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Climate & Security Strategic Capability Game Takeaways

At the fourth annual *Planetary Security Conference* (PSC 2019), participants had the opportunity to enrol in the Climate & Security Strategic Capability Game, a serious board game developed jointly by *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies* (HCSS) with support from the Clingendael Institute. This briefing note summarises key takeaways coming out of the game. This is of interest, as the participants represented a good mix of policy makers, diplomats, military personnel, development professionals, local and regional leaders, scientists and private sector representatives from across the globe.

Introduction

Climate change is increasingly recognised as a challenge to international peace and security. Although environmental factors are rarely the sole cause of violent conflict, climate change has the potential to become a 'threat multiplier' that exacerbates environmental challenges and natural resource scarcity and to contribute to the onset of violence, both within and between states. This issue has already gained prominence on high-level international, diplomatic and security policy agendas. Yet, still more needs to be done to understand and address challenges emanating from climate change.

The *Climate & Security Strategic Capability Game* is a tabletop exercise designed to increase awareness of capabilities needed for conflict prevention in the context of climate change, to address the implications of climate change for the policies, activities and operations of different ministries, businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and others, and to discuss the role of militaries in mitigating and responding to climate change effects.

Game design

The gameplay did not require consensus among all players. They played and designed capabilities along the dimensions of functional areas, strategic functions, effect (low, medium or high effect), actor level (of international actors, national actors, NGOs and/or businesses), and the envisaged implementation time.

Functional areas are categorised as Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic (DIME) domains. **Diplomatic capabilities** encompass international relations, diplomacy, dialogue and negotiations, etc. **Informational capabilities** entail dissemination and collection of information, and education in the broad sense. **Military capabilities** are

related to the armed forces and national defence agencies. **Economic capabilities** encompass trade policies, tariffs, subsidies, capital and infrastructure investments, and (financial) assistance.

Strategic functions are used to categorise capabilities in the preparatory, response, and/or aftercare phase. **Preparatory phase capabilities** are aimed at enhancing

resilience as well as planning and preparing for the consequences of climate change.

Response capabilities intend to limit the direct impacts of a changing environment and natural disasters related to climate change, as well as the magnitude of long-term climate change. **Aftercare capabilities** are aimed at establishing long-term solutions to climate change impacts and supporting the recovery process of disaster-affected communities.

Figure 1: Example of a Climate & Security Capability Game Card

1 PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE AGREEMENTS

DESCRIPTION

The ability to bolster your own and other governments' participation in international climate agreements in order to reduce climate change.

REASONS TO NEED THIS CAPABILITY

- ▶
- ▶

PRIORITIZATION

Effect	<input type="checkbox"/> Low	Implementation time	<input type="checkbox"/> Short-term
	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium		<input type="checkbox"/> Medium-term
	<input type="checkbox"/> High		<input type="checkbox"/> Long-term

Actor International National NGOs Business

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Takeaways

The results of the games played during the PSC 2019 were varied. Players observed and became aware of the broad spectrum of capabilities required to create greater resilience and mitigate climate-induced insecurity, realising that a multidisciplinary approach is required. Participants decided that the greatest number of capabilities were required in the preparatory and response phases; fewer in the aftercare phase.

Most participants concluded that they did not oversee all required and or possible capabilities upfront and observed that it enriched their insight and understanding. Participants particularly valued the understanding of different national approaches brought by the different participants. In this regard, the game was considered useful in helping participants structure their thoughts and decide which capability developments should be prioritised.

In the **diplomatic functional area**, capabilities such as participation in international climate agreements, disaster diplomacy, governance of sea lanes and resources, and coordination of emergency incidents and disasters were determined to be of strategic importance. The ability to engage in disaster diplomacy in order to coordinate emergency relief among international actors stood out as the most important capability in this functional area. Players underlined the need to prevent potential future crises. Participation in international agreements, therefore, was considered to be vital, along with the involvement of and cooperation among a wide range of actors. It was also concluded that participation in international agreements needs both positive and negative incentive structures for participation and compliance.

In the **informational functional area** climate change requires a bottom-up approach that begins at local level. The ability to provide information and education on climate change in local languages would enhance such bottom-up comprehension and adaptation. The Lake Chad Basin was used as an example in which translating

information into local languages could have a profound impact. Encouraging local experts to contribute to the rebuilding and strengthening of their communities after disasters would help vulnerable regions to become more resilient and self-reliant. Additionally, participants emphasised the importance of local tailored information campaigns as a distinct tool for educating communities on climate matters, as well as being linked to improved adaptation processes, increased public support and efficient mobilisation of local resources and knowledge.

In the **military functional area** the ability of the military to reduce their carbon footprint in an operational environment was addressed. Ensuring the security and safety of military operations in risk areas was considered essential and requires integrated capability for climate-related intelligence and deployment planning to military missions. There was general agreement among participants that cooperation between civilian and military actors is a crucial, if not the most important, capability in emergency situations. The ability to successfully relocate internally displaced persons (IDPs) and establish camps with sufficient resources in the direct aftermath of natural disasters was discussed across all five tables and seen as a task in which the military had fundamental added value.

In the **economic functional area**, improvement of critical infrastructure in risk areas was considered important across all players. They considered this capability to be directly related to urban resilience. It was noted that understanding and improving the ability of cities to manage and avoid the negative effects of climate-related changes and events is of utmost importance. Participants agreed that economic policy instruments, in general, can spur behavioural change. The ability to motivate people and businesses to change their behaviour can provide a crosscutting solution to many other problems.

Across the board, **public support** stood out as crucial for the implementation of climate security capabilities. Because of high levels of trust that the public has in the military,

particularly in Western Europe and the United States, experts from the military and security communities can build credibility in climate action and sustainable development and, as such, enhance citizen support for climate policies. In addition to advocacy, the military and security sectors play an important role in risk analysis, responding to natural disasters, and reducing their own environmental impact. Improved cooperation between diplomacy, development, and hard security professionals was also brought forward as essential for effectively addressing climate-related security risks. As climate change is a problem requiring collective global action, all relevant actors need to be involved and collaborate in tackling issues at stake. Climate-related security risks are complex and therefore require multi-stakeholder, multidimensional and transboundary solutions. A tailored approach to addressing climate change impacts is needed. Because the causes and extent of vulnerabilities can vary, policy makers should be able to tailor their strategies to different countries and regions.

Experiences

Overall, according to participants, the game served as a useful exercise for taking stock of existing and future capabilities for conflict prevention in the context of climate change. The game facilitated increased awareness and understanding of existing and required capabilities in different regional and national contexts and helped identify existing gaps. Participants noted that although the topic is complex and abstract, the serious gaming approach gave them greater oversight and helped them to prioritise.

The game helped to build trust among participants, and although some thought their knowledge was limited beforehand they had a good experience participating, contributing to and benefiting from the discussion – realising they knew more than they thought.

About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative aims to help increase awareness, to deepen knowledge, and to develop and promote policies and good practice guidance to help governments, the private sector and international institutions better secure peace and cooperation in times of climate change and global environmental challenges. The Initiative was launched by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and is currently operated by a consortium of leading think tanks headed by the Clingendael Institute.

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