ADVANCING CLIMATE, PEACE, SECURITY, AND GEOPOLITICAL COOPERATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

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Workshop overview

Climate disruption risks peace and security across Asia and the Pacific – yet the scope of those risks, and policy solutions to address them, remain under-appreciated and explored.

Acknowledging this gap, and that the scale of these risks require collective responses that span regions and institutions, the July 2025 workshop, convened by Toda Peace Institute, adelphi, and ASPI's Climate & Security Policy Centre, addressed the underexplored nexus of climate, peace, and security in Asia and the Pacific.

The aim of the workshop was to drive a conversation on priorities and solutions to connect global approaches to climate, peace, and security with regional experts and institutional representatives from across Asia and the Pacific. This helped identify opportunities to generate concrete, region-grounded policy and program options linking climate, peace, and security. [1]

Opening remarks

The workshop opened with Kevin Clements, Director of the Toda Peace Institute, emphasizing the urgency of grappling with intensifying climate hazards that intersect with a global shift towards nationalism, isolationism, and withdrawal from climate-forward policy responses. Kevin noted this dynamic further limited the ability of countries most impacted by climate change, including Pacific Island countries, to set the global climate agenda relative to those with the most power, capacity, and responsibility to take action – particularly the United States and China. Noting the ongoing need for international cooperation to manage climate risks, Kevin called for reshaping international norms to enhance the integration of climate change planning within security institutions, and a push for more conversations with China given the critical role they play in emission reductions and responding to climate risks.

Janani Vivekananda, Head of Climate Diplomacy and Security with adelphi, and a Senior Research Fellow with the Toda Pece Institute, continued to set the scene for the workshop discussions. Drawing on experience in the global climate, peace, and security discourse, she emphasized the need for producing concrete policy and program recommendations that build peace and cooperation in the Asia and Pacific regions against the risks climate change poses for security and stability. Noting the need for enhanced regional coordination and cooperation to drive effective solutions, and drawing on the progress advancing such solutions with partners in Africa to date, she emphasized the need for similarly targeted and effective responses to the risks climate poses for peace and security across Asia and the Pacific.

Michael Copage, Head of the Climate and Security Policy Centre at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, closed the opening session with remarks noting the importance of connecting regional voices and perspectives with partners in governments like Australia. Acknowledging the intensifying state of climate impacts, he emphasized the hope and positive opportunity afforded by the workshop in bringing together experts and actors with the knowledge and capability to both anticipate and prepare for these risks in advance.

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[1] A summary of this report can be found on the Toda Peace Institute website.

Keynote panel: Climate security risks and geopolitical tensions in the Asia-Pacific

The keynote panel helped steer important themes of discussion throughout the workshop on approaching climate as a threat to peace and security in Asia and the Pacific. This included identifying multiple concurrent and pressing risks, different levels of progress across Asia and the Pacific compared with approaches in Europe and Africa, and important distinctions in how resilience is framed and approached across regions and cultures.

The discussion was prompted with several key questions:

- What are the most pressing climate-related security risks in the Asia-Pacific region?
- How do these risks intersect with geopolitical tensions, such as competition over resources or strategic influence?
- What role does climate diplomacy play in mitigating regional tensions?

Food security and heat risk were identified as pressing climate-induced hazards and risks to peace and security in the region – while climate policy driven by and consistent with sub-regional approaches to resilience was identified as a core challenge to balance, particularly in the Pacific.

Strong emphasis was placed on grounding policy responses for Pacific communities in a Pacific sense of resilience, and contesting solutions which may undercut self-reliance and induce further reliance on development partners. This included the tension between leveraging critical mineral development (particularly deep-sea mining) as a source of growth, compared with the consequences deep-sea mining can have for sensitive marine ecosystems on which Pacific island communities depend for resilience. Perspectives on climate mobility highlighted concerns about how relocated communities would develop not only economic but cultural and spiritual resilience, and the consequences for the communities who lose members to relocation initiatives.

