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9. The contribution of the UN Security Council to environmental peacebuilding

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to explore the UN Security Council's contribution to environmental peacebuilding. As highlighted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in a 2018 Security Council meeting on root causes of armed conflict, 'more than 40 per cent of internal armed conflicts over the past 60 years have been linked to natural resources'.¹ Natural resources can trigger, fuel or drive armed conflicts. For instance, valuable natural resources, such as minerals and timber, play an important role in providing belligerents with the opportunity to fund armed conflicts, while access to such wealth can also be a prime motivator for armed groups to continue fighting.² Furthermore, (climate change induced) environmental degradation can (indirectly) trigger or drive armed conflicts, for instance when it forces communities to relocate and/or to compete for access to scarce natural resources, such as water and arable land.³

The Security Council, as the principal UN organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, arguably has an important role to play in addressing such interlinkages. It has been granted extensive powers by the UN Charter to address situations that endanger (Chapter VI) or threaten (Chapter VII) international peace and security. These include the investigation of situations that pose a danger or threat to the peace, the deployment of peace operations and the adoption of (diplomatic and economic) sanctions against state and non-state actors to counter threats to the peace.⁴ The Security Council can therefore effectively engage in fact-finding, coerce actors undermining peace and security to change their behaviour and contribute to enhancing security on the ground. This explains why it is so crucial that the Security Council engages with environmental factors that undermine international peace and security.

However, environmental peacebuilding encompasses much more than addressing security risks. It equally requires consideration for the social, environmental and developmental aspects of the environment-conflict nexus, which fall under the primary responsibility of the UN

¹ Maintenance of international peace and security, Root causes of conflict — the role of natural resources, UN Doc. S/PV.8372, 16 October 2018, 2.

² For a useful overview and critical appraisal of these interlinkages, see Philippe Le Billon, *Wars of Plunder: Conflicts, Profits and the Politics of Resources* (OUP 2014).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See e.g., Alexander Orakhelashvili, *Collective Security* (OUP 2011), 149; Theodor Schweisfurth, 'Ch. VI Pacific Settlement of Disputes, Article 34' in Bruno Simma and others (eds), *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, Volume I (3rd edn, OUP 2012), 1086–107; Michael Bothe, 'Peacekeeping', in Bruno Simma and others (eds), *ibid.*, 1171; and Nico Krisch, 'Ch. VII Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression, Article 41', in Bruno Simma and others (eds), *ibid.*, 1305.

General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This raises an important question, namely how and to what extent can the Security Council effectively contribute to environmental peacebuilding, given that its mandate is limited to maintaining international peace and security? The purpose of this chapter is therefore to assess the Security Council's contribution to environmental peacebuilding as part of the broader UN system, exploring the opportunities and limitations that derive from the Council's unique mandate and powers.

For this purpose, Section 2 first examines the Council's position in the overarching UN peacebuilding architecture, as this will shed light on the potential for the Security Council to engage with environmental peacebuilding. Subsequently, Section 3 explores the Council's practice with respect to environmental peacebuilding, most notably in relation to 'conflict resources' on the one hand and (climate change induced) environmental degradation on the other. Finally, Section 4 evaluates this practice in light of the Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security and presents reflections on the Security Council's position in the institutional framework on environmental peacebuilding.

2. THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S POSITION IN THE UN PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE

Peacebuilding is a relatively novel concern of the United Nations, yet it has become an important focus of UN action over the past decades. The concept was introduced by former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 Agenda for Peace as a component of a broader spectrum of action, starting with preventive diplomacy 'to resolve disputes before violence breaks out', peacemaking and peacekeeping 'to halt conflicts and preserve peace once it is attained' and, finally post-conflict peacebuilding 'to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict'.⁵ Importantly, the original conceptualization of peacebuilding already contemplated cooperation on environmental matters, such as on shared natural resources. According to the Agenda for Peace, post-conflict peacebuilding:

may take the form of concrete cooperative projects which link two or more countries in a mutually beneficial undertaking that can not only contribute to economic and social development but also enhance the confidence that is so fundamental to peace [such as] projects that bring States together to develop agriculture, improve transportation or utilize resources such as water or electricity that they need to share.⁶

The report furthermore signalled the need for the UN to integrate post-conflict peacebuilding more directly in its work, most notably as part of peacemaking and peacekeeping operations.⁷ In the following years, peacebuilding tasks were in fact increasingly included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, yet an institutional structure to ensure sustained assistance to countries throughout their transition from conflict to peace was lacking. Therefore, in its 2004 report, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change recommended to the Security

⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on An Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping, UN Doc. A/47/277 - S/24111 (1992), para 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, para 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, para 55.

Council, in consultation with ECOSOC, to establish a 'Peacebuilding Commission' pursuant to Article 29 of the UN Charter as a 'single intergovernmental organ dedicated to peacebuilding, empowered to monitor and pay close attention to countries at risk, ensure concerted action by donors, agencies, programmes and financial institutions, and mobilize financial resources for sustainable peace'.⁸

At the 2005 World Summit, states recognized the need for such an institutional mechanism and resolved to establish the Peacebuilding Commission as recommended by the High-level Panel, albeit with a more limited objective than envisaged by the Panel.⁹ The purpose of this new mechanism was 'to address the special needs of countries emerging from conflict towards recovery, reintegration and reconstruction and to assist them in laying the foundation for sustainable development', thereby leaving out the early-warning and monitoring function recommended by the High-Level Panel.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Commission was to function as an advisory body with no direct access to funds. The Peacebuilding Fund, established to support countries in their transition to peace, was instead embedded in the UN Secretariat.¹¹ As such, the Commission that was ultimately established was a meagre reflection of the institution envisaged by the High-level Panel.¹²

Importantly, the Peacebuilding Commission was established as a subsidiary organ of both the General Assembly and the Security Council pursuant to Articles 7, 22 and 29 of the UN Charter, thereby confirming that peacebuilding is a shared responsibility of both principal UN organs.¹³ The main purpose of this construction was to enable the Commission to fill an institutional gap between the mandate of the Security Council, responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, and the mandates of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, responsible for promoting development and the protection of human rights in stable countries.¹⁴ However, even though the Peacebuilding Commission is a subsidiary body of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, the latter has been given a privileged position with respect to requests for advice from the Commission. While the General Assembly (and ECOSOC) can only request for advice 'with the consent of a concerned Member State in exceptional circumstances on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict and with which the Security

⁸ Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, United Nations: New York (2004), paras 225 and 261–265.

