ICRC

Reinforcing the implementation of the Paris Agreement in countries enduring armed conflict and other violence

The ICRC's submission to the first Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is pleased to contribute to the first Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement. The ICRC's mandate and exclusively humanitarian mission is grounded in international law, the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Climate risks matter to the ICRC because they severely exacerbate the vulnerability of the communities affected by armed conflict and other violence that it works with. The ICRC is committed to helping strengthen people's resilience to converging climate risks and conflict or violence through its operational response, and through mobilizing others to ensure stronger climate action in places enduring conflict or violence. This work goes hand in hand with its ambition to reduce its own environmental footprint.

Through this submission, we would like to draw attention to one significant gap in climate action and in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. **Despite being particularly vulnerable to climate change because of their limited adaptive capacity and readiness, population of countries affected by conflict or violence tend to be neglected by climate action and finance. In line with article 9.4, such countries should be adequately supported to cope with and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.** Considerations on equity in climate action and support to people in vulnerable situations are at the core of this submissions.

We discuss five dimensions, in line with the guiding questions developed by the SB Chairs for the Technical Assessment component of the first Global Stocktake:

I. Scaling up the response to the growing humanitarian impacts of climate risks and strengthening climate adaptation in countries enduring conflict or violence.

II. Gaps in the provision and mobilization of scaled-up climate finance in conflict and violence-affected settings.

III. Barriers to adequate support to climate adaptation in conflict settings.

IV. The ICRC's contribution to achieving the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.

V. Recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the Paris Agreement and ensuring that no one is left behind.

I. Scaling up the response to the growing humanitarian impacts of climate risks and strengthening climate adaptation in countries enduring conflict or violence

1. Even if ambitious mitigation measures are implemented, the climate crisis will continue to severely affect people's lives for several generations. Scaling up climate adaptation is therefore essential to limit the humanitarian impacts of climate change. This is particularly true in

countries enduring armed conflict and other violence that tend to be particularly vulnerable to climate change – of the 25 states deemed most vulnerable and least ready to adapt to climate change by the ND-Gain Index, 14 are mired in conflict.[1] This is not because climate change directly causes conflict. Rather, climate change amplifies the vulnerabilities triggered by conflict, while conflict weakens institutions, essential services, the economy, development and social cohesion, all of which are critical to helping people cope with and adapt to a changing climate (ICRC 2020a; IDA 2021a, b). In addition, armed conflicts often have a significant environmental impact, as the natural environment is too often directly attacked or incidentally damaged by the use of certain means or methods of warfare (ICRC 2020b). This can further harm communities and limit their ability to cope with a changing climate. In other words, the adaptive capacity of countries enduring conflict or violence is drastically limited by the disruptive impact of wars on societies and their environment.

2. Adapted support to avert, minimize and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change and strengthen climate adaptation in these locations is crucial to reduce humanitarian needs, preserve development gains, and avoid systemic breakdown and lasting fragility. Tailored efforts are required to strengthen the resilience of communities and livelihoods to short and longer-term risks and to scale-up anticipatory action, and limit the losses experienced by people.

3. In line with the Paris Agreement (9.4), the acute vulnerability and severe capacity constraints of countries in conflict – a vast majority of which are among the world's least developed countries (LDCs) – should result in adequate support for climate action.[2] However, in practice, these countries are among those most neglected by adequate support to climate adaptation, even though there is widespread understanding that communities enduring conflict are among the most vulnerable to climate change. This is partly due to the uncertainty attached to financing and programming in these locations. Within countries, there can be significant gaps in climate action between more stable and less stable locations, where insecurity and instability can complicate programmatic efforts. Greater and urgent adaptation efforts are essential to avoid millions more people being pushed into extreme poverty, particularly in fragile, conflict- and violence-affected countries (Hallegatte 2016).[3]

II. Gaps in the provision and mobilization of scaled-up climate finance in conflict and violence-affected settings

4. Using climate finance as an indicator of support to climate adaptation in countries enduring conflict and violence allows for two observations on gaps. First, although states committed in the Paris Agreement to ensure a balance between finance for mitigation and adaptation,

[1] The ND-GAIN Country Index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience, https://gain.nd.edu

[2] Paris Agreement, 9.4: "The provision of scaled-up financial resources should aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account country-driven strategies, and the priorities and needs of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and have significant capacity constraints, such as the least developed countries and small island developing States, considering the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation."

