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# The UN Environmental and Climate Adviser in Somalia

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## Executive Summary

The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) was among the first special political missions to receive climate-related language in its mandate, reflecting Somalia's acute vulnerability to the impact of climate change. In 2020, UNSOM also became the first mission to have an environmental and climate adviser deployed to help implement this mandate. The adviser, who sits in the office of the deputy special representative of the secretary-general, was seconded by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and is funded on an annual basis through extra-budgetary contributions. The adviser's work is structured around three pillars:

1. Mainstreaming the environment and climate throughout the mission's mandated areas of work, including by contributing to the mission's work on environmental mediation, mainstreaming climate into risk planning and analysis, and collating data on climate, peace, and security;
2. Coordinating UN agencies, government actors, and NGOs working on climate through a "triple-nexus" approach, across the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors; and
3. Supporting the government in developing, funding, and coordinating its climate action plans and policies.

While the environmental and climate adviser is still a relatively new position, they have already achieved some important successes. Because of strong buy-in from both mission leaders and national and regional counterparts, the adviser has been able to help the mission implement its mandate relating to climate change, environmental degradation, and other ecological changes. The adviser has also helped coordinate climate-related work, incorporate strategic analysis into climate-related risk assessments and responses, and liaise with local actors.

The environmental and climate adviser has also encountered some challenges. These include the broad scope of work tasked to a single person and the unique set of skills required, which could present a challenge when recruiting for similar positions in the future. The political contention surrounding the concept of climate security, particularly in the Security Council, has also meant that the language underpinning the adviser's work in mission mandates remains minimal and the position lacks long-term funding from assessed contributions. In spite of this, missions will continue to increase their focus on the interlinkages among climate, peace, and security, and understanding and addressing these linkages will only become more important as the impacts of climate change accelerate.

## Introduction

The impact of climate change as a “threat multiplier” is now broadly recognized.<sup>1</sup> Drought, flooding, migration, loss of natural resources, and loss of livelihoods, among other things, can exacerbate tensions that lead to armed conflict or violence.<sup>2</sup> Climate change is thus increasingly a consideration for UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions, with 80 percent of UN peace operations personnel deployed in the countries most exposed to climate change.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding tensions among member states as to the role of the UN Security Council in addressing climate-related issues, the council has included language on climate in the mandates of a number of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions (see Box 1). Some missions have also begun to deploy personnel dedicated to addressing climate-related issues in their mandated areas of work.

The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) was among the first special political missions to receive climate-related language in its mandate, reflecting Somalia’s acute vulnerability to the impact of climate change (see Box 2). Somalia is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, experiencing droughts, floods, land degradation, and desertification, among other effects. In early 2022, there were more than 7.7 million Somalis in need of humanitarian assistance, as the country has experienced multiple failed rainy seasons, increasing the risk of famine.<sup>4</sup> More than 80 percent of Somalis work in agriculture, yet

climate change, coupled with unsustainable farming and pastoralism practices, has depleted resources, adding to tensions between communities.<sup>5</sup> Somalia also has one of the largest populations of internally displaced people (IDPs) at nearly three million individuals, representing more than 18 percent of its population. Climate change is one of the most common reasons for displacement, second only to conflict, though the two are often linked.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Shabaab and other armed groups have further exacerbated such tensions, weaponizing resources to fuel grievances and using deteriorated livelihoods to boost recruitment.<sup>7</sup> Some individuals working in agriculture and pastoralism who have lost their livelihoods have become susceptible to recruitment, while others have adapted by taking to banditry.<sup>8</sup> In areas where state presence is lacking and resources are scarce, belligerents have positioned themselves as service providers, in some cases building allegiance to their groups and further deteriorating state authority.<sup>9</sup>

In light of these challenges, in 2018, the UN Security Council began recognizing the “adverse effects of climate change, environmental degradation, other ecological changes, [and] natural disasters, among other factors, on the stability of Somalia, including through floods, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity.”<sup>10</sup> The council requested that the UN and the Somali government consider these adverse effects, including “by undertaking comprehensive risk assessments and risk management strategies

1 For example, the 2022 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that climate change can contribute to increased conflict, exacerbated by other socioeconomic and governance conditions. See Hans-Otto Pörtner et al., “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability,” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, February 28, 2022. The role of climate as a threat multiplier was also noted by the UN secretary-general in his 2021 remarks to the Security Council. António Guterres, remarks at the Security Council open debate “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Security in the Context of Terrorism and Climate Change,” New York, December 9, 2021, available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm21074.doc.htm>.