⁹ UNGA Resolution 60/1 of 24 October 2005, para 97.

¹⁰ In his 2005 report 'In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights For All', the Secretary-General had advised against equipping the Commission with early-warning and monitoring functions. See UN Doc. A/59/2005 of 21 March 2005, para 115.

¹¹ See <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/fund> accessed 16 March 2023.

¹² See on this topic, e.g., Freya Baetens, 'Facilitating Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Is the UN Peacebuilding Commission Successfully Filling an Institutional Gap or Marking a Missed Opportunity?' in Carsten Stahn, Jennifer Easterday and Jens Iverson (eds), *Jus Post Bellum: Mapping the Normative Foundations* (OUP 2014), 346–75; Dirk Salomons, 'On the Far Side of Conflict: The UN Peacebuilding Commission as Optical Illusion' in Peter Danchin and Horst Fischer (eds), *United Nations Reform and the New Collective Security* (CUP 2010), 195–211.

¹³ The Commission was established through UNGA Resolution 60/180 and UNSC Resolution 1645 (2005).

¹⁴ See Freya Baetens and Katrin Kohoutek, 'United Nations Peacebuilding Commission' in Rüdiger Wolfrum, *Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Vol. X, OUP 2012), 406–14.

Council is not seized in accordance with Article 12 of the Charter',¹⁵ the Council has instead been granted an unconditional right to request the Commission for advice.¹⁶ While the priority that has been given to the Council was not universally welcomed,¹⁷ it does adequately reflect the differences in power between the principal organs of the UN as set out in the UN Charter, most importantly Article 2(7) on non-intervention in the domestic jurisdiction of member states.¹⁸ It further underscores that the Security Council is considered to be the UN's principal organ in relation to peacebuilding activities.

With the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, the UN peacebuilding architecture was formally completed. While the Security Council was to retain exclusive competence in the field of peacemaking and peacekeeping, it was to share responsibility with respect to peacebuilding with the General Assembly and ECOSOC – although not on equal terms – through the institutional structure of the Peacebuilding Commission. However, especially throughout the first years of the Commission's existence, the Security Council did not seem to feel the need to actively work with it and, as a result, the Commission was seriously hampered in its functioning.¹⁹ The working relationship between the Council and the Commission has improved since then, notably as a result of two important evaluations of the UN Charter's collective security framework, including a 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture by an Advisory Group of Experts appointed by the UN Secretary-General.²⁰

This review posited that peacebuilding, re-conceptualized as the more encompassing 'sustaining peace', was a core task for the UN,²¹ but that its activities in the field of peacebuilding were seriously hampered as a consequence of deep fragmentation in the organization's system.²² It also noted that the Peacebuilding Commission, which was established precisely for the purpose of building bridges between the mandates of the principal UN organs 'was rapidly condemned to occupy a sort of no-man's land within the fragmented landscape to which it now

¹⁵ UNGA Resolution 60/180 and UNSC Resolution 1645 (2005), para 12. See also Sievers and Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council* (2014), 473.

¹⁶ UNGA Resolution 60/180 and UNSC Resolution 1645 (2005), para 12.

¹⁷ See Sievers and Daws (n 15), 473.

¹⁸ Art. 2(7) of the UN Charter determines that the UN is prohibited from intervening in 'matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state', but it makes an exception for 'the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII'.

¹⁹ Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, UN Docs. A/64/868 – S/2010/393, 21 July 2010, Executive Summary.

²⁰ The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, UN Doc. A/69/968 - S/2015/490, 29 June 2015. The other review concerned peace operations. See Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations: Uniting Our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People', UN Doc. A/70/95-S.2015/446 (2015).

²¹ The Challenge of Sustaining Peace (n20), para 122.

²² The report stated that '[t]he silos established by the Charter in dividing responsibilities between the principal intergovernmental organs are directly and unhelpfully mirrored in the distribution of responsibilities between United Nations entities. They communicate with one another in various ways and at various levels, but there is general recognition that deep fragmentation persists, given that each entity focuses on its own specific mandate at the expense of overall coherence, added to the absence of a more forceful culture of coordination from the top. A particular additional layer of fragmentation is added between the Secretariat and the agencies, funds and programmes, with structural disincentives to and even prohibitions against mixing or pooling their respective funding streams', *ibid.*, para 63.

belonged'.²³ The Advisory Group recommended that better use could be made of the advisory role of the Commission for the purpose of 'ensur[ing] a United Nations approach to sustaining peace that is coherent, integrated and holistic'.²⁴

Specifically, in relation to the Security Council as one of the main peacebuilding bodies, the Advisory Group recommended that the Council would draw more actively upon the advice of the Peacebuilding Commission 'to assist in ensuring that the mandates, benchmarks and reviews of peace operations, however short-term in scope, reflect the longer view required for sustaining peace', that it should ensure that 'the mandates for peacebuilding missions emphasize the imperative for an integrated mission that draws upon the strengths of the entire United Nations system' and that it 'should consider systematically assessing benchmarking in mandates relating to sustaining peace and specifically in the timing of mission transitions'.²⁵ It also advised the Council to pass situations where peace consolidation has progressed to the point that these no longer constitute a threat to international peace and security to the Peacebuilding Commission.²⁶ These recommendations were subsequently endorsed by the Security Council in a comprehensive resolution on sustaining peace adopted in 2016 in conjunction with a similar resolution adopted by the General Assembly on review of the UN peacebuilding architecture.²⁷ This resolution framed peacebuilding as a shared responsibility, emphasizing that sustaining peace 'requires coherence, sustained engagement, and coordination between the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council, consistent with their mandates as set out in the Charter of the United Nations'.²⁸

It is important from a substantive perspective that both the Security Council and the General Assembly embraced the new notion of 'sustaining peace' introduced by the Advisory Group of Experts, defining it as:

a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.²⁹

The twin resolutions further explicitly referred to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and to the concept of sustainable development more broadly as being relevant to a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace.³⁰

The shift from peacebuilding to sustaining peace is arguably momentous, as it signals a more comprehensive approach to addressing conflict dynamics, including attention to conflict prevention and the root causes of armed conflict, based on increased integration between the three pillars on which the UN is built, namely peace and security, human rights and development. While conflict prevention has always been part of the mandate of the Security

²³ Ibid., para 96.

