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CLIMATE CHANGE AS A SECURITY THREAT IN NIGERIA AND THE SAHEL

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Nigeria Policy Brief, June 2022

ISBN - 978-978-795-343-3

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CLIMATE CHANGE AS A SECURITY THREAT IN NIGERIA

The phenomenon of climate change is an existential reality and a threat to the global system. It is in recognition of the changes within the ecology, the variations in climatic conditions vis-à-vis the implications of this changes that nations have come up with mitigating and adaptive strategies to cushion the negative impact of climate change. There has been an increase in research amongst scholars on the nexus between climate change and insecurity and climate change as threat multiplier. Climate change is a security threat as well as a threat multiplier. The United Nations has organised series of climate change conferences to identify and examine the impact of climate change on human security and also the proffer strategic recommendations and roadmaps for nation's states to adhere to. The threats posed by climate change have attracted global attention. Just as the impacts of climate change differ from one continent to another the level of commitment by states and non-state actors in addressing the threats posed by climate change also varies. There seems to be more commitment on the part of the global north as the global north takes drastic measures to counter the effects but same could not be said of the global south. Africa, with the fast-growing population, faces the severest reality that is driven by climate change. There is a growing consensus that climate change is by far the biggest existential threat to life on Planet



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Earth. Although climate has always changed naturally and will continue to do so even without human beings disrupting the ecological equilibrium, it has become clear that the rate and intensity of the change our planet is experiencing now is largely anthropogenic and catastrophic. Climate change exacerbates and multiplies existing challenges confronting our world, especially insecurity.

To appreciate climate change as a security threats and threat multiplier, it is best to situate the discuss within the context of both the traditional and modern conception of security. Though there are existing security threats that are unconnected to climate change, but climate change has further exacerbated such conflict thereby increasing the rate of insecurity and political instability. Environmental security, climate justice, human security, food insecurity amongst several others is key issues that are climate change related. Agriculture has become the singular worst hit by climate change as it implicates a core need for human survival, the need to eat. Food has become a major target of extreme weather conditions; small scale farmers are among the worst-hit in terms of exposure and vulnerability.

Disappearing arable land and water bodies has gradually increased conflicts between farmers and pastoralist with respects to access to depleted or disappearing natural resource. This interplay is quite frequent in the north. The south of Nigeria is faced with not disappearing resources but increased anthropogenic actions from industrial scale pollution to criminal and illegal logging of woods for commercial purposes in the remaining forest areas. Illegal mining and oil spills continue to pollute the land and underground water making them unfit for farming and drinking, hence livelihood comes into questions again.

With Africa contributing about 4% of Green House Gas (GHG) and contributing the least in heating up the atmosphere, the continent is most vulnerable to the effects of changing weather. The Sahel has the perfect combination of population growth, rising urbanisation, environmental degradation, violent extremist organisations, and weak state capacity all aggravated by climate change to create the perfect storm for insecurity. The internal contractions amongst states in the Sahel and the inability of the states to properly integrate and articulate the conflicting interests is a major reason for the escalation of climate change induced conflict. Source conflicts in Nigeria such as the farmers-pastoralist conflict, the Niger Delta conflict, energy crisis, banditry and cattle rustling are further worsened by climate change.

Worthy of note in relationship between climate change, human security and threat multiplication is the impact of climate change on People with Disabilities (PWD), children and women who are more vulnerable in the phase of conflict. Whether or not conflict is induced by climate change or other factors, People with disability are usually victims as they are cut helplessly in the middle. These categories of people can hardly help themselves in most cases as they are either physically impaired or crippled. Another category of people with disability whose lives are threatened by climate change are those suffering from albinism. The increase in sunlight and temperature has led to increase in skin cancer and other life-threatening disease. This is not to talk about the stigmatization, prejudices, and stereotype that they go through.

