

Central African Republic



In July 2022, heavy torrential rains destroyed the homes of almost 22 000 people in Bangui and surrounding prefectures, adding to an already dire humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR). Years of armed conflict and humanitarian crisis, low capacity of state institutions and low levels of household and community resilience make the population of CAR highly vulnerable to the compound impacts of climate change. While the projected physical effects of climate change on CAR are among the lowest for the continent, the combination of population growth and weak adaptive capacities – accentuated by protracted conflicts and Covid-19 – renders the impacts of climate change severe. Additionally, transhumance from the Sahel is increasingly impacting CAR and further aggravating the consequences of climate change. A changing climate in combination with a worsened security situation in the Sahel and Great Lake regions, especially Chad and Cameroon, have led pastoralists to move earlier in the season and further into CAR. Here, competing interests and violent confrontations between armed groups, highway bandits and poachers amplify and become intertwined with existing conflict lines.

- With few functioning weather stations, there is limited knowledge of the current state of climate change in CAR. However, based on information from the wider region, climate change is expected to lead to more frequent and intense extreme weather events such as flooding and droughts.
- More extreme weather is likely to have a detrimental impact on livelihoods and food security in CAR. The ongoing conflict and a low-functioning state are detrimental to households' adaptation capacities, disproportionately affecting women and women-led households.
- Pastoral ecosystems in the Sahel and Central Africa cross international borders. The impacts of climate change in the wider region contributes to altering transhumance patterns, increasing both the volume and spread of transhumance into CAR. This contributes to the strain on livelihoods and, indirectly, conflict dynamics in CAR.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- ▶ The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the broader UN system should support efforts by the CAR Government to upgrade and establish weather stations throughout the country. MINUSCA should use this information to integrate extreme weather-related disaster alerts and climate change trends in the mission's early warning and analysis system.
- ▶ The Government, with the support of MINUSCA and the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), should continue their efforts to negotiate and implement regional and bilateral framework agreements on transhumance. Given the regional nature of the issue, close collaboration and cooperation between governments in the region, border communities and international agencies is necessary in order to develop sustainable mechanisms for managing transhumance-related migrations.
- ▶ MINUSCA should build on their current efforts to provide safe transhumance corridors and map conflict-prone transhumance hotspots. Deeper collaboration with specialised agencies working on migration and agriculture could help wider UN integration and coordination. Peacebuilding efforts should continue to support community mediation practices and invest in local infrastructures for peace to prevent violent conflict and resolve tensions between farmers and herders.
- ▶ The UN system, international partners and local actors should support the Government's efforts to implement CAR's National Adaptation Plan and especially their efforts to strengthen local adaptation measures. MINUSCA should support the work of the Government to integrate climate adaptation measures into peacebuilding efforts by increasing their understanding of climate-related peace and security risks, including designating a climate security focal point in the mission to do so.

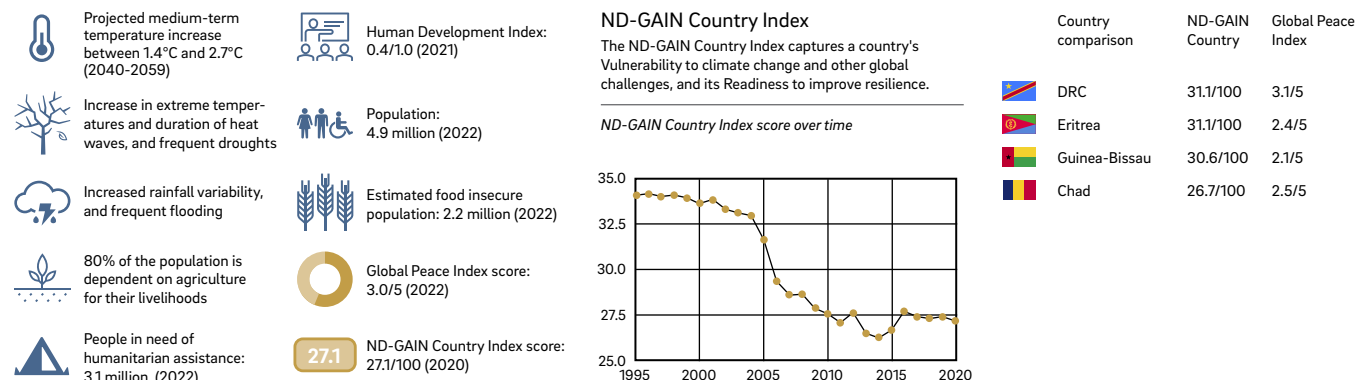


Figure 1. Data sources: World Bank Group. (2021). [Climate risk country profile: Central African Republic](#). OCHA. (2022). [Central African Republic: Situation report](#). UNDP. (2022). [Human Development Report overview 2021/2022](#). Vision of Humanity. (2022). [Global Peace Index: Central African Republic](#). Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. (2022). [ND-GAIN rankings](#).