Australia's use of 'Pacific family' language to be seen as a partner in the region was contrasted with its continued export of fossil-fuels, challenging its ability to be a leader in securing the region against climate impacts while continuing to drive future climate-amplified risks.

A clear contrast was made between the more established approach to linking climate with peace and security in Europe, Africa, and the Pacific, as compared with the nascent conversation in Asia and countries like Australia. Despite recent efforts to better assess and grapple with those risks through national assessments, concern was expressed about losing momentum on advancing solutions to address the nexus of climate, peace, and security. Australia's role in climate diplomacy, and its ability to advance solutions as a credible partner, was referred to in context of sustaining its transition away from fossil fuels domestically while international demand slows for its exports.

The discussion noted that focusing on climate resilience can help countries advance cooperation and peace despite existing tensions, but equally that the geopolitical interests of wealthy countries can be leveraged to advance climate resilience. Doing so successfully requires engaging with how different countries frame and approach climate risks as a security risk – noting the limits to considering climate as a 'non-traditional' security issue, but equally the distinction that countries like India place on climate as an environmental issue entirely separate from hard security issues. Advancing opportunities for resilience building, including for interests abroad, were highlighted in the Pacific as an opportunity to engage with countries like India that are motivated to support and enhance sources of resilience (e.g. fish stocks for food security and economic resilience; distributed solar) - and in turn see climate change as a risk to peace and security in another country context, outside of domestic political dynamics. This in turn leads to opportunities for enhanced cooperation across regions, such as linking Germany and India towards a conversation on climate and security that focuses on mutual areas of interest and framing around climate risks and resilience.

A substantial input was made regarding the importance of challenging the philosophical underpinning of development as it applies to climate, peace, and security programming. Acknowledging the distinction between western philosophies centered around growth and Pacific relational philosophies – especially when applied to dynamics such as climate mobility. it was suggested that a new development model for the Pacific be developed to focus on a holistic approach to community relationships with land and oceans. This, it was argued, could drive new ethical mechanisms that rely on local and relationship philosophies which better account for and amplify resilience rather than exacerbate challenges through maladaptive responses (with the example of deep-sea mining potentially undermining Pacific community resilience despite the intent to enhance economic resilience).

Breakout session 1: Regional perspectives on climate security and geopolitics

Three breakout sessions were held concurrently to explore sub-regional perspectives on climate security and geopolitics, and to begin framing joint policy and program initiatives which could respond to these risks. Groups were divided between discussions focused on Pacific islands; South and Southeast Asia; and Oceania (focusing in particular on the role and response of Australia in the broader region).

PACIFIC ISLANDS

Discussions around Pacific Island countries focused on how climate risks are manifesting, how geopolitical dynamics are shaping responses to climate risks, and opportunities to enhance regional cooperation to address shared challenges.

Climate risks including loss of fresh water, sea-level rise and coastal erosion, loss of culture, identity, of trauma, of mental stress, of marginalisation, of community coherence and consequential displacement of communities were noted as key community as well as geopolitical risks – both in terms of the question around the rights of citizens when communities are forced to leave, but equally in terms of fluctuating involvement and competition among geopolitical actors for ulterior motives.

The tension between the sources and priorities of externally-driven aid – complicated by the withdrawal of the United States and geopolitical concerns raised about China's involvement – were noted, particularly as it relates to meeting local needs and perspectives. This includes an over-reliance on short-term solutions and policy priorities that don't align with needs – for example, favouring short-term investments in renewable energy projects rather than longer-term community-led solutions – as well as the prospect of solutions which can be perceived to echo colonial dynamics (e.g. Tuvalu exchanging full autonomy over security partnerships for a mobility path to Australia).

The role of development partner presence was also raised, noting the distinction between China's presence in the Pacific as a threat to Australia and the United States, and China's presence as a source of support for Pacific Island countries facing rising climate impacts and risks.