²⁴ Ibid., para 131.

²⁵ Ibid., paras 132 and 134.

²⁶ Ibid., para 135.

²⁷ UNSC Resolution 2282 (2016) on 'sustaining peace', 27 April 2016; UNGA Resolution 70/262 on 'Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture', 27 April 2016.

²⁸ Ibid., operative para 2.

²⁹ Ibid., 8th preambular paragraph.

³⁰ Ibid., 11th and 12th preambular paragraphs.

Council, the new approach of ‘sustaining peace’ facilitates more structural attention to the root causes of armed conflict, including for ecological and developmental factors. At the same time, the relevant UN documents clearly underscore that peacebuilding requires a concerted effort by all UN organs, with the Security Council taking the lead until a situation no longer constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

More generally, the reforms initiated in the last two decades have resulted in important changes in the institutional framework for peacebuilding (improving cooperation between the principal UN organs) and in the substantive approach to peacebuilding (enhancing consideration of the root causes of conflict and sustainable development). These changes have paved the way for the Security Council to more actively engage with environmental peacebuilding, in coordination with the broader UN system. The following section will explore the approach that the Security Council has taken in its practice.

3. PRACTICE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN RELATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING

This section examines the Security Council’s practice in relation to environmental peacebuilding. The Council’s engagement with environmental peacebuilding arguably goes back to the 1990–1991 Gulf War, with the establishment of the UN Compensation Commission (UNCC) in 1991 as a first milestone. This Commission was mandated to ‘process claims and pay compensation for losses and damage suffered as a direct result of Iraq’s unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait’,³¹ including with respect to environmental damage caused by Iraq deliberately setting fire to oil wells in Kuwait. The practice of the UNCC is of prime importance with respect to questions regarding state responsibility and compensation for environmental harm caused during armed conflicts.³²

This section focuses however on the Council’s engagement with environmental factors contributing to threats to the peace, starting with its early focus on conflict resources (3.1), subsequently delving into its more recent practice on climate change and other ecological threats (3.2). This section will demonstrate that the Council has used a variety of tools to address environmental factors impacting on peace and security, including the deployment of peace operations with environmental peacebuilding tasks and economic and diplomatic sanctions pursuant to Article 41 of the UN Charter. It has further involved both state and non-state actors in schemes to address the linkages between environmental factors and armed conflict.

³¹ <https://uncc.ch/home> accessed 26 March 2023. The Commission was established pursuant to Resolution 687 (1991), in which the Security Council held Iraq ‘liable under international law for any direct loss, damage, including environmental damage and the depletion of natural resources [...] as a result of Iraq’s unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait.’ Resolution 687 (1991), para 16.

³² See for an in-depth discussion of the environmental practice of the UNCC, Cymie Payne and Peter Sand, *Gulf War Reparations and the UN Compensation Commission: Environmental Liability* (OUP 2011).

3.1 Conflict Resources

The Security Council's engagement with natural resources goes back to the 1990s, when it became apparent that valuable natural resources, such as timber and minerals, played a significant role in financing (mostly internal) armed conflicts.³³ The nexus between natural resources and conflict *financing* explains the primary focus of the Council's practice on stopping the trade in these so-called 'conflict resources'.³⁴ This was the Council's principal objective when it enforced a moratorium on the trade in timber adopted by the authorities of Cambodia to stop the Khmer Rouge from undermining the Cambodian peace process in the early 1990s.³⁵ It was also the prime motivation for adopting commodity sanctions against 'blood diamonds' from Angola in 1998 and Sierra Leone in 2000 and against diamonds and timber from Liberia in 2001 and 2003 respectively.³⁶

In time, the focus of the Council's sanctions practice shifted from commodity to targeted sanctions (sanctions targeting specific actors), but its primary objective remained the same, namely, to sever the nexus between natural resources and conflict financing as a factor contributing to maintaining threats to the peace. The sanctions regime that was imposed to stop the trade in minerals from fuelling armed conflict in the east of the DR Congo is a prime example. Here, the Security Council addressed the illegal exploitation of natural resources principally through financial and travel sanctions against particular individuals and entities. The Council decided that travel bans and asset freezes would be imposed on 'individuals or entities supporting the illegal armed groups [operating] in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the illicit trade of natural resources'.³⁷ The designation of these individuals and entities was left to a committee established by the Security Council to monitor the implementation of sanctions in relation to the DR Congo.³⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that the focus of the Council's practice on natural resources has been and still is on severing the nexus between natural resources and conflict financing, the Council has also, through a multifaceted approach grounded in a combination of coercive measures, institutional reforms and private sector standards, pushed for more structural changes towards responsible natural resources management as part of peacebuilding. In a 2007 Presidential statement on natural resources and conflict, the Council has in fact clearly

³³ One of the first books exploring the nexus between natural resources and armed conflict financing is Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman (eds), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Lynne Rienner Publishers 2003).

³⁴ For an explanation of this term and associated scholarship, see Le Billon (n 2), Chapter 2.

³⁵ See Resolution 792 (1992), especially para 13.

