

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 1 September 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of September 2020, the Niger intends to organize a high-level open debate on the theme “Maintenance of international peace and security: humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security”, to be held on Thursday 17 September 2020 at 10 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, the Niger has prepared and attached a concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdou **Abarry**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 1 September 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: French]

Concept note for the Security Council high-level open debate to be held on 17 September 2020 on the theme “Maintenance of international peace and security: humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security”

I. Background

1. In its resolution [63/281](#), adopted on 3 June 2009, the General Assembly reaffirms that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the key instrument for addressing climate change. It recognizes that the nature of climate change requires broader cooperation among Member States and invites the various organs of the United Nations, as appropriate and within their respective mandates, to intensify their efforts in addressing climate change, including its possible implications for peace and security.

2. It will be recalled that the Security Council first addressed the link between climate change and peace and security in 2007, under the auspices of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Since then, the issue has been addressed in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, with a resulting improvement in the understanding and recognition by the Council of the adverse effects of climate change in specific regions and countries, including the Sahel. Several documents were adopted during these discussions, including Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#) on the Lake Chad Basin. In the resolution, the Council stressed the need for risk assessment and adequate management strategies on the part of Governments and the United Nations with regard to the adverse effects of climate change on security in the Lake Chad Basin.

3. In its resolution [70/206](#), the General Assembly had already noted that “combating desertification, land degradation and drought, including through sustainable land management, can contribute to easing forced migration flows influenced by a number of factors, including economic, social, security and environmental concerns, which can, in turn, reduce current and potential fighting over resources in degraded areas”.

4. Although not the main cause of armed conflict, climate change is an aggravating factor with the potential not only to prolong conflicts but also to threaten to reverse the gains made in recent decades in economic growth and development, while exacerbating humanitarian needs. The resulting problems jeopardize social cohesion and the legitimacy of Governments, destabilizing already fragile regions and hampering efforts to achieve recovery and sustainable peace in post-conflict situations.

5. Since climate vulnerability and environmental degradation put pressure on governance and threaten the stability and legitimacy of States, addressing these risks would help stabilize and strengthen those States and repair the damage to the social contract.

6. Today, nearly 10 million people depend on humanitarian aid in the Lake Chad region because of the prolonged armed conflicts of the last decade. More than 100,000 people have been displaced in the Diffa region of the Niger alone, and nearly 250,000

refugees from Nigeria are living in the border areas of Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, and in other parts of the central Sahel. The increasing effects of climate change on ecosystems are making people's livelihoods more precarious. Fierce competition for control of the region's increasingly scarce resources is also fuelling deadly conflicts between communities that have lived in harmony for centuries.

7. Moreover, in the countries of the region, which already devote enormous resources to the fight against terrorism, protracted political crises and fragile socioeconomic conditions, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is directly affecting efforts to resolve conflicts or their underlying causes in order to maintain peace.

8. To free the region from the trap of conflict, we must address the consequences of climate change, including ecosystem degradation, incorporate that approach into peace efforts and help people adapt to a changing climate and environment. We must also raise people's awareness of the ways in which international humanitarian law protects the natural environment in armed conflict, and in which better compliance with these rules can reduce the impact of conflict on the environment and, consequently, limit the damage and risks to which these communities are exposed. The feedback loop between the humanitarian situation and insecurity in the region calls for a holistic approach, as advocated by the Peacebuilding Commission at its meeting on the region.

II. Objective

9. The meeting will give the members of the Security Council an opportunity to address the links between the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation, including desertification and soil erosion, and armed conflict, as well as conflict resolution. The discussions will also focus on the consequences of the destruction of the natural environment in armed conflicts and the measures to be taken by the United Nations and Member States to combat those effects.

III. Guiding questions

10. The following questions will guide the debate:

- How can the United Nations and the Security Council, in particular, better understand the humanitarian consequences of climate change and land degradation for security, in order to incorporate them into conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies?
- What can be done to address the links among the effects of the destruction of the natural environment in armed conflict, while building people's resilience to those risks?
- How can current climate mechanisms, international law and policies be better adapted and implemented to contribute to the protection of the environment and natural resources in order to prevent armed conflict?

IV. Format

11. The event will be held online in the form of a high-level open debate, and will be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad.

12. Member States and observers are invited to submit a written statement of approximately 500 words to the Security Council Affairs Division (dppa-scsb3@un.org). Statements sent by 18 September 2020 will be included in a compilation document.

V. Briefers

- President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer
 - Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Ibrahim Thiaw
 - Earth Ambassador, artist and activist, Inna Modja (to be confirmed).
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