The discussion raised several existing opportunities to enhance cooperation, including the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific; taking stock of climate finance investments and leveraging the Pacific Resilience Facility; and enhancing regional and international dialogue.

Important points for ensuring cooperation and support meet Pacific needs included redressing the perceived donor short-termism, the tendency to focus on state institutions and building new structures over using existing, local ones. An alternative, Pacific-relevant approach would involve focusing on generational cycles for climate solutions, leveraging local solutions and preferences for resilience (particularly with regards to relocation), reforming climate finance to meet local needs, and to engage with spiritual communities and churches.

SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The breakout discussion on South and Southeast Asian explored the sources of resource competition, climate risks, and regional security. This began with exploring the different perspectives on climate, peace, and security – noting the importance of starting with a common and clear vision of what regional actors work towards.

The vast complexity and spread of climate risks intersecting concurrently for diverse countries across South and Southeast Asia was noted, as was the challenging of applying a systems approach to capture and grapple with dynamics in the region. This includes transboundary resources and water security intersecting with geopolitics, as among countries sharing in the Mekong River; expanding critical mineral extraction that can exacerbate challenges for local communities and pre-existing tensions; economic security for those exposed to risks; and rising challenges of delivering humanitarian aid to disaster-vulnerable regions already experiencing conflict.

This nature of systemic climate risk raised a question about the utility of approaching climate risk within the framing of "everything, everywhere, at all once". While grappling with multiple concurrent risks is critical, it is equally overwhelming and difficult to prioritize among all risk concurrently.

The role of multilateral and regional institutions in grappling with climate and security was raised. While the UN has established the Climate Security Mechanism to explore its role in UN initiatives, it does not have a clear enough institutional home – in particular being rejected by the UNSC as an area of activity.

In the absence of multilateral institution responses to climate security, the role of regional institutions in becoming homes for those discussions was raised. Within Southeast Asia, ASEAN's work to date (with support from the UN) was highlighted in this context, acknowledging that Southeast Asia and ASEAN have distinct approaches to climate, peace, and security that do not necessarily align with a commonly-defined and imposed definition from an external source that would lack regional buy-in and implementation. Instead, the focus is on building incremental support and consensus.

A discussion was also held on the benefit of approaching all climate-related risks and solutions within a climate-driven framing and lens, given that climate-framed issues do not necessarily align with the priorities of communities and governments, and consequently limit engagement. Building resilience to climate-related risks does not always require a climate-framed response either – food and water security require planning that is aware of climate impacts, but this does not always need to be framed as a climate response. The discussion noted that climate change should be used as a framing where it can help motivate coordination and mobilize resources, but the framing for interventions should align with the interests of local communities and partner governments.

Further opportunities to advance climate, peace, and security were noted in engaging regional mechanisms, including cooperation mechanisms like the Quad, regional development banks, and building civil society and non-state actors.

OCEANIA

The Oceania breakout session explored ways of engaging with climate, peace, and security as a spectrum of definitions in which many communities and actors can see their interests – linking human security with cultural and relational definitions of security, national security, and geopolitical interests. Guiding this was a focus on ensuring responses asked the question of whose security and interests climate responses are geared towards.

The discussion identified key goals for programming to target climate risks, particularly focusing on shared risks and concerns to drive cooperation – while avoiding normative disagreement on framing or solutions that could upend engagement. Drawing from this, climate risk can be more appropriately defined in holistic terms that help institutions and governments see themselves in risk framing and resilience responses, while bringing in local solutions and perspectives (including Indigenous knowledge). This in turn can help build opportunities for engagement between elements of civil society and government institutions (particularly defence institutions) with broader benefit for cooperation during disaster response.

Specific opportunities to build towards this included leveraging national adaptation plans as mechanisms to integrate core responses to climate risks (including the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda); and redefining Official Development Assistance to focus on investments that target and build resilience to climate risks.