³⁶ Resolution 1173 (1998), operative para 12(b) for Angola; Resolution 1306 (2000), operative paras 1, 2 and 5 for Sierra Leone; and Resolutions 1343 (2001), paras 2(c) and 15 (on diamonds) and 1478 (2003), para 17(a) (on timber) for Liberia.

³⁷ Resolution 1857 (2008), especially para 4(g). See my earlier work for a more detailed analysis of the Council's sanctions practice, notably Daniëlla Dam-de Jong, *International Law and Governance of Natural Resources in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations* (CUP 2015), 267–365; and Daniëlla Dam-de Jong, 'UN Natural Resources Sanctions Regimes: Incorporating Market-Based Responses to Address Market-Driven Problems' in Larissa van den Herik (ed), *Research Handbook on UN Sanctions and International Law* (Edward Elgar 2017), 147.

³⁸ Resolution 1857 (2008), para 4, in which the Council '[d]ecides that the measures referred to in paragraph 3 above shall apply to the following individuals and, as appropriate, entities, *as designated by the Committee*'. Emphasis added.

indicated that the promotion of responsible natural resources management constitutes one of its key objectives, when it stated that:

[T]he Security Council, through its resolutions, has taken measures on [the issue of natural resources contributing to armed conflict], more specifically to prevent illegal exploitation of natural resources, especially diamonds and timber, from fuelling armed conflicts and to encourage transparent and lawful management of natural resources, including the clarification of the responsibility of the management of natural resources.³⁹

The Council reiterated this message in a 2011 Presidential statement on the interdependence between security and development, while recognizing the important role that the broader UN system plays in promoting responsible natural resources management:

[T]he United Nations can play a role in helping the States concerned [...] to prevent illegal access to those resources and *to lay the basis for their legal exploitation with a view to promoting development*, in particular through the empowerment of governments in post-conflict situations to better manage their resources.⁴⁰

Institutional reforms play a crucial role in the Council's peacebuilding approach. Its sanctions regimes are often seconded by (calls for) institutional reforms, with peace operations providing assistance to states to make these reforms effective.⁴¹ In some instances, institutional reforms are tied to the lifting of sanctions. Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire constitute relevant examples. In both sanctions regimes, the Security Council conditioned the lifting of diamond sanctions on the implementation of a Certificate of Origin regime for rough diamonds by the relevant authorities, in particular the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds (KPCS).⁴² This scheme requires states to put in place a system of import and export controls for the trade in rough diamonds for the purpose of blocking illegal trade by armed groups, while enabling the legal trade in diamonds to continue because of their 'critical contribution'

³⁹ Statement by the President of the Security Council on Maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict, UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/22, 25 June 2007, para 6.

⁴⁰ Statement by the President of the Security Council on Maintenance of International Peace and Security: The Interdependence between Security and Development, 11 February 2011, UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/4. Emphasis added.

⁴¹ See Sophie Ravier, Anne-Cécile Vialle, Russ Doran and John Stokes, 'Environmental Experiences and Developments in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations' in Carl Bruch, Carroll Muffett and Sandra Nichols (eds), *Governance, Natural Resources, and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* (Earthscan 2016), 202; Dam-de Jong, *International Law and Governance of Natural Resources in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations* (n 37), 267; and Daniëlla Dam-de Jong, 'Standard-setting practices for the management of natural resources in conflict-torn States: Constitutive Elements of Jus Post Bellum' in Carsten Stahn, Jens Iverson and Jennifer Easterday (eds), *Environmental Protection and Transitions from Conflict to Peace: Clarifying Norms, Principles, and Practices* (OUP 2017), 169.

⁴² In the case of Liberia, the Council referred to a system for certification more generally, since the relevant resolutions were adopted before the KPCS entered into force. In contrast, in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, the Council referred specifically to the KPCS, as Côte d'Ivoire participated in the process. For a discussion of the measures adopted by the Security Council, see Daniëlla Dam-de Jong, 'UN Natural Resources Sanctions Regimes: Incorporating Market-Based Responses to Address Market-Driven Problems' (n 37), 154–58; and Daniëlla Dam-de Jong, 'Standard-setting practices for the management of natural resources in conflict-torn States: Constitutive Elements of Jus Post Bellum' (n 41), 169.

to development.⁴³ In other instances, institutional reforms are tied to the implementation of sanctions. This was for instance the case for the DR Congo, where the consolidation of trading counters for minerals – bringing together all state services in a limited number of trading counters to facilitate the tracking and tracing of minerals – was considered essential for the implementation of the sanctions.⁴⁴

In addition to institutional reforms to be undertaken by state authorities, the Security Council has also actively involved the private sector in its approaches towards curbing the trade in conflict resources. First, while the KPCS is formally a state-driven process (only states have voting rights), the private sector has played an active role in the scheme from its inception, encouraged by the Security Council.⁴⁵ Second, in its sanctions regime on the DR Congo, the Security Council went a step further by requiring the private sector to carry out due diligence in their mineral sourcing policies, based on guidelines developed by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).⁴⁶

By embracing such a multifaceted approach, the Security Council has shown awareness that structural solutions are required to effectively tackle the problem of conflict resources. This includes consideration of how natural resources can be managed in a more responsible manner, thereby contributing to preventing conflict relapse and to achieving sustainable peace and development as the main objectives of environmental peacebuilding. Furthermore, by actively deferring to other parts of the UN system, international organizations, states, civil society and the private sector to design and implement strategies to achieve responsible natural resources management, the Security Council has consistently shown awareness of the limitations of its mandate, while at the same time using its unique powers under the UN Charter to support such efforts. Finally, by supporting global supply chain mechanisms such as the KPCS and the due diligence guidelines, the Council has underscored that responsible natural resources management is a global concern, which requires a concerted effort by producers and consumers alike.⁴⁷ This is extremely valuable from an environmental peacebuilding perspective, as it effectively

⁴³ Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, fourth preambular para., available at <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/system/files/documents/KPCS%20Core%20Document.pdf> accessed 16 March 2023. For a critical appraisal of the Kimberley Process, see Nathan Munier, *The Political Economy of the Kimberley Process* (CUP 2020).

