FOSTERING GEOPOLITICAL STABILITY THROUGH CLIMATE ACTION

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SUMMARY

In 2021, the global pandemic and economic disruptions already presented challenges for climate ambition and implementation. However, in 2022, the world is facing an additional challenge: the war in Ukraine and its impacts on global energy and food security.

The energy and food security impacts of the war in Ukraine must result in an accelerated transition away from fossil fuels and addressing inefficiencies in global food systems - both of which are also drivers of the climate and biodiversity crises.

Mitigating the most immediate harm to vulnerable populations will be a top priority for governments, but failure to also keep long-term objectives of addressing the climate crises in mind could lead to backward decisions and cascading impacts that further embed flawed global systems which work contrary to climate, economic and social goals.

Governments must respond by stimulating transformative change in energy and food systems, including in supporting just and social transformation, and green recoveries. **International fora, including the UNFCCC, should create the political space for governments to recognize and discuss this link and develop responses.**

1. Energy Transition

The war in Ukraine laid bare the risks of relying on fossil fuels, including the non-climate related risks. Clean renewable energy is now more than ever crucial for national security and global peace and stability, as well as meeting basic energy needs.

Russia is responsible for about 10% of global energy resource production: It is the third-largest producer and exporter of oil; the second-largest producer and largest exporter of natural gas; and the third-largest exporter of coal[1].

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has affected markets and the geopolitics of energy, and threatened the supply of energy resources, stimulating a historic rise in oil and gas prices. As of June 2022 the price of oil is US$118 per barrel, compared to US$73 in June 2021.

Since the start of the war, many governments have declared their intention of reducing their heavy reliance on Russian oil and gas - including sweeping commitments to phase out imports of oil and gas from Russia. While this is to be welcomed, there is an acute risk these imports will simply be replaced with other unsustainable sources of oil and gas, or that other harmful alternatives will be pursued, such as extending the lifespan of existing coal-fired power plants or burning even more trees and crops. The European Union proposal to reduce oil dependency, for example, includes expanding 'imports of liquified natural gas (LNG) and diversification of pipeline gas'. Such a response will slow the low carbon transition and increase the social and environmental risks associated with delayed action, as well as heighten the future stranded fossil fuel assets, already estimated in the trillions of dollars[2].

[1] Chatham house
https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/2022-04-12-ukraine-war-threats-food-energy-security-benton-et-al_0.pdf
[2] IPCC, 2022:
Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Moreover, we are witnessing attempts by vested interests, supported by some politicians, businesses and sector groups using the war as a justification for watering down crucial climate policies, and to postpone or even scrap policy action aimed at making food production more sustainable[3]. Such attempts are deeply misguided and highly counterproductive and ignore the opportunity to prioritize nature and climate protection alongside short-term measures to absorb any shocks to create resilient systems, while also supporting the most vulnerable both at home and abroad.

Conversely, successful climate policies have demonstrated resilience to the geopolitics of energy: The managed development of cheaper renewables in the UK, for example, over the last 5 years has cushioned electricity price increases: while gas bills have risen 97% between April 2021 and April 2022, electricity price rose only 54% over the same period[4].

Overall, the climate costs and risks to the Paris Agreement due to the Ukraine conflict are still unclear, but will depend on how countries can meet the immediate need for fossil fuels while accelerating the transition to renewables. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 6th Assessment Report (AR6) and The Glasgow Pact are both clear on the need for this transition. The pathways recommend the rapid scale up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, and to accelerate efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power and removal of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies:

- AR6 states that unless there are immediate and deep greenhouse gas emissions reductions across all sectors and all regions, 1.5°C is beyond reach. It further implies that the need for the power sector to reach net-zero CO2 in the 2040s, and for coal, oil and gas use to decrease by 95%, 60% and 45% respectively by 2050[5].

  Alongside the rapidly developing geopolitical environment, the AR6 identifies key global policy milestones[6] which need to be reflected in climate ambition in 2022 - particularly in the near term. The parallels are clear, with AR6 providing an additional case for where G20 countries could prioritize immediate ambition-raising ahead of COP27 to get us back on track for limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Specifically, **AR6 calls for immediate action in seven policy areas:**

  1. decarbonizing electricity supply to produce net-zero CO2, including renewable energy;
  2. radically more efficient use of energy than today;
  3. electrification of end-uses, including transport;
  4. dramatically lower use of fossil fuels than today;
  5. converting other uses to low- or zero-carbon fuels (e.g., hydrogen, bioenergy, ammonia) in hard-to-decarbonize sectors;
  6. promote bioenergy, demand reduction, dietary changes, and policies, incentives, and rules for mitigation in the land sector; and
  7. setting and meeting ambitious targets to reduce methane and other short-lived climate forcers.

