

# THE ICRC'S CALL TO COP28: URGENT AND AMBITIOUS ACTION IS NEEDED TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE AND STRENGTHEN CLIMATE ACTION IN CONFLICT SETTINGS



Climate change is an existential threat to humanity. It affects every aspect of people's lives, both creating and exacerbating humanitarian crises around the world. Warming of the atmosphere, ocean and land – driven by human activity – is causing climate variations and extremes all over the world, with over three billion people living in places that are highly vulnerable to climate change (IPCC, 2023). Action taken to date by the international community has been insufficient to prevent or reverse these trends.

The negative effects of climate change are being felt – and will continue to be felt – in some of the most extreme ways by people living in places affected by armed conflict and other violence: communities that are ill-equipped to cope with and adapt to a changing climate (ICRC, 2020). The acute vulnerability and severe capacity constraints of countries in conflict should, in theory, ensure that they are prioritized for climate action. In practice, they are among the most neglected when it comes to climate action and finance. Progress has been made towards recognizing this challenge, but much more must be done. Strong climate action in places affected by conflict, and the finance to support it, is critical to reduce humanitarian needs, preserve development gains and avoid systemic breakdowns and lasting fragility.

**At COP28, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) urges parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the governing bodies of the Conference of Parties (COP) to make three commitments to ensure that people enduring conflict are not left behind:**

- First, recommit to urgent and ambitious political action to reduce emissions and keep warming within a habitable range to avoid the worst consequences of climate change on people.
- Second, acknowledge conflict-affected countries' high vulnerability to climate risks due to their limited adaptive capacity.
- Third, live up to international commitments to bolster climate action in countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change by ensuring climate action is strengthened and supported by fit-for-purpose, accessible finance in countries enduring conflict and violence.

## **1** Recommit to urgent and ambitious political action to reduce emissions and keep warming within a habitable range to avoid the worst consequences of climate change on people.

Negotiations on how to limit the worst consequences of climate change have been taking place for decades. In 2015, signatories of the Paris Agreement agreed to limit warming to “well below” 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and aim for a maximum increase of 1.5 degrees. Yet, as of 2021, government pledges put the world on a likely path to exceed 1.5 degrees in the near future, with no credible path to avoiding it (WMO 2023; UNEP 2022).

In all scenarios, some level of warming will continue because of past emissions, which will compound and intensify climate extremes and exacerbate humanitarian crises. Without mitigation, the need for climate adaptation will continue to increase, in some cases requiring large-scale social, cultural, political and economic transformations. In the absence of effective mitigation and beyond the limits of adaptation, climate change will continue to negatively affect people’s lives, homes, infrastructure, assets and livelihoods. People will therefore need support in averting, minimizing and addressing climate-induced losses and damages and in limiting biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, so that the most vulnerable communities, including those affected by conflict and violence, do not fall even further behind.

### **WE URGE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC TO:**

- **Accelerate and increase their ambitions to cut greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to heightened risks and address losses and damages.**

## **2** Acknowledge conflict-affected countries’ high vulnerability to climate risks due to their limited adaptive capacity.

The international community has committed to provide support to countries that are highly vulnerable to climate change. More than half of the countries considered most vulnerable and least ready to adapt to climate change are countries enduring conflict, most of which are also among the world’s least developed countries (ND-GAIN, 2023). This is not because climate change directly causes conflict. Rather, conflict increases the fragility of institutions, essential services, infrastructure, governance and other capacities that are critical to help people cope with and adapt to a changing climate.

In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of this vulnerability, with growing interest in discussing conflict and fragility at COP26 in Glasgow and COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh. It is essential to build on this progress at COP28, where more conscious and explicit recognition of the high vulnerability of countries enduring conflict would allow for a greater focus on pathways to address their specific needs and ensure there is adequate and urgent climate action in these locations.

### **WE URGE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC TO:**

- **Acknowledge and draw attention to the high vulnerability to climate risks of countries and communities enduring conflict, as this is essential to ensure adequate climate action in these settings.**

**3**

**Live up to international commitments to bolster climate action in countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change by ensuring such action is strengthened and supported by fit-for-purpose, accessible finance in countries enduring conflict.**

International support to help people adapt to a changing climate is particularly weak in places enduring conflict because of the challenges associated with long-term programming in these environments. For the same reasons, the most fragile countries tend to receive the least funding for climate action. Conflict-affected areas within a country – particularly when such areas are not under state control – are often excluded from climate finance to mitigate risks, thus excluding millions of people from receiving support. Meanwhile, only a fraction of international climate finance is committed to local action (Cao et al., 2021).

To close this gap, there need to be sustained efforts to revisit how climate action is implemented in places affected by conflict. Criteria for accessing funding – particularly for adaptation and loss and damage – and assessing risks must be tailored to the specific challenges of places that are extremely fragile (ICRC, 2022).

#### **WE URGE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC TO:**

- Scale up efforts to strengthen climate action for countries, people and communities affected by conflict by improving knowledge and practice on how to prepare for, respond to and build resilience against climate shocks in these settings.**
- Review existing mechanisms for accessing, distributing and absorbing finance for climate action to ensure they do not exclude millions of people from receiving much-needed support. This will require reassessing risk appetites and providing flexible finance at appropriate scale.**



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## ABOUT THE ICRC

The ICRC's mandate and exclusively humanitarian mission are grounded in international law, the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Climate risks matter to us because they severely exacerbate the needs and vulnerability of the communities we work with.

In line with the [ICRC's plan of action for implementing the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#), we aim to help strengthen people's resilience to the risks that arise when climate change and armed conflict or other violence converge, working closely with other components of the [International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#), communities, states, academics and the private sector.

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