⁴⁴ See Resolutions 1952 (2010), para 16; and 1991 (2011), para 17.

⁴⁵ The Security Council has regularly referred to the private sector as important partners in designing and implementing a certification scheme for rough diamonds. For instance, in resolution 1295 (2000), the Council explicitly called upon states to ‘cooperate with the diamond industry to develop and implement more effective arrangements to ensure that members of the diamond industry worldwide abide by the measures contained in resolution 1173 (1998) and to inform the Committee regarding progress in this regard’. See Resolution 1295 (2000), operative para 16. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶ Resolution 1896 (2009), para 7 for the mandate given to the Group of Experts to develop these guidelines; and Resolution 1952 (2010), paras 7 and 9 for the Security Council’s endorsement of the guidelines. The Group of Experts is a fact-finding body established by the Security Council in relation to the sanctions regime regarding the DR Congo. It should be observed that Groups / Panels of Experts have played a vital role in the Council’s practice, by presenting it with evidence to inform its decisions.

⁴⁷ See on this also Daniëlla Dam-de Jong, ‘Who Is Targeted by the Council’s Sanctions? The UN Security Council and the Principle of Proportionality’ (2020) 89 *Nordic Journal of International Law* 383.

expands the circle of participants in peacebuilding efforts and ensures that such efforts do not impose an undue burden on post-conflict states.

Arguably, the attitude adopted by the Security Council in relation to conflict resources can be best compared with that of a ‘regulator’.⁴⁸ The Council has effectively used its resolutions to set standards coordinating the conduct of public and private actors in relation to the management of valuable natural resources for the purpose of peacebuilding. The following section explores whether this approach is replicated in relation to other environmental challenges addressed by the Security Council, including the management of natural resources that have become scarce due to climate change and other ecological changes.

3.2 Climate Change and Other Ecological Changes Affecting Peace and Security

Climate change is broadly considered to constitute one of the major contemporary challenges that the international community faces. However, the question of whether it also constitutes a threat to international peace and security and, if so, what function the Security Council has to fulfil in countering this threat has been the subject of considerable debate. Even though the Security Council has considerable discretion to determine what constitutes a threat to the peace or factors contributing to it and many States (such as the EU, the US and small island developing states) champion an enhanced role for the Security Council in addressing climate change as an existential threat to humanity, other States (such as the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned movement, Russia and China) consider climate change to be primarily a sustainable development issue which is to be addressed through the UN climate change regime.⁴⁹ Hence, its consideration by the Security Council is controversial, prompting accusations that the Council oversteps its mandate in addressing climate change and encroaches on the mandates of other UN organs.⁵⁰ This controversy explains why the topic has been addressed notably through open (thematic) debates and Arria Formula meetings at the initiative of individual members of the Security Council.⁵¹

The first thematic debate on climate change within the Security Council was initiated by the UK in 2007. The purpose was to discuss the security implications of a changing climate, including its impact on border disputes, migratory pressures and – most importantly for the purposes of environmental peacebuilding – conflicts related to competition over scarce natural resources (such as freshwater and arable land) and energy.⁵² The debate did however not produce any tangible results. If anything, the ensuing discussion demonstrated the controversy

⁴⁸ See Kristen Boon, ‘U.N. Sanctions as Regulation’ (2016) *Chinese Journal of International Law* 543.

⁴⁹ For an analysis of the positions of the permanent members of the Security Council with respect to a climate role for the Council, see Shirley Scott, ‘The Attitude of the P5 Towards a Climate Change Role for the Council’ in Shirley Scott and Charlotte Ku (eds), *Climate Change and the UN Security Council* (Edward Elgar 2018), 209.

⁵⁰ See Sievers and Daws (n 15), 582–84.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, at 19–97 on the Council’s working methods. For an overview of meetings on climate change, see Security Council Report, *The UN Security Council and Climate Change*, Research Report Nr. 2, 21 June 2021, Annexes I-III. Other meetings focused on related matters, such as an open debate initiated by Senegal on water, peace and security. See UN Doc. S/PV.7818, 22 November 2016.

⁵² Annex to the letter dated 5 April 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/2007/186, paras 3 and 7.

surrounding the topic.⁵³ A second thematic debate organized by Germany in 2011 was more constructive: it marked the Security Council's first actual engagement with the climate security nexus. This debate introduced the important notion of 'threat multiplier' to designate the impact of climate change on international peace and security.⁵⁴ By the end of the debate, the Council adopted a Presidential Statement in which it set out its position towards the security implications of climate change.⁵⁵ In this statement, the Council took care to underline that climate action should primarily be pursued under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and emphasized the important role of other UN organs, notably the General Assembly and ECOSOC, in addressing climate change, 'including its possible security implications'.⁵⁶ The Council further 'expressed its concern that possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security', thereby indirectly embracing the notion of 'threat multiplier'.⁵⁷ Finally, and very importantly, the Security Council expressed its intention to consider the security implications of climate change in its practice 'when such issues are drivers of conflict, represent a challenge to the implementation of Council mandates or endanger the process of consolidation of peace'.⁵⁸ It explicitly requested the Secretary-General to include contextual information on the possible security implications of climate change in its reports to the Council.⁵⁹

In the following years, the Council gradually started to consider climate change in its country-specific practice, most notably in relation to the Sahel region and Lake Chad. Arguably, the shift in UN policy from peacebuilding to sustaining peace from 2015 onwards has played an important role in paving the way for the Security Council to enhance its engagement with climate change, notably through the emphasis placed on conflict prevention and root causes of armed conflict.⁶⁰ Several Presidential Statements in relation to the Sahel, adopted between 2012 and 2017, refer in general terms to the adverse effects of climate and ecological changes as being interrelated with security challenges in the region.⁶¹ The year 2017, following the adoption in 2016 of the twin resolutions by the Security Council and the General Assembly on sustaining peace, was a watershed moment. It is from then onwards that

⁵³ Meeting record debate on energy, security and climate, UN Doc. S/PV.5663, 17 April 2007.