Nigeria is not isolated in this equation as Nigeria unfortunately is a major climate theatre in the Sahel due to its geographical location; the country is straddled from the north by the expanding Sahara Desserts and from the south by the threatening sea level rise of the Atlantic Ocean. Situating her between this axis of evil burdened with exploding population, overcrowded urban centres, a weak economy, poor governance, corruption, poverty, unemployment, and conflicts Nigeria is sure in one big precarious climate and security crisis.

Notwithstanding the prevailing existential threat posed by climate change, not much has been done with respect to mitigating the underlying environmental problems. Nigeria seems not to be doing enough in addressing the underlying threats. These threats, unattended to have led to hydra headed security challenges bedevilling the country. This policy brief therefore is an attempt to examine and showcase the nexus between climate change and insecurity in Nigeria with a view to looking at regional actions and events that influence national conversations and responses to climate change.

Climate Justice and Climate Change

Climate change is an existential threat and a threat multiplier that must be framed primarily from the human rights, justice, and economic perspective and properly situated within the contexts of healthy international relations and global peace. Impacts of climate change cost lives and livelihoods, it pushes people into poverty and hinders them from lifting themselves out of it. It aids the spreading of diseases; it deepens inequality between and among countries, gender, and social class. It threatens the attainment of SDGs and reverses the gains made in improving the quality of life in both developed



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and less developed countries of the world. It is imperative therefore to address Environmental Justice, Social and Political Justice and most importantly Climate Justice. These would not be possible without environmental security. United Nations Environment Programme describes environmental security as a “conceptual

Environmental Justice would mean paying reparation by way of clean-up of the lands that have been exploited and explored in the Niger Delta with devastating effects on the environment, Livelihood and health of communities

envelope” including a variety of issues involving the role that the environment and natural resources can play across the peace and security continuum, including environmental causes and drivers of conflict, environmental impacts of conflict, environmental recovery and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Environmental justice would address the issue of the over 38 million people caught between the Sahel and Lake Chad area, these are stranded communities that need water for irrigation and drinking, communities that are victims of government inability to recharge the Lake Chad. Water in the lake would have meant more fisherfolks less bandits, more arable land and less farmers dying in the farms, more youth engaged in agriculture and less youth doing drugs. The continuous proliferation of violent non-state actors would have been curtailed as their major source of recruitment would have been plugged and the current insecurity nipped in the bud. Environmental Justice for them means recharging the Lake that has dried up more than 95% since 1975.

