

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 28 October 2025 from the Permanent Representative
of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that Sierra Leone, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of November 2025, will hold a thematic briefing on Thursday, 6 November, in connection with the item entitled “Threats to international peace and security” on climate and security on the theme “Environmental impact of armed conflict and climate-driven security risks”.

In this regard, I would be grateful for the circulation of the present letter and the attached concept note for the above-mentioned meeting (see annex) as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Michael Imran **Kanu**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 28 October 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council briefing on climate and security on the theme “Environmental impact of armed conflict and climate-driven security risks”, to be held on 6 November 2025 at 10 a.m.

Background and rationale

Armed conflict increasingly generates severe and lasting environmental harm, with direct implications for international peace and security. Warfare damages ecosystems; contaminates air, soil and water; destroys agricultural land; accelerates deforestation and biodiversity loss; and devastates urban infrastructure. These impacts erode livelihoods, aggravate humanitarian need, fuel displacement and entrench cycles of instability by intensifying competition over scarce resources.

United Nations estimates have found that a quarter of the world’s population, approximately 2 billion people, live in conflict-affected areas.¹ This widespread conflict not only destabilizes human populations but also drives the degradation of natural resources, which include renewable resources like water, land, forests and other ecosystems. In turn, this environmental decline deepens fragility and worsens humanitarian crises.

Illustrative cases underline the global scope. For instance, in Sierra Leone, even two decades after the end of its conflict, the conflict’s legacies include degraded water resources and farmlands and weakened environmental governance.² In Gaza, the collapse of urban systems has generated hazardous rubble and wastewater discharge and contaminated soils and groundwater, posing grave public health and ecological risks.³ In Sudan/Darfur, climate variability and land-water stress intersect with fighting, accelerating deforestation and aquifer depletion and deepening humanitarian needs.⁴ In Ukraine,⁵ strikes on industrial and energy infrastructure, contamination from munitions and mines, forest and peatland fires, and massive debris have created cross-border pollution risks and long-term remediation needs; extensive croplands are mined or contaminated, threatening food security. These examples, in addition to others in Africa, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific, show that environmental degradation is both a casualty and a driver of insecurity.

The discussion will, however, be anchored in a growing normative context: the observance by the General Assembly of 6 November as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (Assembly resolution 56/4); the International Law Commission’s draft principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts; the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; and relevant United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions encouraging assistance and recovery in conflict-affected areas. It is in this regard that the Security Council has acknowledged climate- and environment-related security risks in several country situations and thematic debates, encouraging risk

¹ Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([A/79/552-S/2024/767](#)).

² United Nations Environment Programme, *Sierra Leone: Environment, Conflict and Peacebuilding Assessment*, technical report (Geneva, 2010).

³ United Nations Environment Programme, *Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Gaza: Preliminary Assessment of Environmental Impacts* (2024).

⁴ United Nations Sudan, Annual Results Report 2024 (2025).

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme, *The Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine: A Preliminary Review* (Nairobi, 2022).

assessment and mitigation that uphold international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Objectives

Key objectives of the briefing are to:

- (a) Elevate recognition of conflict-driven environmental harm as a security risk that compounds humanitarian crises, undermines governance and can fuel renewed conflict;
- (b) Draw lessons from diverse conflict contexts on impacts on ecosystems, agriculture, water systems, urban infrastructure and public health;
- (c) Identify practical tools to prevent, monitor and remediate environmental damage during and after conflict, integrating these into political, peacekeeping, humanitarian and development responses;
- (d) Promote United Nations system coherence (United Nations Environment Programme, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Department of Peace Operations, United Nations Development Programme and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) and partnerships with regional organizations and international financial institutions to align financing for remediation, stabilization and climate adaptation.

Guiding questions

1. How should the Security Council more systematically reflect conflict-linked environmental risks in mandates, reporting and political guidance? How can missions and United Nations country teams better integrate environmental risk management, mine action for agricultural recovery and nature-based stabilization into planning and resourcing?
2. What measures should parties adopt during hostilities to minimize environmental harm?
3. What are the steps needed to advance implementation of international human rights obligations and the principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, including training, reporting and cooperation on investigations, remediation and accountability, including for the proposed crime of ecocide?
4. What are the minimum standards and support needed for safe debris management, hazardous-waste handling and resilient urban reconstruction?
5. Which financing options can expand predictable support for environmental recovery and climate adaptation in conflict-affected contexts, including access to international financial institutions and climate funds?

Format and briefers

The meeting will be a briefing of the Security Council with participation under rule 37.

The proposed briefers are:

- Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
- Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme
- Charles C. Jalloh, professor, University of Miami Law School, and member of the International Law Commission
- Civil society representative.