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## **OSCE Chairpersonship Event – Resilient Together in a Changing Climate**

### **Side Event Presentation - Helsinki+50 From Below? Building Bottom-Up Approaches for Climate Resilience**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you to the organizers for the invitation and I am glad that the country of Happiness Finland holds the OSCE Chairmanship and is holding today's discussion on *"Helsinki+50 from below? Building bottom-up approaches for climate resilience"*.

Just recently, key global economists highlighted the main factors that lead to economic inequality in the world: epidemics, wars, violent revolutions and the collapse of states, but today we are all witnesses to how climate risks and disasters have become a new challenge for everyone, and how they negatively affect all three OSCE “baskets”.<sup>1</sup>

### **Views from the Frontline (Views from the Frontline data visualization platform: how well do you know your community's resilience priorities?)<sup>2</sup>**

A new methodology developed with Bir Duino<sup>3</sup> members from the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)<sup>4</sup> in recent years has shown that there are multiple risks and disasters in the next five years (92 uranium tailings dams, one of them Mailuu Suu, Kyrgyzstan,<sup>5</sup> is listed among the 10 most dangerous in the world, the Kumtor tailings dam) that have become threats under the systemic impunity, shrinking civic space, as well as new challenges that affect the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people with whom our members work.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to natural hazards, threats today include climate change, pandemics, global economic and financial instability (especially following the statements of the US President), terrorism and transnational criminal networks, cyber instability, geopolitical instability, various forms of conflicts and wars, and much more.

*Six interconnected drivers of risk have been emphasised by local community leaders together with researches and GNDR experts: climate change, conflicts, gender inequality, food and water insecurity, urbanisation, and forced displacement.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.osce.org/whatistheosce>;

[https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2006/2/21/365305df-047d-43e6-b320-43ee8eafadc7/publishable\\_en.pdf](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2006/2/21/365305df-047d-43e6-b320-43ee8eafadc7/publishable_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unisdr.org/conference/2019/globalplatform/programme/platform/view%3Fid=964.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://birduino.kg/en/press/results-of-bir-duinokyrgyzstanactivities-to-protect-civic-space-in-the-kyrgyz-republic-2024-was-the-most-tragic-year-in-the-history-of-civil-society>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gndr.org>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gndr.org/project/views-from-the-frontline/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gndr.org/impact/views-from-the-frontline/impact-in-each-country/kyrgyzstan/>

## 1. Climate change

Climate-induced disasters accounted for 90% of all major disasters between 1998 and 2017 and are now happening at the rate of one per week – mostly out of the international spotlight. Climate change threatens to annihilate the development efforts that the world has made in recent times.

The impacts of climate change mean that disaster losses are rising. The last 20 years have seen a rise of 251% in direct economic losses from climate-related disasters, and it is the people most at risk who are often disproportionately impacted – particularly those in the global south.

Our focus on risk-informed development requires us to provide the frontline perspective to the climate justice debate on loss and damage, to identify methods to further converge climate change adaptation into disaster risk reduction, to advocate for climate and disaster risk-informed investment, and campaign for action at an all-society level.

## 2. Conflicts

Many NGOs in the OSCE region operate in fragile states, in contexts where democracy is unstable or under threat, especially in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus.

The impact of climate change, as well as other threats, exacerbates this fragility, and 58% of deaths from so-called ‘natural disasters’ occur in the top 30 most fragile states, with numbers of people affected often unreported or vastly under-reported.<sup>7</sup>

For every \$100 spent on response in fragile states, only \$1.30 was spent on disaster risk reduction between 2005 and 2010. Disasters are increasingly happening in conflict areas and when conflict, including political violence, is part of the local reality, traditional approaches to risk reduction are challenged.

The experience of many Civic Solidarity Platform<sup>8</sup> members is that communities in their countries are faced with violence and fragility which increases their vulnerability to disasters, especially in Ukraine and in other conflicts zones.

***Recognition of how conflict, in various forms, drives vulnerability, is therefore critical when designing frontline risk-reduction strategies. Conflict and socio-political confrontations also challenge the notion of the centrality of the state in establishing policies and mechanisms as the primary entry point to reducing risk.***

***With a growing occurrence of fragility and conflict in different forms, members are expressing an urgent need for our network to better understand and prioritize the link between conflict and risk-informed development.***

The issue of integrating development, humanitarian, and peace-building actions is one that has gained relevance in the international space. While the importance of the so-called ‘triple nexus’ (development – humanitarian action – peace) is well understood, its operationalization remains a challenge.

***Our contribution as a global network is to learn from the local reality, to share and amplify this learning. This is an area in which members are requesting greater focus (Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan/members of the GNDR), hope it will be useful for other regions of the OSCE.***

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.undp.org/blog/managing-climate-and-disaster-risk-fragile-states>

<sup>8</sup> <https://civicsolidarity.org/ru/>

### 3. Gender inequality

April 21, 2025 (new global report)

UNITED NATIONS, New York - For decades, feminist organizations and women's movements have pointed out that climate change exacerbates violence against women and girls, a human rights violation that already affects at least one in three women and girls globally. It is also well known that violence inhibits climate action, threatening women's and girls' ability to create change and reducing our collective ability to fight the climate crisis. But these relationships have often been difficult to quantify. The new issue brief from Spotlight Initiative and Dalberg, 'Colliding Crises: How the Climate Crisis Fuels Gender-based Violence' uses modelling to show the correlation between these twin crises – and how we can address them simultaneously.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the brief's key findings:

1) A 1°C rise in temperature results in an almost a 5 per cent increase in intimate partner violence.