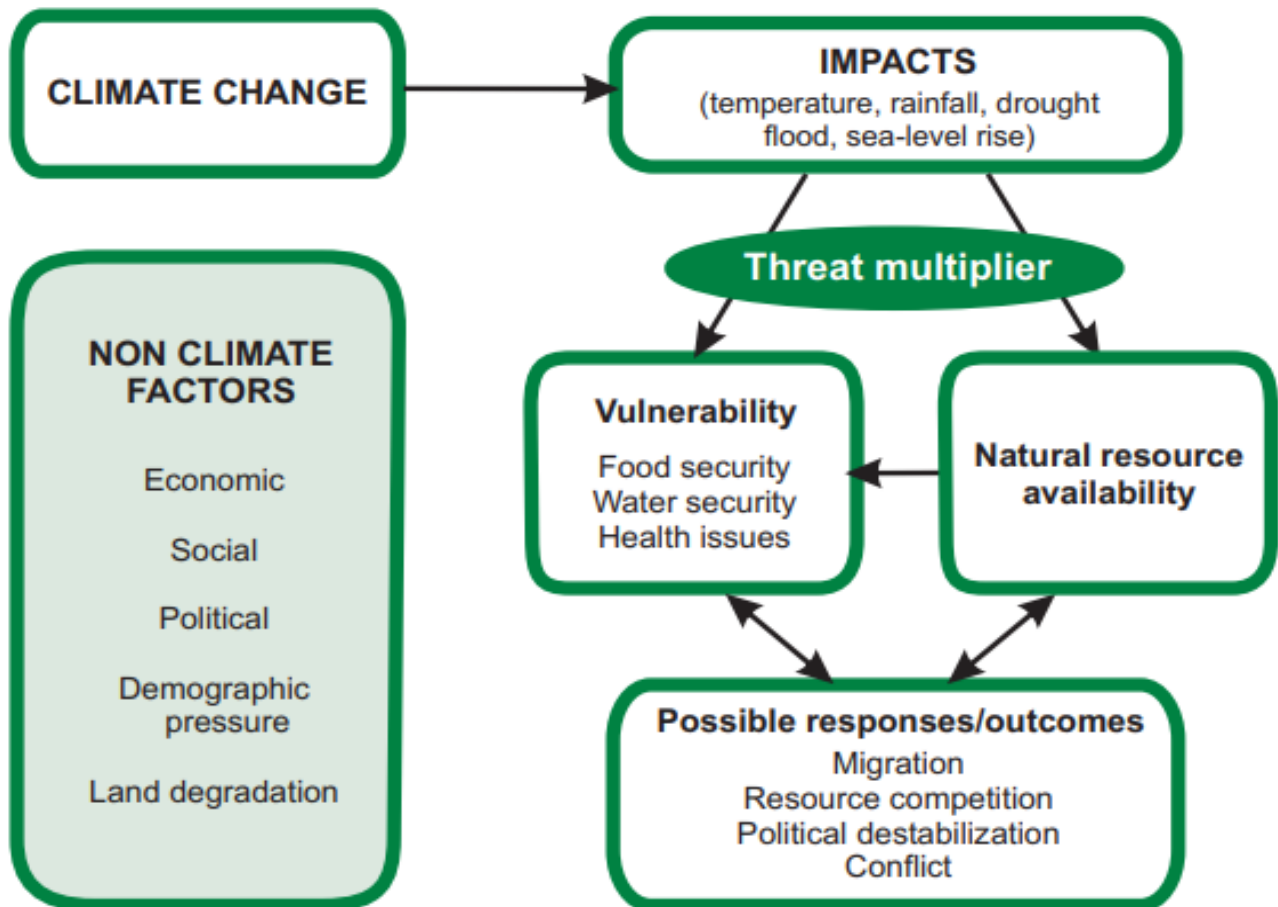
Environmental Justice would mean paying reparation by way of clean-up of the lands that have been exploited and explored in the Niger Delta with devastating effects on the environment, Livelihood and health of communities. The current ecocide happening in the Niger Delta region has led to youth restiveness. Young men and women who could be fishing or farming could not because of the industrial scale pollution that has been happening in the land. With life expectancy drastically reduced, stranded communities are slowly disappearing as children become elders in polluted lands and waters where they can neither farm nor fish, these young ones resorts to the barrel of the gun to press home their demand for environmental justice and call the attention of the government to their stranded state.

Social and Political Justice remains the base or conduit to achieving environmental justice. This includes making changes to policies and laws surrounding resource control, power, inclusion and penalties. These are the vehicles that made the escalating environmental crimes possible in the first place. The way our environmental laws are crafted and operated have only led to youth restiveness, gender inequality, trust deficit in government, restructuring all of which have snowballed into political apathy and/or secessionist agitations birthing another level of arms bearing non-state actors in the arena of an already fragile country.

Social and Political Justice means matching policies with actions, writing and rewriting policies and laws to cater for the livelihood of the of citizens affected by the worsening climate conditions, diversify the economy, meet our

NDC obligations recharge the Lake Chad, Clean Up Ogoni Land, sustainable town planning, best practices, and all.

Climate justice in the Nigeria context means a shared burden of the all the effects of climate change bedeviling the country. While Climate Justice in our context seems tricky due to our gender, class, and occupational peculiarities, we need to make those peculiarities work to our advantage by crafting response measures that will take into consideration our socio-political construct and deliver to us the best climate just solutions.