2 While there is no consensus within the literature on the exact role climate change plays in regard to conflict, most studies have found that climate change can exacerbate conditions that can lead to conflict, by, for example, increasing competition over scarce resources. See: Stefan Döring, “Come Rain or Come Wells: How Access to Groundwater Affects Communal Violence,” *Political Geography* 76 (January 2020); Thomas Vervisch, Emery Mudinga, and Godefroid Muzalia, “MONUSCO’s Mandate and the Climate Security Nexus,” *Governance in Conflict Network*, December 2020; and Jonas Vestby, “Climate Variability and Individual Motivations for Participating in Political Violence,” *Global Environmental Change* 56 (May 2019).

3 Florian Krampe, Elizabeth Smith, and Farah Hegazi, “Climate-Related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Mali,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), April 2021.

4 Somalia ranks 173 in the University of Notre Dame 2019 ND-GAIN’s Country Index, which measures a country’s vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change and its readiness to adapt.

5 Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and SIPRI, “Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet: Somalia,” February 3, 2021.

6 Moulid Hujale, “Displaced Somalis and Refugees Struggle to Recover as Climate Change Brings New Threats,” UN Refugee Agency, August 17, 2021; UNSOM, “UNSOM Quarterly Newsletter,” Issue 21, December 2021.

7 NUPI and SIPRI, “Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet.”

8 Interview with UNSOM leader, August 2022.

9 NUPI and SIPRI, “Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet.”

10 UN Security Council Resolution 2592 (August 30, 2021), UN Doc. S/RES/2592.

related to these factors.” It also requested that they “collaborate with the international financial institutions to support the mobilization of economic and development assistance... with a view to

making maximum use of development financing in Somalia, including in response to climate change, flooding, [and] drought” (see Box 1).

### Box 1. Climate language in UN peace operations mandates

The UN Security Council has recognized the negative effects of climate change in the mandates of a number of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. This language is often similar in wording, modeled after Resolution 2349 pertaining to the Lake Chad Basin, which was passed in 2018 following a Security Council visit to the region. In this resolution, the council recognized 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 emphasized “the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations relating to these factors.” Since then, several other mission mandates have included similar language.<sup>11</sup>

|   | Preambular Language  |   |  | Operational Language   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | Recognizes the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, and natural disasters on the security and/or stability of the respective context | Emphasizes the need for adequate risk-assessment and risk management strategies by the government and/or the UN | Emphasizes the need to take meaningful action to adapt to or mitigate the challenges posed by climate change and ecological change | Mandates the mission to support or assist the host government and/or UN country team on issues related to climate change | Requests the mission to consider the environmental impact of its operations when implementing its mandated tasks | Mandates mission to assess the risks of climate change |
| <b>MINUSMA (Mali)</b>                     |  | X   |  |  | X  |  |
| <b>MONUSCO (DRC)</b>                      | X  |   |  |  | X  |  |
| <b>MINUSCA (CAR)</b>                      | X  | X   |  |  | X  |  |
| <b>UNMISS (South Sudan)</b>               | X  | X   |  |  |  | X  |
| <b>UNFICYP (Cyprus)</b>                   | X  |   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>UNAMI (Iraq)</b>                       | X  | X   | X  | X  |  |  |
| <b>UNITAMS (Sudan)</b>                    | X  | X   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>UNSOM (Somalia)</b>                    | X  | X   |  | X  |  |  |
| <b>UNOWAS (West Africa and the Sahel)</b> | X  | X   |  |  |  |  |

<sup>11</sup> Security Council Report, “The UN Security Council and Climate Change,” June 21, 2021.