Climate Trends and Projections

CAR has a hot and humid climate in the south and a Sahelo-Sudanian climate in the north, with a rainy season (May to October) and a dry season (December to April). The country also enjoys a high degree of biodiversity and rich agricultural lands.¹ Climate change contributes to more frequent and intense extreme weather in CAR, such as floods, droughts and wildfires.²

Temperature: Annual average temperatures in CAR range from 23°C in the south to 26°C in the north.³ The country has experienced an average increase of 0.35°C each decade since the 1970s. Medium-term projections predict a change of between 1.4°C and 2.7°C from 2040 to 2059.⁴ An increase in extreme temperatures and a large increase in the duration of heatwaves is projected. The increase in the number of hot days is expected to be most pronounced in the north and central regions.

Precipitation: While challenging to predict due to limited meteorological stations across the country, medium-term projections do not indicate a change in total rainfall, but rather increased variability.⁵ Flooding and droughts are expected to be more frequent and intense, with the central and southern parts of the country most likely to see abundant rainfall

Socio-ecological Vulnerabilities

CAR has been in a continuous political governance crisis since independence in 1960, with multiple protracted violent conflicts.⁶ The latest wave of violence is connected to the 2013 coup by the Séléka (now called ex-Séléka); an alliance of armed, predominantly Muslim groups, which led to a violent backlash from the Anti-Balaka, a group of primarily Christian fighters.⁷ In 2020 violence by non-state groups, often religious and ethnically charged, was nearly three times as lethal as state-based conflict.⁸ CAR is now in the midst of a new cycle of political instability after the creation of the Coalition des Patriotes Pour le Changement (CPC) in December 2020, a coalition of six armed groups aiming to overthrow the government.

CAR's protracted conflicts have led to low levels of social cohesion and weak public institutions. The state is virtually non-existent beyond the capital, Bangui, though efforts to decentralise power through local elections are underway.⁹ A lack of state adaptive capacity compounds low individual and communal adaptive capacity to climate change.¹⁰ The country is consistently ranked as one of the lowest on the UN's Human Development Index, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 3.1 million people, out of the country's population of 4.9 million, need humanitarian assistance, and that 2.2 million people are experiencing food insecurity.¹¹ Almost 650 000 people are internally displaced.¹² Lack of socio-economic opportunity, critical food insecurity and instability caused by conflict and displacement have particularly heightened the vulnerability of women and children.¹³

In addition, approximately 80 per cent of the country depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, increasing their vulnerability to the

impacts of climate change. Farming is largely the responsibility of women who grow cassava, millet, corn, rice, squashes and peanuts for their own consumption. CAR experiences a high volume of herders, both herders who originate from CAR and herders present because of transhumance from the Sahel and Lake Chad regions.¹⁴ Finally, forestry is estimated to provide direct employment to about 4 000 people in CAR, contributing 6 per cent of the country's GDP. Whilst deforestation rates are relatively low for the region, degradation levels are high, threatening the forests' rich biodiversity.¹⁵

Climate-related Peace and Security Risks

Research has identified multiple pathways through which climate change interacts with political, social, economic and environmental stresses to compound existing vulnerabilities and tensions.¹⁶ While climate change is rarely the main driver of conflict, it can undermine development gains, exacerbate the dynamics influencing ongoing violent conflict and disrupt fragile peace processes. In turn, violent conflict and political instability undermine community resilience to managing the effects of climate change.¹⁷

This Fact Sheet uses four interrelated pathways to navigate the complex relationship between climate change, peace and security: (1) livelihood deterioration, (2) migration and mobility, (3) military and armed actors, and (4) political and economic exploitation and mismanagement.¹⁸