By 2090, an additional 40 million women and girls will likely experience intimate partner violence (IPV) each year in a 2°C warming scenario. For context, many predictions say we already exceeded the 1.5°C threshold at the end of 2024. An additional 10 million women and girls will likely experience non-partner sexual violence in the same timespan. In other words, approximately one in ten cases of IPV will be linked to climate change if it continues unabated. Most of this increase is linked to global temperature rise, with early evidence suggesting that every 1°C rise in temperature is associated with a 4.7 per cent rise in IPV. The rest is related to extreme weather events, which are becoming more common.

2) *The climate crisis doesn't cause violence against women – but it does make it worse.*

Violence against women and girls is the result of unequal gender power dynamics. Extreme climate-related weather events such as droughts, floods and storms exacerbate these dynamics – including by triggering displacement, insecurity, poverty and broader institutional breakdown that can reinforce norms and behaviours that increase violence. For example, violence often spikes in situations of displacement, where multiple families are forced to live together in cramped, shared spaces with inadequate resources. This situation can also confine women and girls with perpetrators of violence, with no or very limited access to emergency shelters. Increases in human trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse have been documented in the wake of displacement under disasters and slow onset events like desertification, while competition for natural resources has led to violent conflict and displacement, in which rape and sexual violence are used as a strategy to intimidate and exert control.<sup>10</sup>

3) The climate crisis makes existing gender-based violence more extreme

Climate change worsens the severity of violence as well as increasing its prevalence, putting more than one billion women and girls who already experience violence at even greater risk. One study found that women and girls who had already experienced intimate partner violence experienced more frequent and severe forms of IPV with warming temperatures. This raises the risk of the most extreme forms of violence such as femicide, sexual exploitation, child marriage and rape as a weapon of war. Another study found that intimate partner femicide rose by as much as 28 per cent during heat waves.<sup>11</sup>

4) The climate crisis reduces our ability to fight both environmental degradation and violence against women and girls.

<sup>9</sup> <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/33391516.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SG-2023-annual-reportsmallFINAL.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://spotlightinitiative.org/sites/default/files/publication/2025-04/Colliding%20Crises%20How%20the%20climate%20crisis%20fuels%20gender-based%20violence\\_0.pdf](https://spotlightinitiative.org/sites/default/files/publication/2025-04/Colliding%20Crises%20How%20the%20climate%20crisis%20fuels%20gender-based%20violence_0.pdf)

Climate change can create environmental conditions that damage or disrupt schooling, health services, public services and infrastructure, transportation, social services and local government. This not only disrupts programming to prevent violence, it also reduces access to vital communication networks, frontline service providers, shelters and helplines that enable survivors to seek help.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, violence against women is making it harder for women and girls to participate in and lead climate action. Women environmental human rights defenders, many of whom belong to Indigenous communities, are at particular risk of targeted violence as they speak up to address the climate crisis. Advocacy for land rights, natural resource protection and gender responsive climate transition put these advocates in danger of harassment, doxing, defamation, sexual violence, physical attack and femicide. Violence can come from within their own communities, such as in Guatemala where women who reported logging activities to local authorities were forcibly evicted by their neighbours and had their homes burned down. It can also come from well-resourced corporate or institutional actors, state actors or collusion between the two.

5) Addressing violence against women and girls can help us achieve climate justice and vice versa.<sup>13</sup>

Ending violence against women and girls and curbing climate change are not competing but mutually reinforcing agendas. Women's full participation in political processes – including climate action – has known benefits across climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience and a just transition. More gender-balanced parliaments, for example, have passed more stringent policies to lower carbon dioxide emissions. However, gender-based violence and climate actors need to work together far more than they do today. Increased funding and political commitment are needed for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience, as well as for ending violence against women and girls.<sup>14</sup>

#### **4. Food and water insecurity**

More than a billion people live in water-scarce regions and predictions are that 3.5 billion could face water scarcity by 2025. 700 million people worldwide could be displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030.<sup>15</sup>

The availability of freshwater has fallen short of adequately meeting its demand in most parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and nearly two billion people in the world lack access to clean water.

Land encroachment, unplanned expansion, over-exploitation of resources, deforestation, corruption and the corporatization of land and water are all contributing to increasing food and water insecurity.