⁵⁴ Meeting record debate on impact of climate change, UN Doc. S/PV.6587, 20 July 2011, at 4.

⁵⁵ Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/15, 20 July 2011.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, para 3. The Council hereby also responded to a resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Climate change and its possible security implications in 2009, which invited 'the relevant organs of the United Nations, as appropriate and within their respective mandates, to intensify their efforts in considering and addressing climate change, including its possible security implications'. This resolution enhanced the legitimacy of the Council to consider climate security matters. See General Assembly Resolution 63/281 (2009). See also Shirley Scott and Charlotte Ku, 'The UN Security Council and global action on climate change' in Shirley Scott and Charlotte Ku (eds), *Climate Change and the UN Security Council* (Edward Elgar 2018), 13.

⁵⁷ Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/15, 20 July 2011.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, para 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ See Section 2 of this chapter.

⁶¹ See several of the Council's Presidential Statements on Peace and Security in Africa, including UN Doc. S/PRST/2012/26 of 10 December 2012, UN Doc. S/PRST/2013/10 of 16 July 2013, UN Doc. S/PRST/2013/20 of 12 December 2013 and UN Doc. S/PRST/2015/24 of 8 December 2015; its Presidential Statement on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts of 27 August 2014, UN Doc. S/PRST//2014/17; and its Presidential Statement on Peace Consolidation in West Africa of 28 July 2016, UN Doc. S/PRST/2016/11.

the Security Council started to include substantive references to climate change in its resolutions, connecting climate risks to concrete measures to be taken. Resolution 2349 (2017) on Lake Chad, adopted following a visiting mission by Security Council members to the Lake Chad Basin Region in March 2017, is a key resolution in that it clearly recognizes the adverse effects of climate change on stability in the region and calls for risk assessments and risk management strategies to be developed by states and the UN. Under the heading ‘root causes and development’, the Security Council:

Recognises the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of the Region, including through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity, and emphasises the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations relating to these factors.⁶²

Similar references to the effects of climate change and other ecological changes on stability were included in subsequent resolutions relating to Somalia, Mali, the Central African Republic, the DR Congo, South Sudan and Iraq,⁶³ including calls on governments and the UN to conduct risk assessments and to develop risk management strategies. Peace operations play an important role in this, in coordination with the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) that was established as an inter-agency initiative by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2018.⁶⁴ So far, only the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has been expressly mandated to provide strategic advice in relation to climate change.⁶⁵ Its primary focus has been on mainstreaming environment and security approaches across the UN and its partners; to form partnerships with local and international organizations to deliver interventions on the ground around mitigation and adaptation approaches; and to gather data and evidence and to conduct research on the climate security nexus.⁶⁶ These tasks are expressly connected to supporting Somalia’s efforts to advance the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its peacebuilding programmes.

Somalia can be regarded as a first example of an integrated peacebuilding approach with due attention for environmental factors undermining stability. While it is so far the only peace operation expressly mandated to address such factors, UN operations are increasingly involved in such activities, even in the absence of an explicit environmental peacebuilding mandate. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) is a prime example. Like Somalia, the Sahel region is seriously affected by climate change and environmental degradation, leading to competition over scarce natural resources and deteriorating

⁶² Resolution 2349 (2017), 31 March 2017, para 26. It should be noted that references to risk assessments and risk management strategies also appear in a Presidential Statement on Peace Consolidation in West Africa adopted on 20 January 2017 (UN Doc. S/PRST/2017/2).

⁶³ See e.g., Resolutions 2408 (2018), 2431 (2018), 2461 (2019), 2472 (2019), 2520 (2020), 2540 (2020), 2568 (2021) and 2592 (2021) on Somalia; Resolutions 2423 (2018), 2480 (2019), 2531 (2020) and 2584 (2021) on Mali; Resolution 2429 (2018) on Darfur; Resolutions 2448 (2018), 2552 (2020) and 2605 (2021) on the Central African Republic; Resolution 2499 (2019) on the Central African Region; Resolutions 2524 (2020), 2579 (2021) on Sudan; Resolution 2556 (2020) on the DR Congo; Resolution 2567 (2021) on South Sudan; and Resolution 2576 (2021) on Iraq.

⁶⁴ United Nations Climate Security Mechanism, Progress Report, May 2021.

⁶⁵ Resolution 2540 (2020), paras 5(1) and 13.

⁶⁶ See <https://unsom.unmissions.org/environment> accessed 17 March 2023.

living conditions that make the region susceptible to the spread of terrorism and transnational organized crime.⁶⁷ In a Presidential Statement adopted in 2019, the Security Council encouraged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member states to address challenges stemming from conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in the region ‘in a coordinated and holistic manner’ with the support of UNOWAS.⁶⁸ It furthermore expressly recognized that these conflicts are driven *inter alia* by competition over natural resources and pressures related to climate and ecological factors.⁶⁹

The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is another example of a peace operation engaging with environmental peacebuilding without being explicitly mandated to conduct such tasks. It has done so within the larger framework of confidence-building measures that have been developed as a means to resolve the (largely frozen) conflict in Cyprus.⁷⁰ In its 1993 report, the Secretary-General presented a package of confidence-building measures, including with respect to water management and protection of the environment,⁷¹ which was subsequently endorsed by the Security Council.⁷² It was however not until 2020 that the Security Council specifically referred to environmental protection as a confidence-building measure. Resolution 2506 (2020) recognized that ‘effective contact and communication between the sides enhances the prospects for settlement and is in the interests of all Cypriots, and helps to address island-wide matters, including environmental protection’.⁷³ This was reiterated in Resolution 2537 (2020), while subsequent resolutions added ‘issues related to the adverse impacts of climate change’ to the confidence-building measures.⁷⁴ UNFICYP has engaged in several environmental confidence-building activities, including with respect to water management.⁷⁵

A related matter of interest to the Security Council is the sustainability of UN peace operations themselves, to prevent these operations from harming the communities that they aim to protect. The presence of peace operations can place a huge burden on the local environment. Especially in regions where the environment is degraded, there is a significant risk that peace operations compete with local communities over scarce natural resources, such as water.