Livelihood Deterioration

Research finds that climate change can increase the risk of conflict by worsening livelihood conditions and exacerbating existing grievances.¹⁹ CAR's high number of food-insecure people reflects the combined effects of armed conflict, forced displacement, Covid-19, climate-related disasters, poverty and non-functioning food systems. The expected increase in the frequency and intensity of flooding and droughts is likely to negatively impact the country's agriculture, placing already vulnerable systems under severe pressure.²⁰ In addition, delivery of humanitarian assistance becomes increasingly difficult in these conditions. Research suggests that this combination has the potential to fuel insurgent activities, although there is little research on this relationship in CAR.²¹ Women and girls in rural areas are the most vulnerable, and socio-cultural norms make it difficult to improve their own living conditions.²² For instance, increased flooding in CAR has an adverse effect on women farmers and their vulnerability to violence as they have to move to higher ground further away from their homesteads to areas often controlled by rebels.²³

Knowledge of the impacts of climate change on CAR is weakened by limited weather monitoring capacity, meaning that both current and historical climate data is scarce. To address this, MINUSCA and other parts of the UN system, in particular the UN Country Team and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), should support efforts to upgrade and establish weather stations throughout the country. MINUSCA should use this information to integrate weather-related disaster alerts and climate change trends in early warning and analysis. Such information would also

¹ World Bank Group. (2021). [Climate risk country profile: Central African Republic](#).

² World Bank Group, 2021.

³ World Bank Group, 2021.

⁴ World Bank Group, 2021.

⁵ Sonkué, D. et al. (2019). [Evaluation and projected changes in daily rainfall characteristics over Central Africa based on a multi-model ensemble mean of CMIP5 simulations](#). Theoretical and Applied Climatology, 137; World Bank Group, 2021.

⁶ Caryannis, T. & Lombard, L. (eds.) (2015). *Making sense of the Central African Republic*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

⁷ Howard, L. et al. (2020). [Assessing the effectiveness of the United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic \(MINUSCA\)](#). Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

⁸ Uppsala Conflict Data Program. (2021). [UCDP conflict encyclopaedia](#). Uppsala University.

⁹ We conducted interviews with six different researchers and experts on the Central African Republic between 4 October and 4 November 2021; Caryannis & Lombard, 2015; 21votes. (2021). [Central African Republic Elections: September 2022 \(proposed – long overdue – additional delays possible\)](#).

¹⁰ Ahmadalipour, A. et al. (2019). [Future drought risk in Africa: Integrating vulnerability, climate change, and population growth](#). Science of Total Environment, 662; Nguimalet, C.R. (2018). [Comparison of community-based adaptation strategies for droughts and floods in Kenya and the Central African Republic](#). Water International, 43(2).

¹¹ OCHA. (2022, 1 September). [Central African Republic: Situation report](#).

¹² OCHA. (2022, 31 August). [Central African Republic: Situation report](#).

¹³ Genovese, S. (2018). [Prosecuting U.N. peacekeepers for sexual and gender-based violence in the Central African Republic](#). Brooklyn Journal of International Law, 43(2); Limo, R. et al. (2016). [Protecting the rights of women through community – focused approaches to strengthening gender in African peace support operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic](#). ACCORD.

¹⁴ IFAD. (2021). [Central African Republic: International Crisis Group](#). (2014). [The security challenges of pastoralism in Central Africa](#).

¹⁵ Forest Legality Initiative. (2022). [Risk Tool: Central African Republic](#).

¹⁶ Mobjörk, M. et al. (2020). [Pathways of climate insecurity: Guidance for policymakers](#). SIPRI.

¹⁷ Moran, A. et al. (2018). [The intersection of global fragility and climate risks](#). USAID; de Coning, C. & Krampe, F. (2020). [Multilateral cooperation in the area of climate-related security and development risks in Africa](#). NUPI.

¹⁸ Mobjörk et al., 2020.

¹⁹ van Baalen, S. & Mobjörk, M. (2018). [Climate change and violent conflict in East Africa: Integrating qualitative and quantitative research to probe the mechanisms](#). International Studies Review, 20(4).

²⁰ FAO & WFP. (2019). [Summary - FAO/WFP crop and food security assessment mission to the Central African Republic](#).

²¹ Enekel, M. et al. (2015). [Food security monitoring via mobile data collection and remote sensing: Results from the Central African Republic](#). Plos One, 10(11).

²² OCHA, 31 August 2022.

²³ Personal communication with UN staff, September 2022.

improve the Government's and partners' knowledge of how climate change interacts with livelihood vulnerability, food insecurity and in turn with violence and conflict dynamics.

