

Conference on Climate and Security

11 June | Espoo

RESPECT – RESPOND – PREPARE

RESILIENT TOGETHER



OSCE Chairpersonship Conference on Climate and Security: Unleashing the Potential of the Comprehensive Approach – Chair’s summary

The 3rd annual OSCE Climate Conference was organized on 11 June 2025 in Espoo, Finland. The conference discussed the climate, peace and security agenda from a cross-dimensional and holistic perspective. The conference focused on the environmental and climate cost of conflicts, the participation of business in shaping climate security, and the role of environmental and climate defenders.

Objective 1: Addressing the current state of affairs of the climate and security agenda

The environmental consequences of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine are devastating. The war has caused irreparable damage to Ukraine’s environment and is taking a heavy toll on the Ukrainian people, their health, lives and livelihood. Forests are scorched, rivers polluted, water management systems disrupted, rural lands degraded and contaminated with landmines and pollutants. The war also has serious spill-over effects in the OSCE region and beyond.

Environmental damage can be a deliberate war tactic to make a country uninhabitable. In addition, wars and conflicts impede access to information and data collection. Without data, it is difficult to defend the environment and advance accountability.

Climate change is a **threat multiplier** at national, regional and global levels. It aggravates existing vulnerabilities, fuels instability, and undermines the foundations of peace and prosperity. Rising sea levels threaten to submerge coastal cities and critical infrastructure. Raging wildfires, mudslides and extreme weather events destroy local communities and livelihoods. Extreme droughts and water scarcity ignite tensions between neighboring states. Climate-induced disasters displace millions and trigger migration that strains borders. Displacement overwhelms humanitarian systems, and tests international cooperation.

Climate change is part of a **broader triple planetary crisis**—biodiversity loss and pollution, accelerating land degradation and desertification. An integrated multistakeholder approach is needed to address the triple planetary crisis.

Climate change is a severe risk to security. Climate change is far more than an environmental issue, as it endangers lives, livelihoods and the stability of countries and entire regions. Time is running out: the window for meaningful and impactful action is closing. The cost of inaction is mounting while citizens' trust in political leadership in climate affairs is decreasing, especially among youth.

Objective 2: Discuss climate and security matters from a holistic perspective

The conference promoted public-private partnerships and inclusive, **whole-of-society approaches**. It underscored that unleashing the potential of the whole-of-society approach requires closer cooperation not only between States but also with businesses, civil society, human right defenders, cities, local administrations, academia and other critical actors.

Based on its unique national **comprehensive security model**, Finland stresses the role of individuals, communities and business in crisis response. It integrates environmental security into the protection of health, infrastructure and the economy. This approach can serve as a good practice for strengthening the climate resilience of communities around the OSCE region.

The conference underscored that **human rights** must be placed at the centre of measures to tackle the environmental and climate crisis, as there is no security without human security. Although access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right, those fighting for this right are often most at risk. Across the OSCE region, climate and environmental defenders, as well as journalists, face intimidation and censorship, and surveillance, in addition to restrictions on their freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association. Climate and environmental defenders as well as journalists must be ensured a safe space in which to operate.

Objective 3: Contribute to defining the OSCE's comparative advantage in the broad field of international actors engaged in climate action

The OSCE's **comprehensive approach** to security across all three dimensions, its partnerships with other international actors, and its on-the-ground presence, including in Ukraine, is unique. These capacities enable the OSCE to assist participating States in implementing their commitments and strengthen local resilience.

The OSCE serves as a forum for discussing and addressing the impacts of **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine** and holding Russia accountable. The OSCE has also essential tools to help monitor and assess the environmental damage caused by the war.

Despite the current political challenges, the **OSCE is uniquely positioned to address climate-related security risks due to its comprehensive security mandate and regional presence**. By framing climate change as a core security issue—across the politico-military, economic-environmental, and human dimensions—the OSCE can enhance its

relevance and effectiveness. The OSCE continues to provide political platforms for actors to come together who do not often sit at the same table.

Objective 4: Elaborate on ways to strengthen climate resilience and promote the safety and security of people in the OSCE region.

The conference further highlighted that **climate action is part of security policy**, and that security policy must include climate action. It was also stressed that there can be **no lasting peace or stability without climate resilience**. In post-conflict setting green recovery initiatives make communities more resilient to climate-related risks.

Inclusivity and gender equality are key to strengthening climate security, because diverse perspectives and equitable participation ensure more effective, just and resilient responses to climate-related challenges, especially for those communities which are most vulnerable to environmental impacts. Not everyone is affected equally. Women, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities often carry an outside burden.

Ensuring an enabling environment for **public participation and civic engagement** is a fundamental prerequisite for developing sustainable solutions and effectively managing the climate crisis. Environmental- and climate-related journalism and civic engagement play a vital role in ensuring access to information and transparency and facilitating public debate regarding environmental and climate action.

Next steps:

Fulfilling commitments to internationally agreed decarbonization, mitigation and adaptation targets requires action and political will. While we need whole-of-society approaches to address the risks stemming from a changing climate, the responsibility for action remains primarily with the governments. Hence, the **participating States** are urged to step up their national efforts, pursue intensified cooperation in relation to the climate, peace and security agenda, strengthen climate resilience, develop climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, promote multilateral diplomacy and cross-border cooperation.

As the **OSCE Chair, Finland** commissioned the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute with conducting a study on strengthening the role of the OSCE in climate, peace and security. This study will be published in the run-up to the Chair's event in Prague, in September, which will be a forum for political discussion to identify concrete solutions and review the OSCE's work on questions related to climate and security.

Together with Slovenia, the Chair of the **OSCE's Economic and Environmental Committee**, we continue discussions on the climate, peace and security agenda. The Committee's work enables us to collectively strengthen our understanding of the interlinkages between economic and environmental matters in the face of the climate crisis, as well as the OSCE's tools and activities to assist participating States.