[3] The World Bank (2020) assesses that by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor will live in countries characterized by fragility, conflict and violence.

adaptation funding is still trailing behind.[4] Second, there is a significant disparity between the provision of funding to stable middle-income countries and the world's LDCs, a category in which conflict- or violence-affected countries are over-represented.

5. Despite the Paris Agreement's commitment to increase support for LDCs, between 2016 and 2018 they only received some 14 per cent of the total climate funding accounted for by the OECD, with nearly 70 per cent of all climate finance provided to middle-income countries (OECD 2020:7). Even within the group of LDCs, funding is not equally distributed and the most fragile countries with the weakest institutions tend to receive the least funding (UNDP 2021).[5]

6. When climate finance is provided to countries in conflict, delivery mechanisms and processes often result in conflict-affected locations being omitted, particularly when these territories are not under the control of the state (Cao 2021; IIED 2021:1; Sitati 2021:7). This can leave large groups of people behind, as millions of people across the world live on territories that are not under government control (ICRC 2021:2).

III. Barriers to adequate support to climate adaptation in conflict settings

7. High contextual risks, weak governance and institutional capacity, and unfit for purpose and burdensome access and accreditation requirements and programmatic modalities can largely explain the gap in climate finance to fragile and conflict-affected countries (Cao 2021:22; OECD 2014). In addition, in situations of conflict, organizations often focus on shorter-term action to address its direct consequences. Longer-term measures and finance to strengthen the resilience of communities to a changing climate may not be prioritized.

8. Climate donors' risk appetites vary, but overall, donors tend to share a low acceptance for programmatic, financial, environmental and social safeguard risks. This often translates into rigid governing instruments and partnership procedures for climate actors, and an effective inability to fund projects to strengthen the resilience of communities in areas where conflict and instability might jeopardize their implementation. This explains the inclination to invest in relatively safer places that are expected to remain stable and in capitals, and not necessarily in the very locations that are the most vulnerable to climate change. Donors are particularly likely to steer away from parts of a country that are not under governmental control and where a non-state armed group may have a strong presence. This is in part to avoid interfering with the dynamics of the conflict and because of concerns about the sustainability of interventions that may not be aligned with national development plans (Cao 2021:32).

9. The climate finance landscape is complex and fragmented. The Paris Agreement (9.9) underscores the importance of harmonizing procedures and enhancing the readiness of countries to ensure that LDCs and SIDS are not disadvantaged in accessing the funds, but for countries with limited institutional capacity, the transaction costs can still be inhibitive. Weak national institutions tend to have limited capacity and technical expertise to develop

[4] It is commonly agreed that climate finance tracking is imperfect. All figures however indicate a significant unbalance between funding for mitigation and adaptation. OECD figures show that in 2018, 70 % of climate finance was dedicated to mitigation, 21% to adaptation and the rest was cross-cutting (2020: 7). The biggest multilateral climate fund, the Green Climate Fund, has allocated 40 % of its funding to adaptation (UNEP 2021).

[5] For instance, from 2014 to 2018, Bangladesh and Ethiopia were allocated over 30% of climate finance for LDCs (IIED 2021: 6).

comprehensive and adapted long-term policies and strategies, undergo lengthy and uncertain accreditation and application processes and fulfil a wide array of institutional, procedural and fiduciary requirements to qualify for funds (Peters 2016, 2019; Savvidou 2021). For countries enduring protracted conflict and lasting insecurity, knowledge and data gaps can be significant barriers. Current and past climate data, granular socio-economic data or detailed spatial mapping required for proposals may be non-existent and participatory or gender assessments might be hard to complete, and environmental and social safeguards might be substandard. Internal tensions within governments, staff turnover, language itself, for non-English speaking countries, and requirement for co-financing can also be major obstacles (Cao 2021; Savvidou 2021). Although the Green Climate Fund's Readiness Program helps countries strengthen their capacity to tap into its funding, less than a quarter of the fund has been allocated to fragile or conflict-affected countries (Cao 2021:45).