Migration and Mobility

A growing number of extreme weather events contribute to increasing displacement in CAR. In 2019, flooding along the Ubangui river displaced more than 100 000 people.²⁴ In July 2022, torrential rain hit Bangui, Ombella M'Poko, Lobaye, Nana-Gribizi, Ouham-Pendé and Ouham-Fafa prefectures, resulting in 21 700 people losing their homes.²⁵ Climate-related displacement comes in addition to substantial conflict-related displacement, placing a high burden on vulnerable communities.²⁶ Internal displacement has created and shaped tensions over distribution and access to resources, and constitutes an added risk of sexual and gender-based violence for women – its alarming proportions have been a defining feature of the country's violence.²⁷

As regional pastoral ecosystems cross international borders, climate change is contributing to changing traditional pastoral mobility patterns across the Sahel and Central Africa, increasing both the volume and spread of transhumance into CAR. In the Lake Chad region, increasing droughts push traditional Sudano-Sahelian transhumance further into the south of CAR, as the area provides relatively rich grazing and greater access to fresh water.²⁸ Observers suggest transhumance patterns are also altering with changing seasons, and herders are moving south earlier, reaching land used to farm at harvest time and increasing competition.²⁹ Herders from Niger and Nigeria have also begun travelling into CAR.³⁰ High levels of insecurity in CAR, particularly in the north and north-east, are also pushing pastoralists away from traditional routes.³¹ Simultaneously, farmers have started to move into areas previously used for trans-humance grazing due to diminishing yields from their traditional fields.³²

Changing mobility routes in Central Africa and the Sahel, partly attributed to climate change, have been found to cause and exacerbate tensions and conflicts between farmers and herders over land and water resources in CAR.³³ Armed confrontations between (foreign) pastoralist groups and sedentary Central Africans have occurred since the growth of pastoralism in CAR in the 1970s and 1980s. As climate change in the Sahel is estimated to be well above global averages, increasing transhumance into CAR is likely to continue, even if the wider conflict stabilises, suggesting a risk of continued insecurity.

While there is no regional framework for transhumance in Central Africa, initiatives to develop regional and bilateral frameworks are ongoing.³⁴ The 2019 Khartoum peace agreement between the Government of CAR and armed groups emphasises strengthening both local and national frameworks for managing seasonal pastoral migration. However, a recent bilateral transhumance agreement between Chad and CAR has seen implementation hindered due to a lack of resources.³⁵

Livelihood Zones, Pastoralism and Displacement

Central African Republic

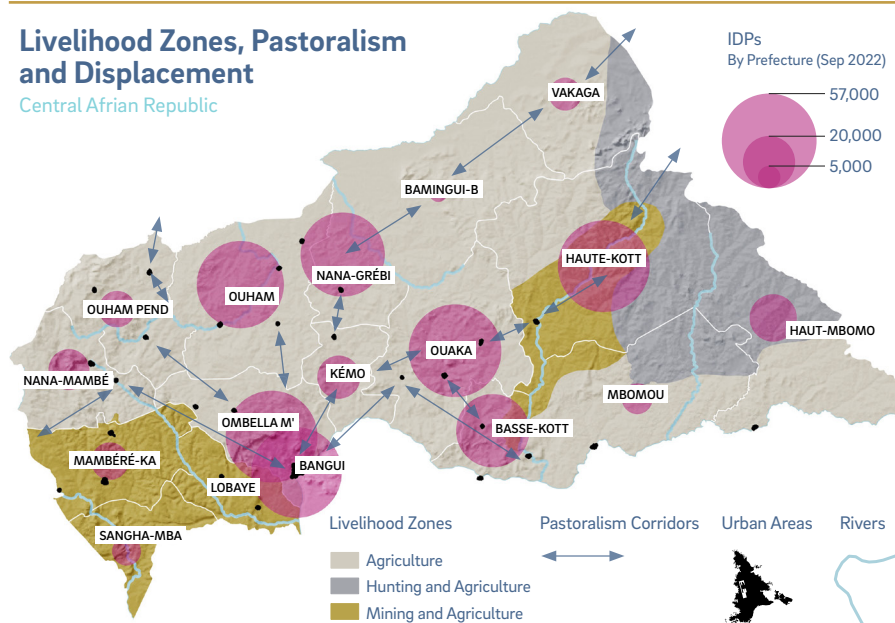


Figure 2. Data sources: FEWS, IOM, IPIS, SWAC-OECD & Natural Earth

MINUSCA should continue to support the Government's efforts to negotiate and implement regional and bilateral transhumance framework agreements. This would complement UNOCA's efforts to support the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in developing a regional transhumance framework.³⁶ Given the regional nature of the issue, strong collaboration and cooperation between UNOCA, UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), MINUSCA and the CAR Government is necessary.