[3] See for example, Bloomberg, 28 April 2022: War Forces Germany to Put G-7 Coal Phaseout Push on Hold, News article authored by Birgit Jennen and Jess Shankleman.
[4] ECIU, 08 Mar. 2022, Ukraine conflict and impacts on UK energy, authored by Jess Ralston
[5] IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers. In Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [C.3.2]
[6] IPCC, 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Ch 4-39, 40]

The Glasgow Pact decision (1/CP.26 paragraph 20) [calls] upon Parties to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the **phase-down** of unabated coal power and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, recognizing the need for support towards a just transition.

Recognizing that in the near term, governments are grappling with efforts to shift away from Russian fossil fuels, the UNFCCC processes must build consensus that this cannot be used as a means to lock-in inappropriate sources from elsewhere for the long term. Specifically, the challenge presented by the Russia/Ukraine conflict must stimulate increased global efforts to shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy generation, and to a geopolitical narrative that supports the **phase-out of unabated fossil fuels** as soon as possible, in line with 1.5°C pathways in AR6.

Negotiators to the UNFCCC process, and the UNFCCC Secretariat, can support this narrative and promote solutions to the various crises through ensuring:

- Emphasis on the need for a **fossil fuel phase-out** narrative (rather than merely "phase down") in long-term scenarios; establish the theme of urgently-required transformative change, fully reflecting national energy profiles and related energy transition opportunities);

- **Target-setting** required to ensure continued positive efforts towards the critical goals, without provision for slipping back to past conditions; this will involve clear commitment to full cost benefit analysis and risk assessment of NDCs to ensure continued progress;

- Pressure on public and private sector financiers to **increase the level of climate mitigation finance** in response to the crisis (not to divert such finance to other crisis issues); highlighting the critical need to shift finance from fossil fuels to renewable energy and increased efficiency;

- Acknowledgement of the need for **immediate energy transition plans** to reflect current global crisis conditions, but not compromising global commitment to the urgent energy transformation required, with a focus on renewable energy and associated energy efficiency;

- Raising awareness of the critical link between energy and **disruption to nature/biodiversity** which, if remaining unaddressed, is likely to cause additional global economic, social and environmental upheaval due to the breakdown of natural systems that meet basic needs;

- Encouragement for the development and practical demonstration of **innovative solutions** for global energy needs.

2. Food systems

The war in Ukraine has also shone a spotlight on food systems, which have witnessed sharp rises in commodity prices amidst fears of shortages. These and other impacts on raw material supply chains show how vulnerable today's economies are to external shocks, particularly when based on the unsustainable production and consumption of natural resources. Just as is the case in global energy systems, the war shows that **we need to accelerate the transition towards more resilient, sustainable, healthy and fair food systems.**

Since the start of the conflict, commodity prices have soared to their highest level since 2008[7]. The FAO Food Price Index rose to a new all-time high in February, exceeding the previous record in 2011[8]. Russia and Ukraine are real agricultural powerhouses, producing 12% of the calories produced worldwide[9]. In 2021, wheat exports by Russia and Ukraine accounted for ~30% of the global market[10].

Countries around the world are feeling the direct impacts. Almost 40% of Africa's wheat imports come from Russia and Ukraine, and in February, US grocery prices were nearly 9% over a year prior, the largest increase in 40 years[11].

Our globalized food systems face many deficiencies and problems, but shortage of supply is not one of them. Global food production today is sufficient to nourish the entire world population, even when factoring in the reduced exports and production losses in Ukraine (estimated to be 6-7% if production halts[12]). For example, the FAO forecasts that in 2022 global cereals production will even increase further, reaching record heights - despite the impacts of the war[13].

Rather than the **production of food commodities, accessibility and affordability represent the most pressing challenges** now, particularly for low-income countries relying on food imports. Before the war in Ukraine started, price levels in the agricultural and fisheries sectors were already rapidly rising, in part due to climate change, supply chain disruptions and the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The FAO now estimates that an additional 7.6 to 13.1 million people globally are at risk of undernourishment as a result of the war in Ukraine[14]. This comes on top of a rising number of people already suffering from malnutrition including undernourishment, overweight and obesity, and corresponding diet-related diseases due to existing conflicts, inequality and lack of access to healthy affordable food[15].

