated into the reporting obligations to the UNFCCC.

3. Are there undue barriers to obtain access to information on human rights and climate change that is up to date? (eg, language and technical accessibility, use of technology, grounds for non-disclosure, other?)

The Paris Agreement on climate change made military emissions reporting to the UNFCCC voluntary. Governments are not obliged to report their military emissions, and information provided is inconsistent. Whilst there are countries that already provide some annual military

[1] carbon dioxide equivalent

GHG emissions data, there is also reluctance. In some cases, national security or confidentiality are given by governments as a reason to not provide disaggregated data.

Greater transparency in military GHG reporting is needed. This is vital to highlight their contribution to the climate crisis, and drive global attention on the policies and technologies needed to reduce the military emissions. Several governments have pledged to further increase military budgets, meaning that transparency is especially important since emissions are also forecast to increase with higher military expenditure. There are huge gaps in the availability of climate finance, and in particular for fragile and conflict-affected states. The COP28 declaration on climate relief, recovery, and peace highlighted the need for leveraging greater financial support, but it is also critical that the climate impacts of the military and conflicts are acknowledged and addressed.

4. Are there examples in which international cooperation effectively supported public access to information on climate change and human rights? What are the challenges in implementing UNFCCC Articles 4 (public access to information) and 6 (public awareness), and Paris Agreement Article 12 (public access to information), and other international instruments and processes that can support/contribute to international cooperation on access to information on climate change and human rights?

Reporting to the UNFCCC on military emissions is incomplete, but several countries prepare and publish military emissions data in national reports. NATO's methodology for mapping GHG emissions was developed for NATO bodies and structures, and not to NATO's members. However, the methodology does state that it may be useful to NATO members in facilitating the development of their own national plans and reporting. The EU Strategic Compass also requires EU Member States to develop national defence strategies on climate change and the 2023 Joint Communication sets out the need for better data on energy consumption and GHG emissions. These indicate that the reporting and access to military emissions data across NATO and EU states is likely to improve, and may encourage other states to follow suit.

Several countries have also developed military climate mitigation plans – such as Canada, Germany, the UK and the US – setting out a commitment to reduce military GHG emissions. However, these are not yet incorporated their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which outline a country's commitment to tackling climate change. As a minimum, all countries with military climate mitigation strategies must integrate these into NDCs to demonstrate their commitment. States must also be encouraged to develop military climate mitigation plans and set emission reduction targets.

5. Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges for business to communicate information on risks, including in different countries, in relation to climate change and human rights? What are the barriers for the rights holders to access to this information and to evaluate the adequacy of an enterprise's response to these risks? Are there specific examples of State regulation that have significantly improved access to information held by private actors on climate change and human rights?

A large proportion of military GHG emissions are from their supply chain. Engagement across the whole military supply chain is fundamental to properly report GHG emissions and maximise GHG reduction opportunities. Under Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting,

there are examples of the military technology sector providing emissions data. In Europe, the military suppliers will also face closer scrutiny, with the EU adoption of the new European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), for use by all companies subject to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

ESG reporting by military technology sector challenges claims by some militaries on national security restricting their reporting and emission disclosure legislation (such as CSRD) will increase the availability of military supply chain emissions data. This means that governments should be able to commit to improving the standard and scope of their military GHG reporting, with the increased availability of supply chain emissions data.

6. What are the impacts on human rights of inadequate access to information from public authorities and/or business? Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges in, collecting and sharing information on disproportionate levels of actual and potential harm from climate change and climate change response measures (disaggregated data on Indigenous Peoples, women, children, local communities, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons living in extreme poverty, others)?

Covered in responses above.

Further information and reports

- ICRC, 2023. Chair's Summary Report of State Expert Meeting on International Humanitarian Law: Protecting the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict, available at: https://www.icrc.org/en/document/chairs-summary-report-state-expert-meeting-ihl-protecting-natural-environment-armed