10. For many countries, access is slightly easier through accredited development actors and intermediaries. But this can limit national ownership, and, in fragile and conflict-affected countries, these actors may not be present or may not have access to large portions of the territory. The reality of conflict also means that the central government may not be in the best position to channel financial resources to the local level and support the implementation of projects because of systemic institutional weaknesses, as well as specific conflict dynamics. Lastly, the fact that finance is increasingly provided in the form of loans and other non-grant instruments is a strong deterrent for countries that already carry a high debt load (OECD 2020:7).

11. The historic global gap in funding for adaptation is harder to explain, given the common recognition that even with strong mitigation action, the world needs to prepare for and adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change. In practice, a significant gap remains, and evidence shows that vulnerability does not significantly influence the allocation of climate adaptation finance (Cao 2021). In addition, when funding is provided, it might neglect current climate impact and not support comprehensive adaptation, but overly focus on agriculture, livelihoods and water and sanitation. Sectors that are equally core to climate adaptation, such as health, education or ecosystems, are often neglected (Savvidou 2021; Sitati 2021:12).

IV. The ICRC's contribution to achieving the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement

12. As a humanitarian organisation, the ICRC is determined to act and contribute to reducing the humanitarian impacts of climate change by accelerating its own action and mobilizing others to do the same. The ICRC has committed to factor climate and environmental risks into all its programmes by 2025; to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2030, compared to 2018 levels; and to use its influence to mobilize urgent and more ambitious climate action and environmental protection, notably through promoting respect for the rules and recommendations relating to the protection of the natural environment under international humanitarian law. Working closely with other components of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, it already conducts a broad range of activities to reinforce people's resilience and help people adapt to growing climate risks, including through ensuring a more sustainable access to water in conflict and violence-affected communities, livelihoods, supporting the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes or providing adapted seeds. Over the last years, the ICRC

has also carried out research on the consequences of converging climate risks and armed conflict and has updated its IHL Guidelines on the protection of the natural environment during armed conflict (ICRC 2020a, b). These efforts are intrinsic to the ICRC's bid to ensure that its response factors in the multiplicity of challenges facing people in conflict zones and has a more sustainable humanitarian impact.

13. The scale of these challenges requires strong collaboration and mobilisation across the humanitarian sector and beyond to better respond to the adverse impacts of climate change and to help reducing risks and vulnerability to shocks, stresses and longer-term changes. This should take place through an increased focus on conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action that supports those most at risk and considers the influence that individual characteristics and situations have on people's capacities and vulnerabilities.

14. In line with this, along with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the ICRC has co-led the development of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, which aims to steer and galvanize the humanitarian response to the climate and environment crises while maximising the environmental sustainability of humanitarian action. The Charter was adopted in May 2021 and has since been signed by more than 215 humanitarian organizations, including local and international NGOs, Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, UN Agencies and research bodies.[6]

15. The ICRC has also been collaborating with the World Bank to convene a group of multilateral development banks, humanitarian and development organizations and researchers to explore avenues to strengthen climate action in fragile, conflict and violence-affected settings.

V. Recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the Paris Agreement in conflict and violence-affected settings and ensure that no one is left behind

16. Imbalances and obstacles hampering the development and implementation of measures to strengthen the resilience and preparedness to climate shocks of communities suffering from conflict or other forms of violence are relatively well known but remain unaddressed.[7] Unless strong efforts are made to reinforce climate action in countries enduring conflict, the vulnerability of those left behind will only continue to grow. As a result, the humanitarian consequences of climate shocks are likely to be greater, forcing larger humanitarian responses.