Military and Armed Actors

In CAR, the lack of government control combined with the presence of mineral resources has turned previously marginal zones in the north-west and east into "frontier zones" that attract armed groups, highway bandits, seasonal pastoralists from neighbouring states and poachers.³⁷ Armed groups are increasingly portraying themselves as security providers for herders moving through precarious areas and tax cattle in their area of control.³⁸ This has contributed to the deterioration of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, in turn escalating farmer-herder conflicts.³⁹ Observers suggest the ex-Séléka often negotiate on behalf of pastoralists whilst the Anti-Balaka militia, who are part of the CPC coalition, negotiate on behalf of mostly Christian farmers, drawing ethnic tensions into local conflicts and exacerbating them.⁴⁰

Increasingly pastoralists find it necessary to carry arms to protect themselves due to the current security situation.⁴¹ In addition, there has been an increase in pastoral transhumance from Chad to CAR, with cattle managed by waged drovers employed by wealthy cattle owners from the Chadian elite, a development which facilitates access to arms. This allows pastoralists to move through CAR without having to negotiate access with local farmers, and further exacerbates tensions between farmers and herders.⁴²

²⁴ REACH. (2020). [Central African Republic flood susceptibility & risk](#). Reliefweb; UN Security Council. (2019). [Central African Republic. Report of the Secretary General](#).

²⁵ OCHA, 31 August 2022.

²⁶ Mobjörk, M. et al. (2016). [Climate-related security risks: Towards and integrated approach](#). SIPRI.

²⁷ Lombard, L. & Picco E. (2021). [Distributive justice at war: Displacement and its afterlives in the Central African Republic](#). *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(1); Howard et al., 2020.

²⁸ Nagabhatla, N. et al. (2021). [Water, conflicts and migration and the role of regional diplomacy: Lake Chad, Congo Basin, and the Mbororo pastoralist](#). *Environmental Science & Policy*, 122; Mobjörk et al., 2016; The Expert Group Working on Climate-related Security Risks. (2018). [Lake Chad Region: Climate-related security risks assessment](#). Adelphi.

²⁹ Interviews, 2021.

³⁰ Interviews, 2021.

³¹ Conciliation Resources. (2015). [Analysis of conflict and peacebuilding in the Central African Republic](#).

³² Interviews, 2021.

³³ World Bank Group, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2014; Interviews, 2021.

³⁴ McCharty, P. (2020). [Preventing transhumance-related intercommunity conflict in Chad: Towards a climate-sensitive conflict analysis](#). UNDP.

³⁵ Hyman, N. et al. (2020). [Preventing, mitigating & resolving transhumance-related conflicts in UN Peacekeeping settings: A survey of practice](#). United Nations Department of Peace Operations.

³⁶ Hyman, 2020.

³⁷ De Vries, L. (2020). [Navigating violence and exclusion: The Mbororo's claim to the Central African Republic's margins](#). *Geoforum*, 109.

³⁸ Interviews, 2021; Brottem, L. (2021). [The growing complexity of farmer-herder conflict in West and Central Africa](#). Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

³⁹ International Crisis Group, 2014.

⁴⁰ Interviews, 2021.

⁴¹ International Crisis Group, 2014.

⁴² Luizza, M. (2017). [Transhumance pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging impacts on conservation and security](#). American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, U.S. Fishing & Wildlife Service.

MINUSCA should build on current efforts to provide safe transhumance corridors and map conflict-prone transhumance hotspots and patrolling related areas to reduce violence and exploitative behaviour by rebel groups and other armed actors.⁴³ Given the cross-border nature of conflict and climate change, transnational and regional coordination, such as the roadmap for peace adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), is key for sustainable peacebuilding. Peacebuilding efforts should also continue to support community mediation practices and invest in local infrastructures for peace to prevent violent conflict and resolve tensions between farmers and herders.