The current phase to decide the future mandate and programme for the Koronivia Work on Agriculture (KJWA) is a unique opportunity to ensure that Parties address emissions across the entire food system - agriculture as well as food waste & loss and a shift to healthy and nutritious diets - comprehensively and in an integrated way.

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[7] Financial Times, Mar 3 2022: Commodity prices soar to highest level since 2008 over Russia supply fears, News article, Neil Hume, Tom Wilson and Emiko Terazono.
[8] FAO, 2022: FAO Food Price Index
[9] IFPRI Blog, Jan 24 2022: How will Russia's invasion of Ukraine affect global food security? Issue Pos, Joseph Glauber and David Labor.
[10] GAIN, Mar 28 2022: How war in Ukraine impacts global food supplies, GAIN Interview Cruncher with panelists: Stella Nordhagen, Lawrence Haddad, Wubit Girma and Penjani Mkambula.
[11] How war in Ukraine impacts global food supplies
[12] BBC, Apr 2 2022: Will the war in Ukraine cause a global wheat shortage? More or Less: Behind the Stats radio episode.
[13] FAO, 2022: FAO Cereal Supply and Demand Brief
[14] FAO, 2022: The importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for global agricultural markets and the risks associated with the current conflict
[15] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2021: The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all

Despite the precarious state of our food system, it is possible to feed 10 billion people a healthy diet within planetary boundaries and leave natural ecosystems intact – if we take a food systems approach to climate change and biodiversity. By transforming the whole food system, we can make it a fundamental part of the solution to the climate crisis and enable the wide scale implementation of nature-based solutions (which must absolutely not come at the expense of natural habitats).

Negotiators in the UNFCCC process, and the Secretariat, can help support this narrative through ensuring:

I. Integrating changes from farm to fork

- A shift to nature-positive food production systems that will protect nature, rehabilitate the functions of degraded land and soil and use sustainable, regenerative agroecological practices. That means each stage is considered: the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food – as they each have social, environmental and economic consequences.

- Sustainable local, regional and global value chains, including supporting enabling policy framework that incentivizes trade.

- Support for shifts to healthier diets and reducing food loss and waste will also enable widespread adoption of nature-positive farming practices, without increasing the pressure to convert more land and use more of nature's resources to produce more food.

II. Agriculture: from carbon source to carbon sink

- Support for decarbonizing all sectors rapidly to achieve the 1.5°C Paris Agreement target, and including all parts of the food system, are included in climate negotiations and policy. Science shows that even if fossil fuel emissions were immediately halted, current trends in global food systems would prevent us from meeting the 1.5°C target. Moreover, food cannot be "phased-out", as is the case with fossil fuels. Failure to account for all greenhouse gas emissions from the production, consumption and disposal of food will prevent the world achieving the Paris Agreement.

- Negotiations sufficiently recognize that agricultural lands offer tremendous potential for storing carbon. Limiting temperature to 1.5°C target will require some so-called 'negative' emissions — drawing carbon down from the atmosphere and storing it. Recent studies have shown that land and ocean sinks could store up to half of the carbon necessary for keeping global warming
- to 1.5°C.

III. Outcomes from the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture

- The future of the KJWA go beyond sustainable agriculture and address all components of food systems, while also contributing to climate goals and human and planetary health.

IV. Parties revisit role of food system in climate plans by COP27

- Negotiations underline the importance and urgency of addressing emissions from across the food system by including them in their national climate plans (including NDCs, NAPs and LT LEDS). No country has yet committed to a food-systems approach in their NDCs. Many have committed

to climate action on agriculture and land-use, including supporting innovative methods such as nature-positive or regenerative farming. But even radically different modes of farming will drive a rising demand for land and other resources unless they are accompanied by more sustainable food consumption patterns and significant reductions in food loss and waste. Globally, countries could come together and rally behind three key outcomes by 2030:

- Half the area used for agriculture and aquaculture is sustainably managed, with no new areas being converted;

- Global food waste is halved and post-harvest loss is reduced;

- Human and planetary health are aligned to halve the global footprints of diets,

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