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Security Threats Heightened by Climate Change in Nigeria and the Sahel

West Africa and the Sahel region are grappling with several security challenges in the post-colonial era. The geopolitical architecture vis-à-vis the ecological characteristics of these regions has in no small way contributed to precipitating insecurity. Environmental variability in West African and the Sahel has given rise to the manifestation of conflicts and insecurities. The farmers-herders conflict, banditry, Niger Delta conflict, trans-border crimes, insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin, etc are instances of environmentally induced crises.

The ecosystems reflect a complex interdependent web of living organisms and natural resources, play a critical role in supporting human wellbeing and driving economic growth through the valuable services they provide such as food, water for drinking and irrigation, pollination, and climate regulation. Yet human society has systematically undermined these natural allies, treating forests, arable land, and rivers as though they are inexhaustible.

The securitization of climate change and resource induced conflict is in tandem with contemporary perspectives of security which differs from the state-centric and militaristic orientation

There is a causal relationship between climate variability and human security as evidenced in several parts of the international system. This variability has in different instances contributed to conflicts. Hence the need for environmental security. Environmental security has been described as a bundle of issues that involves the role that the environment and natural resources can play in peace and security, including environmental causes and drivers of conflict, environmental impacts of conflict, environmental recovery, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Ecological and environmental variations have accounted for different forms of insecurities either by serving as springboards for insecurity or as security threats in themselves. Pastoralist-farmers conflict is a form of rural violence that is manifested in different parts of Africa particularly in the Sahel region and sub-Saharan Africa.

There are existing and emerging security threats in Nigeria precipitated and further worsened by climate change. Resource induced conflicts such as the pastoralist-farmers and the Niger Delta conflicts have been further fuelled by climate change. The

exacerbation of vulnerability and conflict in Northern Nigeria is both a product of the impact of climate change and drought leading to competition between farmers and pastoralists. The spill-over effect of this lies in the multi-dimensional manifestations of these conflicts as it has led to increase in the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, loss of lives and properties, loss of livelihood, internally displaced persons, food insecurity, economic stagnation amongst several security crisis. bearing in mind the pluralistic nature of Nigeria and the fact that most herders are muslims and most farmers in north central Nigeria are Christians, the conflict between herders and farmers has also assumed an ethno-religious dimension further widening the cleavage and already fracture and fragile unity in Nigeria.

State Fragility means weak state capacity to carry out basic governance functions. Sahel region is incredibly diverse in terms of culture, politics, ethnicity, economics and climates. Amidst its rich diversity, several factors – including population growth, poverty, and poor governance – have made several states in the region very fragile. Climate

change is compounding this trend, by exacerbating tensions and potentially triggering new conflicts in the context of pre-existing conflict drivers. The resultant security outcomes have included heightened proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), population displacement, strengthening of violent extremism, growth in organized crimes, and overall political instability which ultimately climaxes in livelihood collapse.

Under the combined effect of state fragility, conflict, drought and floods, land and water bodies are deteriorating and losing its fertility and fish supplies. Insufficient rain-fed irrigation means that crops fail or are destroyed, while livestock struggle to find water for drinking and sufficient pasture. Loss of millions of hectares of easily accessible farming land to the desert, thus creating or exacerbating food insecurity and loss of livelihoods for thousands. Rivers are polluted at industrial scale killing fish and other aquatic life culminating in a total collapse of livelihood.

The securitization of climate change and resource induced conflict is in tandem with contemporary perspectives of security which differs from the state-centric and militaristic orientation. The rate of political instability and socio-economic development in the Sahel region is not unconnected to climate change and its impact on resource availability. The political economy of resource allocation/ownership vis-à-vis the dwindling availability of resource has always been a stimulant for conflict. Conflict over Land Resources - Land degradation is a prominent feature of the Sahel, hence conflict over arable land resource remains a key area of climate change induced security challenge. These conflicts are usually incremental then degenerate into violent armed conflict as an adaptive strategic particularly from violent non-state actors. Over the years, the inability of states within the Sahel to manage climate change and resource induced conflicts has led to the emergence and increase in the rate of violent non-state actors who have become serious security threats.