Political and Economic Exploitation and Mismanagement

The political and economic systems of CAR are characterised by exploitation of resources and concessionary politics. Partly as a result of this, the state has limited capacity to provide security, regulate internal and cross-border transhumance, support local or regional dispute resolution and implement climate adaptation. This has provided opportunities for armed groups to impose taxes on transhumance, and for elites in neighbouring countries to expand livestock ownership and related resource exploitation in CAR's territory.⁴⁴

To guide better policymaking, more research is needed on political and economic exploitation, natural resource mismanagement and climate change. Research from neighbouring countries suggests that state fragility, fragmented patronage systems and high levels of corruption all increase grievances among populations facing multiple crises.⁴⁵ Without adequate development and adaptation measures, the impacts of climate change will continue to exacerbate conflict risks and vulnerabilities in CAR.⁴⁶

While CAR has a comprehensive and ambitious National Adaptation Plan, which emphasises integrating conflict management into climate change adaptation planning, limited capacity and funding poses substantial

Armed Violence and Food Insecurity
Central African Republic

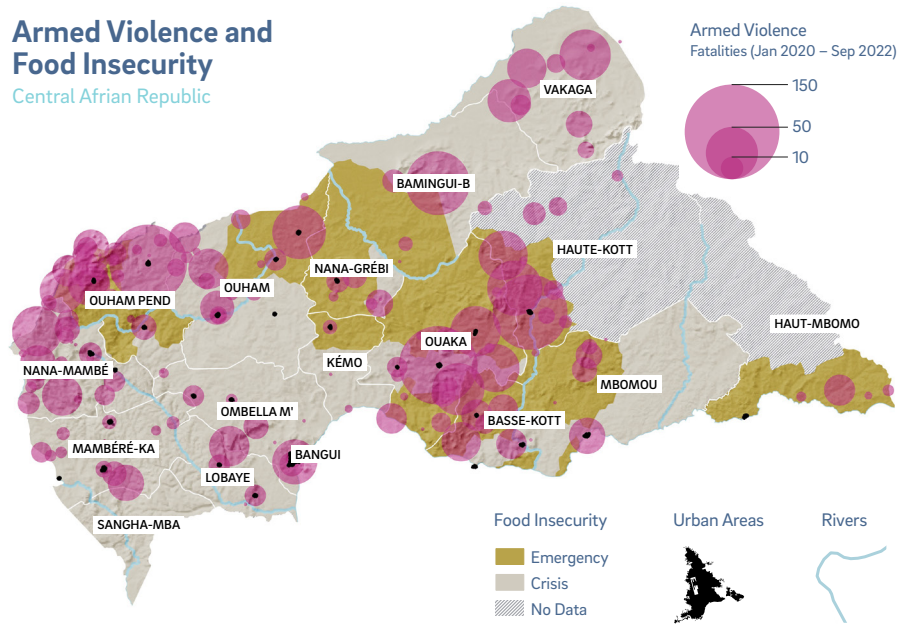


Figure 3. Data sources: FEWS, IOM, IPIS, SWAC-OECD & Natural Earth

barriers to the plan's implementation. This is further amplified by the difficulty of translating elite-level politics into positive impacts on the ground.⁴⁷

MINUSCA and other international and regional partners should support and facilitate the integration of peacebuilding and climate adaptation, including by designating a climate security focal point in MINUSCA. The focal point can lead work requested by the UN Security Council within MINUSCA's current mandate to undertake comprehensive risk assessments on the impacts of climate change on conflict dynamics and stability. While climate adaptation is critical, additional solutions to political mismanagement are urgently needed.

⁴³ Hyman, 2020.

⁴⁴ Smith, S. (2014). CAR's history: The past of a tense present, in Caryannis, T. & Lombard, L. (eds.) Making sense of the Central African Republic. London: Zed Books Ltd.; Dalby, N. (2014). A multifaceted business: Diamonds in the Central African Republic, in Caryannis, T. & Lombard, L. (eds) Making sense of the Central African Republic, London: Zed Books Ltd.

⁴⁵ NUPI & SIPRI. (2022a). [Climate, peace and security fact sheet: Sudan](#); NUPI & SIPRI. (2022b). [Climate, peace and security fact sheet: South Sudan](#); NUPI & SIPRI. (2021). [Climate, peace and security fact sheet: Sahel](#).

⁴⁶ NAP Global Network. (2022). [Maintaining peace while building climate resilience: Lesson from the Central African Republic](#).

⁴⁷ Duursma, A. (2022). [State weakness, a fragmented patronage-based system, and protracted local conflict in the Central African Republic](#). African Affairs, 121(483).

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