⁶⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sahel region, UN Doc. S/2013/354, 14 June 2013, setting out the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

⁶⁸ Presidential Statement on Peace Consolidation in West Africa, UN Doc. S/PRST/2019/7, 7 August 2019, para 20.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Such measures have been a consistent feature of UN engagement in Cyprus since the 1990s. Their purpose is to build the necessary trust for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities that has destabilized the island from the 1960s onwards. Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus, UN Doc. S/26026, 1 July 1993, 3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Annex 1, 15.

⁷² Resolution 839 (1993), 11 June 1993.

⁷³ Resolution 2506 (2020), 30 January 2020, preambular para 7.

⁷⁴ Resolution 2537 (2020), 28 July 2020, preambular para 7; Resolution 2561 (2021), 29 January 2021, preambular para 10; and Resolution 2587 (2021), 29 July 2021, preambular para 13.

⁷⁵ See Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, UN Doc. S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, para 32. In relation to environmental peacebuilding, including water management, a Technical Committee on Environment was established by the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the UN in 2019 with the aim of ‘bring[ing] closer experts from both communities in order to exchange experience and information, while at the same time identify necessary key environmental projects for future implementation’. See Report of the Secretary-General on Mission of good offices in Cyprus, UN Doc. S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, 15.

Furthermore, peace operations generate a considerable amount of waste, which may lead to pollution of soil and waterways. There are therefore clear interlinkages between the sustainability of peace operations on the one hand and ecological factors underlying armed conflicts on the other, including natural resources scarcity. This may also explain the Security Council's interest in supporting wider UN efforts to reduce the impact of peace operations on the environment in the regions where these operations are deployed.

A trigger for the Security Council's engagement with this theme can be found in the cholera outbreak in Haiti in 2010, claiming thousands of lives and infecting nearly 800,000 persons.⁷⁶ An independent panel of experts created by the UN Secretary-General to investigate the causes of the outbreak, traced it back to a compound of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The panel concluded that the outbreak had been caused by poor waste management, infecting local waterways.⁷⁷ Even though an environmental policy for UN missions had already been adopted in 2009,⁷⁸ the cholera outbreak in Haiti did put the spotlight on the matter and highlighted the need for peace operations to implement sound environmental practices.⁷⁹ Several UN-wide initiatives, including the important 'Greening the Blue Helmets' campaign launched by UNEP,⁸⁰ were instrumental in placing this issue high on the agenda of the Security Council. The very first UN operation to receive an express mandate to consider and manage the environmental impact of its operations was the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), established in 2013.⁸¹ Today, several other UN operations have received similar mandates.⁸² Importantly,

⁷⁶ Report by the Secretary-General, A new approach to cholera in Haiti, UN Doc. A/71/620, 25 November 2016, 5.

⁷⁷ Final Report of the Independent Panel of Experts on the Cholera Outbreak in Haiti, available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_525.pdf accessed 17 March 2023. It should be noted that it took the UN until 2016 to accept some form of responsibility for the cholera outbreak in Haiti. See <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/db160819.doc.htm> accessed 17 March 2023, referring to a statement dated 19 August 2016 by the UN Secretary-General in which he expressed regret for the suffering that the people of Haiti have endured as a result of the cholera epidemic. Even though the UN accepted responsibility, it held on to its immunities. See Rosa Freedman, Nicolas Lemay-Hébert and Siobhán Wills, *The Law and Practice of Peacekeeping* (CUP 2021), 66–88 for a discussion of immunities and remedies.

⁷⁸ DPKO/DFS Policy on Environment for UN Field Missions, June 2009, available at <https://pcrs.un.org/Lists/Resources/14-%20Environment/3-%20Policies/Environmental%20Policy%20for%20UN%20Field%20Missions.pdf> accessed 17 March 2023.

⁷⁹ Lucile Maertens, 'From Blue to Green? Environmentalization and Securitization in UN Peacekeeping Practices' (2019) 26(3) *International Peacekeeping* 302.

⁸⁰ UNEP, *Greening the Blue Helmets: Environment, Natural Resources and UN Peacekeeping Operations* (2012).

⁸¹ Resolution 2100 (2013), 25 April 2013, para 32.

⁸² See for an analysis of this development, Maertens (n 79). Specifically relating to MINUSMA, see Laura Pineschi, 'Conflict prevention and climate change in the MINUSMA mandate under Resolution 2423 (2018): Mission impossible?' (2021) 84 *Questions of International Law*, 3. Peace operations with a mandate concerning their environmental impact include the United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). See Resolution 2113 (2013), 30 July 2013, para 28 for UNAMID, Resolution 2245 (2015), 9 November 2015, para 6 for UNSOS, Resolution 2348 (2017), 31 March 2017, para 48 for MONUSCO and Resolution 2387 (2017), 15 November 2017, para 48 for MINUSCA. Reflecting the growing consensus

innovations resulting from these practices can be used to improve access to energy for local communities, thereby also contributing to peacebuilding.⁸³

In sum, the Security Council has increasingly engaged with ecological factors that impact international peace and security over the past decades. It has done so primarily by authorizing peace operations to engage with the security implications of climate change and ecological changes, while also giving consideration to reducing the environmental impact of these operations themselves. Overall, its engagement with ecological factors is however mostly indirect. The Security Council has taken on a secondary role, primarily lending support to other parts of the UN system. This can be explained by the following factors. First, UN peace operations, even though authorized by the Security Council, fall under the responsibility of the UN Secretary-General. It is therefore also the UN secretariat that develops policies for peace operations, including with respect to reducing their environmental impact. Second, climate change and other environmental factors do not only affect security, but also undermine sustainable development in conflict-affected regions. Restoring peace and security in these regions should therefore be based on a holistic approach, which requires a coordinated effort by the UN system as a whole. The Sahel region provides a good example, where the Security Council works in tandem with the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission.⁸⁴ This kind of cooperation is precisely what the sustaining peace agenda envisages.