Under the combined effect of state fragility, conflict, drought and floods, land and water bodies are deteriorating and losing its fertility and fish supplies

Places affected the most in West Africa include Mopti and Gao in Mali, the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions in Niger, the Eastern region of Burkina Faso, the Northwest and Northcentral regions of Nigeria, and Sila and Ouaddai provinces of Chad. Though there exist different climatic and environmental conditions in Nigeria, climate change has further recalibrated the variations of climate in Nigeria particularly between the southern and northern parts of the country thereby giving room for conflict.



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Land is a major resource and the size of Nigeria notwithstanding; the use and availability of arable land has been a source of conflict. Conflicts over scarce arable land resources in the region continues to put pressure on Nigeria as it propels forced or conflict induced migration in all directions. Despite the abundance of arable land, food insecurity in most part of the rural areas of Nigeria has been exacerbated by violent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, thereby disrupting the livelihood of millions of families particularly in Adamawa, Borno, Benue, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara states among others. The obvious reality in Nigerian in relation to food insecurity can be better appreciated from the fact that farms and farming communities have increasingly become unsafe hence the phobia for going to farms. There are several incidences in Benue state, Kaduna state, Zamfara state and others states in Nigeria where farmers are killed in the farms and farming communities raided. This explains the rate of food inflation in Nigeria.

The importance of water for both human and agricultural activities cannot be overemphasised for obvious reasons bearing in mind that water is not just a basic necessity for man but also a sine-qua non both crop and livestock production. In addition to this is the issue of energy crisis in Nigeria. The direct physical impacts of climate change, such as increased frequency and severity of storms, heat waves, and droughts are likely to impact energy security in a number of ways. Water scarcity will diminish hydro-electrical generation capacity. Electricity generation in

Nigeria has always been dependent on water. What this portends in that climate change in and its impact on water will continue to affect the level of electricity generation in Nigeria since Nigeria is yet to fully key into alternative sources of energy. The epileptic nature of power supply in Nigeria has affected a lot of businesses and has further created unemployment among youths thereby promoting idleness and insecurity.

The impact of climate change in the Sahel has led to the incremental shrinking and drying up of the Lake Chad thereby given room for further contestations over the little available water. Induced water scarcity in some states of the Sahel is increasing conflicts over water as the drying-up of Lake Chad is a direct attack on the livelihood of over 17million people depending on it for survival. Clash between Shuwa Arabs in Chadian vs Fulani pastoralists in Nigeria is a case in point. Water scarcity has triggered regular clashes between ranchers and fishers in Logone and Chari, Cameroon. Conflicts over drying watering holes in the patchy landscape that defines a large percentage of the northern region has increased significantly, thereby increasing the percentage of those already affected negatively by human insecurity. Declining fish populations partly attributed to climate change, rising demand for seafood, pollution and heavy illegal fishing are increasing the risk that conflict over fisheries resources will undermine stability and peace.

The drying-up of lake Chad vis-à-vis the threats posed by the Sahara Desert, heavy dependence on rainfall for agricultural production, Unsustainable agricultural practices, ineffective state policies on agriculture, sand mining, loss of biodiversity, destruction of wetlands, energy poverty, livelihood disruptions due to conflicts, banditry and insurgency all serve to propel rural-urban migration that is induced by population and state neglect. The youth constitute a major component of Nigeria's population and the failure of the state to ensure that they are gainfully engage has led to increase in migration. The country and the region are experiencing a huge demographic shift of migration from the state-neglected rural areas to the unplanned urban areas, in search for greater opportunities for livelihoods. Migrations like this depletes the rural workforce; reduce agricultural produce while burgeoning the population in towns and cities that already suffer lack or inadequate infrastructure and public services, leaving women and children (including the elderly and persons with disability) more vulnerable to climate change impact.