Because UNSOM did not have the capacity to implement these new climate-related aspects of its mandate, mission leaders worked with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to establish an advisory post, and an environmental and climate adviser was deployed to UNSOM in 2020. In addition to providing technical capacity on environmental and climate-related issues and their linkages to security and stability, the position was envisaged as a way to bridge the mission's work on peace and security with UNEP's technical expertise on environmental analysis, climate adaptation, ecosystems management, and other related issues.

UNSOM's environmental and climate adviser works to ensure that the mission incorporates environmental and climate-related considerations into its work where relevant, helps build the capacity of the mission and the government, and coordinates efforts among UN and external partners. While the position was initially conceived as something of an experiment to fill capacity gaps in the mission, the concept has gained momentum, with several other field missions following suit.<sup>12</sup> Environmental and climate security advisers have been or are soon to be deployed to the UN missions in South Sudan (UNMISS) and Mali (MINUSMA), the UN's regional offices in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and Central Africa (UNOCA), and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa.

The purpose of this issue brief is to review the role of the environmental and climate adviser in Somalia, including their areas of work, successes, challenges, and opportunities for replication in other mission settings. This brief is based on interviews with UNSOM's adviser, mission leaders, individuals backstopping the position, members of the Climate Security Mechanism, and mission personnel from other settings who are recruiting for similar positions.

## Areas of Work

An environmental and climate adviser was first deployed to UNSOM in 2020. The adviser was seconded by UNEP and funded on an annual basis through extra-budgetary contributions from Germany's Federal Foreign Office. The adviser sits in the office of the deputy special representative of the secretary-general (DSRSG), who also serves as the resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator in Somalia. Because UNSOM is an integrated mission, positioning the adviser in the office of the DSRSG allows them to integrate climate throughout the mission's work and to coordinate environmental and climate-related work undertaken by members of the UN country team, including via the interagency task force on the environment. The adviser also works to increase the capacity of UN actors and the government and to coordinate with local civil society groups.

While the adviser is situated within the mission, they report to both the mission and UNEP. The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) also supports the adviser through additional backstopping and technical expertise (see Box 2).

As a special political mission, UNSOM does not directly implement programs but rather advises and coordinates programs implemented by partners, including the UN country team and national and local actors. Therefore, the role is intended to be advisory in nature, though the adviser is sometimes asked to support the implementation of projects. Based on UNSOM's mandate, the mission and UNEP have jointly developed the adviser's work around three pillars: (1) mainstreaming the environment and climate throughout the mission's mandated areas of work; (2) coordinating actors working on climate through a "triple-nexus" approach; and (3) supporting the government in developing its climate action plans and policies.<sup>13</sup> Each of these areas is discussed below.

While the position of the environmental and climate adviser was initially conceived as something of an experiment to fill capacity gaps in the mission, the concept has gained momentum.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with UNEP official, November 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with UNSOM personnel, April 2022.

## Box 2. The Climate Security Mechanism

The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) was established in 2018 as a joint initiative of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UNEP, with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) joining in December 2021. The CSM was born out of the recognition that effectively addressing the complexities of the climate-peace-security nexus requires collaboration across the UN system.

The work of the CSM is based on four pillars: (1) providing support to the field, including mission and non-mission contexts (for example, resident coordinators and peace and development advisers); (2) undertaking advocacy, convening, and developing partnerships, both within and outside of the UN system; (3) providing training and other forms of capacity building; and (4) contributing to knowledge management, including via the establishment of a UN Community of Practice on Climate Security, which comprises approximately twenty-five UN entities.<sup>14</sup>

The CSM supports environmental and climate security advisers by collecting and sharing data, providing training and other technical expertise, and creating a community of practice among individuals working on climate security in various missions. The second phase of the CSM will come to a close at the end of 2022. While planning for the third phase is still underway, interlocutors noted that support to the advisers through training and other tools will remain a priority.<sup>15</sup>

## Pillar 1: Mainstreaming Climate into the Mission's Work

The first pillar of the adviser's work is to mainstream climate into UNSOM's mandated areas of work, including its peacebuilding and stabilization tasks, as well as to mitigate climate-related risks to mandate implementation. Within this pillar, the adviser contributes to the mission's work on environmental mediation, mainstreams climate into risk planning and analysis, and collates scientific information and data to support evidence-based approaches to the mission's work on climate, peace, and security.