4. OUTLOOK

This chapter set out to explore the UN Security Council's contribution to environmental peacebuilding. It raised the question of how and to what extent the Security Council can effectively contribute to environmental peacebuilding, given that its mandate is limited to maintaining international peace and security. The current section aims to answer this question by presenting some reflections on the Security Council's engagement with environmental peacebuilding and by making projections for the future.

For this purpose, it is necessary to start with a closer analysis of the notion of environmental peacebuilding itself. For the purposes of this book, environmental peacebuilding was defined as 'the integration of natural resource management and environmental protection in conflict resolution and recovery strategies to prevent conflict relapse [on the one hand] and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development [on the other]'. According to the defini-

on this matter, Principle 7 of the 2019 draft ILC principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict determines that 'States and international organizations involved in peace operations in relation to armed conflict shall consider the impact of such operations on the environment and take appropriate measures to prevent, mitigate and remediate the negative environmental consequences thereof.' See International Law Commission, Report on the Work of Its Seventy-First Session, UN Doc. A/74/10 (2019), 230. Even though it may be too early to assume the existence of a binding obligation under international law for the UN and troop-contributing states to implement sound environmental practices, it is clear that it represents – at the very least – a best practice.

⁸³ See United Nations Peacekeeping, New Partnership for Renewable Energy in Peacekeeping Announced at UN Energy Summit, 24 September 2021, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/new-partnership-renewable-energy-peacekeeping-announced-un-energy-summit> accessed 17 March 2023.

⁸⁴ For an overview of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and ECOSOC on the Sahel, see <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/document-topic/sahel> and <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/node/36374508> both accessed 17 March 2023.

tion proposed by this book, environmental peacebuilding therefore has two dimensions, one negative (preventing conflict relapse) and one positive (laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development). While it seems logical to assume that the Security Council's mandate focuses primarily on the negative dimension and the mandates of other UN organs on the positive dimension, this is a too simplistic view. In fact, the difference between the two dimensions can be better expressed in terms of perspective. While preventing conflict relapse represents a short-term perspective, laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development requires a long-term perspective, consisting of promoting good environmental governance to build resilience within societies. Arguably, the Security Council can and should contribute to both objectives.

Zooming in on the Security Council's contribution to environmental peacebuilding, there are two common features underpinning the Council's approach. First, this chapter argued that the UN peacebuilding architecture accords primacy to the Security Council, while emphasizing that peacebuilding requires a holistic approach and a concerted effort by the UN system as a whole. The Security Council's practice reflects this perspective. In relation to conflict resources, the Council has frequently turned to other actors (including external actors such as the private sector) to consolidate the measures that it had adopted. Likewise, in relation to climate change and other ecological factors, the Security Council has used its powers primarily to lend support to broader UN efforts. The second feature relates to the objectives of the Council's 'environmental' practice. With respect to both themes addressed in this chapter, the focus of the Council's practice has been primarily on severing the interconnections between environmental factors on the one hand and peace and security on the other. Yet, in doing so, it has also paid attention to broader sustainable development questions.

There are however also important differences between the Council's approach with respect to conflict resources on the one hand and climate change and other environmental changes on the other. These differences relate both to the level of engagement by the Council and in the tools that it has used to advance its objectives. As regards the first difference, the Security Council has been much more active with respect to addressing conflict resources than it has been in relation to environmental degradation. Arguably, one of the reasons explaining this difference in approach is related to scientific evidence linking these phenomena to armed conflict. While the interlinkages between natural resources and armed conflict are clear and direct, this is less so for environmental degradation.⁸⁵ The designation of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' is indicative of the current thinking on interlinkages between climate change and armed conflict. It is therefore not surprising that the Security Council's practice has so far focused mostly on investigating these interlinkages. This also partially explains the second difference in the Council's approach, relating to the tools that it has used to advance its objectives. Whereas sanctions are the Council's principal tool with respect to conflict resources, it has addressed climate change only through the mandates of peace operations.

This brings us to projections about the Security Council's future engagement with environmental peacebuilding. With advances in the scientific evidence linking climate change and armed conflict, it is to be expected that the Security Council will increasingly engage with this matter. In relation to responses, it has been suggested that the Council adopts measures to support compliance with the reporting obligations of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate

⁸⁵ See Ken Conca, 'Is There a Role for the UN Security Council on Climate Change?' (2019) 61(1) *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 4, at 6–8.

change or that it adopts sanctions to compel major polluters to reduce their greenhouse gases.⁸⁶ However, neither of these options seems feasible or desirable, at least not in the near future. Instead of addressing climate change as an abstract phenomenon, it seems more likely and appropriate if Security Council responses focus on addressing geographically defined threats to the peace emerging from climate change and environmental degradation. Notably, the Security Council could play an important role in reducing conflicts over scarce natural resources, such as water and land, by promoting regional (and global) cooperation. For this purpose, the Security Council could use its regulatory authority in much the same way as it has done for other natural resources, such as minerals and timber. With the current pace of environmental degradation, preventing and resolving conflicts over scarce natural resources will become the principal security challenge for the future. The Security Council has a key role to play in addressing this challenge.

⁸⁶ See Alan Boyle, Jacques Hartmann and Annalisa Savaresi, 'The United Nations Security Council's Legislative and Enforcement Powers and Climate Change' in Shirley Scott and Charlotte Ku (eds), *Climate Change and the UN Security Council* (Edward Elgar 2018), 101; and Francesco Sindico and Mallory Orme, 'Climate Change and Economic Measures: One Assumption and One Scenario Too Many?' in Scott and Ku (eds), *ibid.*, 47.