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Conclusion



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There abound series of studies and contending perspectives on the impact of and nexus between climate change and security and whether or not climate change is a driver of and multiplier of conflict. It is therefore important to note that there seems to be a high degree of consensus amongst security policy experts and many non-governmental organizations that climate change as a threat multiplier in conflict situations.

There is no doubt that climate change is an obvious existential phenomenon/reality that the global system is grappling with. The impact of climate change and its implications as threat multiplier is manifested in both in the northern and southern hemisphere in various ways and dimensions. However, the degree of impact varies based on the peculiarities of each continent and the degree of adaptive and mitigating strategies and mechanisms that have been put in place. Effects of climate change and its potential drivers have brought about devastating impacts with very dire consequences on human security and national development. Disappearing fish stock, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, deepening poverty, dwindling fresh water supply, increasing burden of diseases, unemployment, infrastructure destruction, and resource constraints, crop failure and low agricultural yield lead to food insecurity just as means of livelihood are lost and unemployment rises. Climate change further deepens the inequality gap between men and women as more women are left to fend for the family even as fending becomes even more difficult.

Furthermore, by depleting forests reserves and destroying the wetlands, we lose access to vital ecosystem services that nature renders, food, medicines, and carbon sinking. From a perspective that sought to deal with the threats posed by climate change, the Nigerian National Security Strategy (NSS), which was launched in 2019 recognized forests as critical national assets, as well as forest conservation as a strategic necessity. Investing human resources to the Great Green Wall initiative would be great way to push back the expanding desert currently affecting Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan.

The response of state actors and non-state actors is a necessary requirement for climate change adaptation. There is no doubt that state actors alone cannot address effectively the challenge posed by climate change. The Nigerian state has established several institutional frameworks and designed series of policies to mitigate climate change and its impact on human security. Addressing climate is addressing security threats. It is therefore germane for states to address the precipitating factors of climate change. Recharging of the Lake Chad remains a key component to halting the gains of climate induced security threats "...with inter basin water transfer, farming, fishing, animal husbandry would resume and curtail irregular migration of youths..." said President Muhammadu Buhari. This should be beefed up with a robust National and Regional Drought Plan, this will go a long way to complement the land restoration push currently being carried out by the agencies involved.



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Recommendations

Haven interrogated the nexus between climate change as both a security threat and threat multiplier; this policy brief puts forward the following strategic recommendations for both Nigeria, regional bodies and states within the Sahel region:

1. Address the remote and immediate precipitating factors of insecurity across the country including terrorism and banditry, Boko Haram; kidnapping, and violent crimes veiled as political agitations.
2. There is need for interfaith, inter-ethnic and community dialogue as a way of addressing resource induced conflict especially the farmer-herders conflict in Nigeria
3. Promote youth employment by diversify the Nigerian economy and investing in climate-smart agriculture
4. Government should strengthen institutions that are saddled with the responsibility of weather forecasting, climate modelling, early warning systems and ensure access to accurate, timely, and effective climate information services delivery to farmers and other stakeholders in various sectors of the economy.
5. Climate proof the economy through massive investment in climate-resilient infrastructure in roads, energy, health, and manufacturing.
6. Ensure that climate policies are effectively and efficiently implemented
7. There is need to invest in capacity building, research and development (R&D) that are climate change related
8. There is an urgent need for climate change education, mitigating and adaptive strategies while also taking into cognizance the role of gender
9. Nigeria and Africa should up the tempo in promoting environmental security while also demanding climate justice at the global level

Regional Bodies

10. Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) should prioritise commitment to preserving and restoring their forests. These forests play an important role in biodiversity conservation and millions depend on the free services these forests provide
11. ECOWAS and ECCAS should support local initiatives aimed at mitigating climate change through coordination of policies, building partnerships, resource mobilization, and promotion of national ownership for projects implemented
12. Partner with Universities, Research Institutions and Think Tanks to generate knowledge and ideas as well as innovate ways or mechanisms for mitigating the impact of climate change in the regions
13. ECOWAS and ECCAS should deepen partnership to strengthen the capacity of regional institutions and frameworks, Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJT) to respond to transboundary water resources challenges (shrinkage of Lake Chad) and transborder criminality such as terrorism and organised crimes.