17. Avenues to ensure that adequate climate adaptation and finance reaches those who need it the most, in line with the Paris Agreement, revolve around rethinking the means of implementation and support to improve access to climate finance in conflict and fragile situations, and finding ways to ensure that climate adaptation is adequately supported at the local level, notably through international cooperation. Some preliminary pathways could be:

18. **Rethinking tolerance to risk –** To ensure that funding from major climate funds and bilateral donors reaches countries in crisis, and the most vulnerable and remote communities within

[6] See climate-charter.org

[7] See, for instance, the outcome documents of a series of roundtables on people's experience of conflict, climate risk and resilience, co-organised by the ICRC, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and the Overseas Development Institute, https://odi.org/en/publications/double-vulnerability-the-humanitarian-implications-of-intersecting-climate-and-conflict-risk/

these countries, a certain level of risk must be accepted and the scale and modalities of implementation of programs need to be tailored to contextual realities. At the same time, programs must be conflict-sensitive, thus reflecting a good understanding of risks and integrating risk-mitigation measures. Countries could, for instance, coordinate to ensure that the process to access funds is simplified, guided by a suitable set of conflict-sensitive criteria, with built-in flexibility to adapt to fluid situations.[8] Financing mechanisms could be required to report on funding provided to countries in crisis. Carving out clear exemptions for critical short and longer-term activities that are humanitarian in nature from the scope of sanction regimes and counterterrorism regulations might also be necessary (ICRC 2019: Chap.5). As currently structured, externally financed climate action can be brought to a halt for long periods when a change in situation occurs (Cao 2021:38).

19. **Strengthening knowledge and practice to prepare for, respond to and build resilience against loss and damage associated with climate change –** Challenges attached to the development and implementation of comprehensive responses to growing climate risks in conflict settings have limited the development of knowledge and the emergence of practices that are adapted to these environments. It is key to support the exploration and documentation of avenues to enable adequate climate adaption in conflict-affected settings.

20. **Reaching the local level –** In countries enduring conflict, where the central government might have a limited capacity and access to parts of the territory, locally driven climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction that complements centralized efforts is critical and in line with the *Principles for Locally Led Adaptation* (GCA 2021). This entails finding ways to channel support to the subnational level and ensure that local governments, civil society or the private sector have the required authority and skills to design and implement quality programs that do reach the most vulnerable segments of societies, even in unstable and hard to reach areas (Cao 2021; Harries and Jaime 2019).

21. **Enabling the diversification and complementarity of partners –** There are significant differences between crises, notably in terms of scales, drivers, strength of institutions and governance, and therefore, between adequate ways of ensuring suitable climate action. Diversifying the types and sizes of organizations eligible for support or selected as partners by accredited entities – notably to include community-based groups and organizations and local authorities that can leverage their local experience and knowledge – ensuring complementary, and nurturing multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral engagement could help ensure adequate climate action at all levels, taking into account the specificity of each crisis situation (ZFRA 2021).

22. **Reducing fragmentation –** Ensuring that the requirements to access climate finance are harmonized across funds and donors would ease the burden and reduce transaction costs for all applicants, and would be particularly enabling for those in conflict settings (IIED 2021:3).

23. **Improving the availability of information on climate finance flows to countries enduring conflict, violence or fragility –** Although figures are mentioned above, no complete overview of climate finance at the national and local levels exists. A clearer definition

[8] This can notably take the form of specialized windows, or specific formulas for country allocations of fast-tracked investments, or specific targets for fragile and conflict-affected situations, as put forward by the International Development Association (IDA 2021a,b).

of climate finance, a fuller picture of how it flows, and the reasons why the most vulnerable countries are experiencing access difficulties despite being prioritized, would help improve the targeting and the identification of real gaps, and improve the transparency of reporting by donors (IFRC 2020:305-7). Among the most important channels for climate finance, major multilateral climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund or the Global Environment Facility, multilateral development banks and bilateral support stand out. Addressing gaps at that level as a first step might already yield significant results and could help unlock climate finance for fragile and conflict affected settings more broadly.

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