While access to natural resources has long been factored into mediation processes as a potential security risk, environmental mediation reframes environmental issues as an opportunity for peacebuilding. To this end, the environmental and

climate adviser is working with the mission's political and mediation teams to design environmental approaches to mediation.<sup>16</sup>

This approach is currently being piloted in the Mataban district of Hirshabelle state, for example, where communities have experienced recurring conflict over land and water access. In response, UNSOM has used climate action as an entry point for fostering dialogue and collaboration among community members, including women and youth.<sup>17</sup> In other areas, including Galmudug state, the mission is working with partners, including the Berghof Foundation, the Life & Peace Institute, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, and the Norwegian International Support Foundation, to build a network of peacebuilders who are integrating climate into their mediation and reconciliation efforts. Such initiatives include, for example, efforts to bring together

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with DPPA official, June 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews with CSM representatives, August 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Nature-based solutions respond to climate-related challenges by conserving or restoring the natural environment. Some examples in Somalia include sustainable flood and drought management, reforestation and afforestation, and the development of alternative livelihoods to facilitate charcoal reduction. For more information, see: UNEP, "Nature-Based Solutions," available at <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/disasters-conflicts/what-we-do/nature-based-solutions>.

<sup>17</sup> Mohamed Osman Mohamoud et al., "Opportunities: Developing a People-Centered Approach to Climate Security in Somalia," Challenges Forum, November 2021.

local leaders and communities to discuss their concerns, including those related to climate change and resource contestation.<sup>18</sup>

The adviser is also working to apply an environmental and climate lens to UNSOM's planning and analysis, including risk analysis and response. For example, the adviser is integrating climate issues into UNSOM's risk register, which includes eight climate-related risks. Buy-in from UNSOM's leaders has helped ensure that the adviser is able to participate in these processes, including via monthly environmental task force meetings that support the integration of the environment and climate throughout mission programming.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to integrating climate into UNSOM's risk analysis and response, the adviser compiles and analyzes environmental and climate data to facilitate evidence-based approaches to the mission's work on climate, peace, and security. The mission has benefitted from having an individual with the expertise to analyze highly technical data, including from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and UNEP's Strata platform, an online source for data on environmental and climate stressors.<sup>20</sup> By overlaying climate data with the mission's conflict data, UNSOM is able to map out potential vulnerabilities and target hot spots. The adviser has also supported hydrological modeling to assess the effects of environmental degradation and propose optimal solutions to manage flooding. This modeling allowed the mission and government to consider potential risks as well as response options, including nature-based solutions like reforestation or sand dams.<sup>21</sup>

## Pillar 2: Coordinating Action on Climate-Related Issues

Given the multiplicity of national and international actors working on climate-related issues in Somalia, there is a need to coordinate efforts and avoid duplication. Thus, the second pillar of the environmental and climate adviser's work is to coordinate these actors, including the twenty-six UN agencies, funds, and programs present in Somalia as well as government actors and NGOs. This coordination is based on a "triple-nexus" approach to climate, which entails pursuing a holistic response across three interrelated areas: humanitarian action, development, and peace-building.

Through this triple-nexus approach, UNSOM, in partnership with the UN country team, decided to make water management through climate adaptation and durable solutions for displaced individuals as two of its areas of focus. To this end, and in support of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia, as of 2021, the mission and country team were supporting nineteen initiatives related to sustainable flood management, alternative livelihoods, climate-adaptive solutions to displacement, and support to Somalia's "blue economy," among other things (see Box 3).<sup>22</sup> In addition to coordinating relevant mission components, country team entities, and government ministries, the adviser works to involve Somali civil society actors, whose expertise on local contexts is essential to the success and sustainability of these projects.

18 Berghof Foundation, "Somalia: Strengthening Infrastructures for Peace and Fostering Inclusive Dialogue in Galmudug State," available at <https://berghof-foundation.org/work/projects/somalia-i4p-and-inclusive-dialogue-in-galmudug-state>.

19 Interview with UNSOM personnel, April 2022.

20 Florian Krampe, interview with Chris Hodder, UNSOM Climate Security Adviser, "Stemming Climate Change and Security," at the 2022 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development, May 23, 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTuIghmVUdQ>; Strata, "What is Strata?," available at <https://unepstrata.org/project/>.