Sahelian States

14. Develop and properly resource national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, prioritising a national “re-greening” initiative
15. Strengthen the capacity of traditional structures and authorities on early warning, mediation and alternative dispute resolutions, conflict management, and peace messaging
16. Promote best practices in agriculture and pastoralism such as improved irrigation efficiency, use of adaptive crops and ranching
17. National efforts and strategies on peacebuilding must be redefined to prioritise mainstreaming climate change impact
18. Targeted investments on youth in the area of education, vocational training, and social protection system to offer them alternatives to livelihood systems that are negatively impacted by climate change



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Flyers



Theme: **Multistakeholder Forum on Climate Change as a Security Threat**



Speaker:
Oseloka H Obaze
CEO Selonnes Consults LTD



Speaker:
Dr Chris Kwaja
Senior Lecturer / Researcher,
Modibbo Adama University
of Technology, Yola



Speaker:
Suleiman Arigbabu
Executive Secretary,
HEDA Resource Centre



Speaker:
Dr. Freedom Onuoha
Senior Lecturer, University
of Nigeria, Nsukka.



General Moderator
Chinedu Nwagu
Lawyer and Human Rights
Advocate



Moderator
Tamwakat Golit
EPSAO Project ECOWAS



Panelist:
Fr. Edward Obi
Climate Change Expert



Panelist:
Asmau Benzie,
Gender and Climate
Change Expert



Panelist
Dr Sunday Adejo
Nigeria Defence Academy,
Kaduna



Panelist
Rinnicit Temlong Aboki
Executive Director of
We Unite Foundation



Experience sharing
Eunice Asiedu
Programme Coordinator,
FES Ghana.

**23 – 24
June 2022**

**The Wells Carlton Hotel &
Apartments, Asokoro, Abuja**

**9am
daily**

Theme: **MULTISTAKEHOLDER FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE AS A SECURITY THREAT**



SESSION ONE:

Theme:
**CLIMATE CHANGE
AS SECURITY THREAT IN
NORTHERN NIGERIA
(INCLUDING THE MIDDLE BELT REGION)**



Speaker:
Dr. Chris Kwaja
Senior Lecturer / Researcher,
Modibbo Adama University
of Technology, Yala



Panelist:
Fr. Edward Obi
Climate Change Expert



Panelist:
Asmat Benzie,
Gender and Climate
Change Expert



Moderator:
Chinedu Nwagu,
Lawyer and Human
Rights Advocate




Theme:
**CLIMATE
CHANGE
AS SECURITY THREAT IN
SOUTHERN
NIGERIA**

SESSION TWO:



Speaker:
SULEIMAN ARIGBABU
Executive Secretary,
HEDA Resource Centre



Panelist:
DR SUNDAY ADEJO
Nigeria Defence
Academy, Kaduna



Panelist:
**RINMICIT TEMPLONG
ABOKI**
Executive Director of
We Unite Foundation




Moderator:
TAMWAKAT GOLIT
EPSAO Project ECOWAS




SESSION THREE


Theme:
**CLIMATE CHANGE
AS SECURITY THREAT
– PERSPECTIVES
FROM THE SAHEL**



Speaker:
Dr. Freedom Onuoha
Senior Lecturer, University
of Nigeria, Nsukka.



Experience sharing
Eunice Asiedu
Programme Coordinator,
FES Ghana.




Theme:
Climate Change as a Security Threat

Date: 23 June 2022 Time: 9am daily
Venue: The Wells Carlton Hotel & Apartments, Asokoro, Abuja



Keynote Speaker:
Oseloka H Obaze
CEO Selonnes Consults LTD



General Moderator:
Chinedu Nwagu
Lawyer and Human Rights Advocate



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