#### **5. Urbanization**

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<sup>12</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162461>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/03/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/news/climate-change-will-result-additional-40-million-women-and-girls-experiencing-intimate-partner>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.undp.org/water>

More than half of the world's population are now living in urban areas — increasingly in highly-dense cities. Urbanization across many low-to-middle income countries has increased rapidly over the last 50 years.<sup>16</sup>

## 6. Forced displacement

Large-scale population movements within and across borders can reduce access to essential services and livelihood options, and increase exposure to violence, poverty and insecurity, not just for displaced populations but also for host communities. **In Kyrgyzstan, more than 3.8 thousand families continue to live in areas exposed to hazardous natural processes. This was reported to 24.kg by the director of the department for monitoring and forecasting emergency situations of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Kyrgyz Republic Daurbek Sakyev.**<sup>17</sup>

### Lessons from the Past: Systematic Impunity

In general, the problems highlighted in the joint reports of Bir Duino and FORUM-Asia paint a bleak picture of the systemic obstacles communities face in realising their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Access to information, participation and access to justice are fundamental procedural elements that must be respected to protect environmental rights. However, widespread corruption, corporate capture, lack of accountability and shrinking civic space in the region seriously undermine these rights.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to combat corruption, increase transparency and strengthen the legal framework protecting environmental rights. Governments and businesses must be held accountable for their actions, and affected communities must be able to participate fully in decision-making processes and seek justice when their rights are violated. Only by addressing these systemic barriers can we ensure that environmental rights are protected and that communities and individuals are able to thrive<sup>18</sup>.

The important role of human rights defenders in ensuring that business respects human rights is recognized by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.<sup>19</sup> They highlight the key role of human rights defenders in companies' human rights due diligence and their understanding of the risks to the human rights of affected stakeholders.<sup>20</sup>

#### In particular, the Guiding Principles:<sup>21</sup>

- urge entrepreneurs to consult with human rights defenders, who are often the most expert sources of information on the human rights situation, emphasizing their role as observers, advocates and mediators;
- call on states to ensure that the legitimate work of human rights defenders is not hindered.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>

<sup>17</sup> [https://24.kg/obschestvo/327637\\_seli\\_iopolzni\\_bolshe38\\_tyisyachi\\_semey\\_vkyrgyzystane\\_jivut\\_vopasnyih\\_zona\\_h/](https://24.kg/obschestvo/327637_seli_iopolzni_bolshe38_tyisyachi_semey_vkyrgyzystane_jivut_vopasnyih_zona_h/)

<sup>18</sup> <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/33021706.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.undp.org/ru/kyrgyzstan/press-releases/kyrgyz-republic-adopted-national-action-plan-business-and-human-rights>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.undp.org/kyrgyzstan/stories/contribution-human-rights-defenders-agenda-business-and-human-rights-kyrgyzstan>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.undp.org/kyrgyzstan/stories/un-guiding-principles-business-and-human-rights>

- defend civic space in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe<sup>22</sup>

Ecologists note that dam construction in the Western Tien Shan is fragmenting critical river and terrestrial habitats, isolating animal populations and disrupting the ecological connectivity of the landscape. Unique and endangered species include the endemic Chatkal rare plant (*Cottus jaxartensis*), the naked rare plant (*Cottus nudus*), other endemic fish species and even the snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*). Unique ecosystems of river valleys, including floodplain luga forests and habitats of wild ancestors of fruit trees, are being degraded.

**Our team and key partners wanted to call the presentation "Climate change - a chance for positive changes through responsible citizens and the return of power to the values of human rights and respect for human dignity." We all understand that the times require new approaches and solutions to risks and disasters, focusing on early warning, with creative tools and innovations.**<sup>23</sup>

*Ukraine is a trigger for returning the values of the OSCE Human Dimension and sustainable development of the three OSCE baskets in harmony: we must all work daily and together to prevent new risks and disasters in the world.*

*Civic space for active citizens should be supported by OSCE, UN and EU member states and meet international standards.* Civic space is the environment that enables civil society to play a role in the political, economic and social life of our societies. In particular, civic space allows individuals and groups to contribute to policy-making that affects their lives, including by:

- accessing information,
- engaging in dialogue,
- expressing dissent or disagreement, and
- joining together to express their views.

An open and pluralistic civic space that guarantees freedom of expression and opinion as well as freedom of assembly and association, is a prerequisite for making development and peace sustainable.<sup>24</sup>

The new world is needed in strong, creative regional inclusive consortiums, where with equal participation civil platforms develop key recommendations for joint discussions and decisions of people, leading to solutions at the level of the OSCE, the UN, the European Union and other international organizations.

Together we can make the world a more positive place by learning from history, returning to Helsinki Act values, respect for human dignity through the establishment of an enabling environment for pluralism, promoting peace and security for all, as initiated by the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship 2025 "RESILIENCE".

Together for the Better World. Thank you.

<sup>22</sup> [https://birduino.kg/en/assets/news/2025/january/otchet-eng2024\\_compressed.pdf](https://birduino.kg/en/assets/news/2025/january/otchet-eng2024_compressed.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.vb.kg/doc/439798\\_ychastnicy\\_jenskogo\\_foryma\\_ca\\_obratilis\\_k\\_kancelery\\_frg\\_olafy\\_sholecy.html](https://www.vb.kg/doc/439798_ychastnicy_jenskogo_foryma_ca_obratilis_k_kancelery_frg_olafy_sholecy.html)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/civic-space>