21 UNEP-DHI Centre, "Nature-Based Solutions Supporting Climate Resilience in the Shabelle River Basin," 2022, available at <https://www.unepdhi.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/Somalia-NbS-brief.pdf>.

22 Christophe Hodder, "Climate Change and Security in the United Nations Assistance Mission to Somalia," *Climate Diplomacy*, August 26, 2021.

### Box 3. Examples of triple-nexus initiatives in Somalia

**Sustainable flood management:** In support of the two priority areas of climate adaptation and durable solutions for displaced individuals, the adviser is helping coordinate UNEP and Somalia's Ministry of Energy and Water Resources to promote sustainable flood management. This includes hybrid approaches to flood management, which combine "gray" construction with "green" measures. For example, in the wider Hirshabelle river catchment area, V-shaped weirs are placed in open waterways along with shrubs and plants to reduce flash flooding and build stores of water.<sup>23</sup>

**Alternative livelihoods:** To uphold the 2012 Security Council ban on charcoal imports and exports in Somalia, the adviser has supported the Programme for Sustainable Charcoal Reduction and Alternative Livelihoods, a joint program of the Somali government and several UN agencies.<sup>24</sup> This program monitors and enforces the charcoal trade ban while also developing alternative energy sources, supporting a transition toward more sustainable livelihoods, and contributing to reforestation and afforestation. The program also aims to build partnerships between Somali government institutions, governments and institutions in other countries in the region and in the Gulf states, the private sector, donors, and local organizations.<sup>25</sup>

**Climate-adaptive solutions to displacement:** Based on a study on rapid urbanization in Baidoa and Kismayo, the adviser is coordinating work with UNEP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to implement climate-adaptive solutions to displacement.<sup>26</sup> The study's recommendations for more durable and participatory solutions to migration were incorporated into the work plans of Somalia's Directorate of Environment and Climate Change, as well as the design of two IDP camps.<sup>27</sup>

**Somalia's blue economy:** Somalia's long coastline makes revenue from fisheries and tourism an important source of revenue for the country. Yet, unsustainable fishing practices, coastal degradation, and conflict have posed obstacles to the management of Somalia's "blue economy." To address this challenge, the adviser facilitated a partnership between UNEP and the organization Secure Fisheries, which has facilitated workshops with government officials, fishing communities, and international actors to identify scenarios to help plan for the future and prevent conflict. The adviser has also trained maritime officials on the links between climate change and maritime policing.

## Pillar 3: Supporting the Somali Government

The third pillar of the environmental and climate adviser's work is to support the Somali government's efforts to develop and implement national policies and frameworks related to climate adaptation. This work, which is done in collaboration with UNDP, includes support to the formulation of national adaptation plans and nationally determined contributions (NDCs) as part of the Paris

Agreement and support to government policies and institutions related to environmental management and protection. This work has also involved connecting Somalia with bilateral and multilateral channels of financial support, including in support of Somalia's updated NDC, which is estimated to cost \$48.5 billion to implement.<sup>28</sup>

The adviser has also helped facilitate coordination among government ministries, as the government has limited coordination capacity.<sup>29</sup> For example,

23 UNEP-DHI Centre, "Nature-Based Solutions Supporting Climate Resilience in the Juba-Shabelle River Basin."

24 UN Security Council Resolution 2036 (February 22, 2012), UN Doc. S/RES/2036.

25 UNEP, "Programme for Sustainable Charcoal Reduction and Alternative Livelihoods (PROSCAL)," March 14, 2019.

26 Hervé Nicolle, "Identifying Climate Adaptive Solutions to Displacement in Somalia: Assessment Report," Samuel Hall, IOM, and UNEP, February 2021, available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cfe2c8927234e0001688343/t/6087ebc5eafc7a1f1624c33f/1619520506254/Identifying%2BClimate%2BAdaptive%2BSolutions%2Bto%2BDisplacement%2Bin%2BSomalia%2B-%2BIOM-UNEP%2B-%2BFinal%2BDraft%2B-%2B19FEB2021.pdf>.

27 UNEP, "Somalia," available at <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/disasters-conflicts/where-we-work/somalia>.

28 NDC Partnership, "Somalia Submits Enhanced NDC, Recognizing Climate Crisis' Urgency by Emphasizing Adaptation with Mitigation Co-Benefits," August 30, 2021.

29 Interview with UNSOM leader, August 2022.

the adviser has helped coordinate interministerial partnerships on water-management policies, including the National Water Resource Strategy for 2021 to 2025, which requires the involvement of many government actors across multiple sectors.<sup>30</sup>

## Lessons Learned

While the environmental and climate adviser is still a relatively new position, their work over the past two years has illuminated some important lessons. This section explores some of the adviser's initial successes and the challenges they have faced.

### Successes

One success mentioned by both UNSOM's leaders and those backstopping the position from headquarters is the adviser's role in helping the mission implement its mandate relating to climate change, environmental degradation, and other ecological changes.<sup>31</sup>

This success has been facilitated by the buy-in of mission leaders, who fully support the work of the adviser and take their views into account during strategic thinking and planning. For example, by situating the adviser within the DSRSG's office, mission leaders have made themselves accessible to the adviser and facilitated the adviser's inclusion in regular planning meetings. The adviser has also benefited from strong support from national and regional counterparts, including in the Somali government and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which opened a research center in Mogadishu in 2021 to help combat climate change.<sup>32</sup> As noted by a UNEP official, "In Somalia, the stars have sort of aligned" to enable the adviser's work. This broad commitment was attributed, in part, to the extreme effects of climate change in

The adviser's success has been facilitated by the buy-in of mission leaders, who fully support their work and take their views into account during strategic thinking and planning.

Somalia, including its effects on intercommunal conflict and the way it has been instrumentalized by al-Shabaab and other armed groups, necessitating a strong and coordinated response.<sup>33</sup>

A second area of success has been the adviser's efforts to coordinate climate-related work among a large number of UN, government, and civil society actors working across the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors. Particularly within the UN country team, the adviser has reportedly played a helpful role in facilitating structured dialogue and collaborative action among people with often-overlapping priorities and areas of work.<sup>34</sup>

A third area of success has been the adviser's work incorporating strategic analysis into climate-related risk assessments and responses. According to one UNEP official, prior to the adviser's arrival, many interventions happened without proper analysis and thus were often unsuccessful.<sup>35</sup> By using data-driven and science-based approaches to connect Somalia's security and climate risks, the adviser has helped make these responses more strategic. This strategic analysis and planning has also helped make responses more sustainable, including by mobilizing funding for longer-term development in addition to the short-term humanitarian response.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the adviser has helped the mission not only liaise with UN and national counterparts but also integrate the insights, practices, and knowledge of civil society organizations and other local actors into its work.<sup>37</sup> As one UNEP official noted, the adviser has "been very good at raising local voices to the higher-level discourse..., not just UN talking to [the] UN but also looking at Somali entrepreneurs working on these issues and raising their voices."<sup>38</sup>

30 Federal Government of Somalia Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, "National Water Resource Strategy 2021–2025," August 2021.

31 Interviews with UNSOM leader and UNEP personnel, August 2022.

32 Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022.

33 Interview with UNSOM leader, August 2022.

34 Interview with CSM representative, August 2022.

35 Ibid.

36 Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022.

37 Interview with UNSOM personnel, April 2022.

38 Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022.



## Challenges

In addition to these areas of success, the environmental and climate adviser has also encountered some challenges. One challenge has been the breadth of the work to be undertaken by a single person. The adviser is tasked not only with integrating climate throughout the mission's work but also with supporting the climate-related work of the country team, government ministries, and local organizations. Further, one UNEP official noted that there are often competing demands from the country team and national counterparts, and the adviser often gets pulled into "the nitty gritty" of projects, even though the role is intended to be advisory in nature.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, UNSOM leaders emphasized the importance of setting clear priorities: "The capacities are limited even though the needs are enormous. Therefore, you have to focus on one or two things and do them well—provided those things are truly transformative and strategic—rather than spread your resources thin."<sup>40</sup> UNSOM has attempted to do this by focusing on adaptation and durable solutions to displacement. Nonetheless, interviewees cited the scope of the job as a key challenge.

A second challenge is the unique set of skills required to fill this position. The adviser requires knowledge of mission settings, the ability to work with and coordinate a wide range of actors, and expertise both in peace and security and in environmental and climate-related issues. In addition to being a generalist in these fields, they may also be asked to provide technical guidance and input on specific projects (e.g., modeling the linkages between flooding, displacement, and recruitment by armed groups). Some missions may require more context-specific expertise as well. For example, UNOWAS has worked to recruit an adviser with strong knowledge of regional dynamics and the ability to speak French, on top of the other security- and climate-related expertise required.<sup>41</sup>

Individuals from UNEP who helped develop the

position noted that this was a challenge in hiring for the environmental and climate adviser in Somalia. While they eventually identified an individual who fit the requirements, they acknowledged that this may be difficult in other settings. As noted by one interviewee, the success of the adviser in Somalia is "linked to him as a person.... [Having an] adviser itself is not a guarantee for success."<sup>42</sup> In order to mitigate this challenge, the CSM is currently developing guidance and other tools to train and equip future advisers. The CSM is also considering ways to provide consistent, high-quality technical support and guidance to field-based advisers. The CSM also intends to build a community of practice among the advisers to allow them to share lessons and draw on one another's expertise.

A third challenge is the political contention surrounding the concept of climate security, particularly within the Security Council. In spite of a growing focus on the need for climate action and the recognition that climate change may exacerbate risks in conflict-affected countries, member states disagree over whether it is appropriate for the council to take up this issue. As a result, language on climate in mission mandates remains minimal and is usually kept to the preambular text. While UNSOM's mandate has provided an entry point for its work on the environment and climate, interviewees stressed that the mission would benefit from stronger language on climate, especially in the operational section.<sup>43</sup> As noted by one UNEP official, this would help further elevate the issue of climate among mission leaders.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, the position is currently funded by extra-budgetary contributions on a year-to-year basis rather than through assessed contributions. While one UNEP official indicated that a number of member states have expressed interest in funding the position, having to secure funding on a year-to-year basis limits the adviser's ability to make longer-term plans and could disrupt the continuity of their work. One official noted that including the position in the regular budget would be an important signal

39 Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022.

40 Interview with UNSOM leadership, August 2022.

41 Interview with UNOWAS personnel, August 2022.

42 Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022.

43 Interview with UNSOM personnel, April 2022; Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022.

44 Interview with UNEP personnel, August 2022

of political commitment both to the work of the adviser and to the broader goal of mainstreaming climate in the mission's work.<sup>45</sup> UNSOM has submitted requests to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly to integrate the post into the mission's regular budget, and this request is still under consideration at the time of writing.

## Conclusion: Looking Ahead

The UN has already begun to recruit and deploy similar advisers in other missions, including in South Sudan, Mali, the regional offices in Central Africa and West Africa and the Sahel, and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. Lessons learned from the environmental and climate adviser in Somalia have helped inform the work of these other advisers, and the CSM is facilitating regular contact between them. As in Somalia, these positions are funded by extra-budgetary contributions and seconded by other UN entities. While the adviser in UNSOM is backstopped by UNEP, there has been discussion as to the UN entity best situated to recruit, manage, and backstop the position in other settings,

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including whether the labor could be divided among the CSM entities (e.g., DPPA or DPO facilitating recruitment while UNEP provides technical backstopping).

For those advisers working in the regional offices, coordination with regional organizations will be especially important given the political nature of climate security. For example, UNOWAS has been working closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) both in recruiting the adviser and in developing their workplan, which is based on ECOWAS's May 2022 call to action on climate change, peace, and security.<sup>46</sup>

The birth and growth of these advisers, together with the development of the CSM and the increasing number of mandates with climate-related language, reflect a rapid rise in attention to climate security in UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions. This is a strong indication that, in spite of ongoing political contention among member states, missions will continue to increase their focus on the interlinkages among climate, peace, and security. Understanding and addressing these linkages will only become more important as the impacts of climate change accelerate.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with UNOWAS personnel, August 2022.



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