The possibility of a jointly-supported effort to map systemic climate disruption as a collaborative exercise with and between regional institutions was also raised, in order to inform and drive regional initiatives that can better grapple with intersecting climate risks. This was envisioned as a process to facilitate discussions among regional institutions and governments and jointly map climate risks and vulnerabilities across communities, without imposing views on climate risk and resilience priorities.

The prospect of COP31 being jointly hosted by Australia and the Pacific in late 2026 was also raised as an opportunity to anchor discussions on climate, peace, and security across Asia and the Pacific, which initiatives identified during this workshop could drive towards and be advanced through. The joint systems mapping of climate risk was particularly considered as an opportunity to initiative prior to COP31, in order to deliver initial results, but be seen through and past COP31's conclusion to continue refining knowledge and driving action.

Thematic panel: Climate–security nexus in practice

The second panel of the workshop aimed to explore practical solutions to address climate and security, and lessons from successful initiatives across Asia and the Pacific.

Discussion among the panelists linked four themes: climate mobility, water security, adaptation as a tool for peacebuilding, and cultural security.

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's (CHD) programming experience in the region was used to extract practical lessons from experiences in cross-border dynamics between Cambodia-Vietnam, Bangladesh-India, and Thailand-Myanmar.CHD's work focused on opportunities for cooperation on climate change in conflict-affected areas, but its experience demonstrated a disconnect between focusing on climate change from an external perspective, and community-level issues that resonated around shared environmental challenges. Climate is often politicized, and while it's easier for governments to engage with as a more palatable issue, it is the more sensitive community-level environmental issues that resonate more and have potential to build cooperation. In doing so, it was found that women were easier to engage around environmental peacebuilding, though that this does not necessarily translate into wider discussion of gender dynamics. Discussions around responding to climate-amplified risks for communities outside of state control emphasized the need to engage civil society and faith-based groups, as well as the role of philanthropy for governments or institutions unable to engage directly.

The discussion on water security emphasized that dual challenges can play out – either of too much water from intense precipitation, or too little in drought. This can amplify existing pressures among neighbouring communities that are already water-stressed at the local level, but has not been found to drive interstate conflict directly. Moreover, there is strong evidence for positive outcomes like cooperation, as much as there is for negative outcomes like conflict. Even when there is no outright conflict, however, violence for those most affected by water insecurity – particularly women – is noted to rise during periods of exacerbated water stress. It was noted that Pacific island countries are among some of the most water insecure, particularly for low-lying atolls, and that increasing urbanization within atolls is increasing dependence on desalination. Adaptation to enhance water security is critical and a necessary investment to ensure Pacific islanders can remain in their communities, rather than rely on mobility and remittances.

The role of grounding climate resilience planning with an understanding of cultural security, particularly in a Pacific context, was examined. This included a perceived distinction between Western philosophies of resilience focused on the self, where Pacific cultures are collectivist in nature and grounded in the inseparable connection between people and land (van). The difference between these philosophies was proposed as a challenge to engaging with Pacific communities in a way that leverages their insights and perspectives on climate change trends that can be both risks and opportunities. It was suggested that this distinction be used to advance solutions which ensure the collective adaptation of Pacific communities, as well as extending to cultural security that is based in land itself (vanua).

A concluding discussion on the intersection of climate mobility and security, as experienced in the southwest borderlands of Bangladesh, demonstrated the challenges of addressing transboundary climate-induced pressures on top of existing political dynamics and cross-border challenges. Noting that southwest Bangladesh is not a conflict zone, high levels of violence have nonetheless been experienced, but the securitization of the border has not enhanced security. Bangladesh is bordered by intense climate shocks from cyclone risk and flooding, while it is a dam-locked delta – with significant dependence on managing the flow of transboundary freshwater with India. Greatest challenges to the resilience of communities in these borderlands areas is that their needs for resilience and stability are not met by governments, either through corruption or insufficient social protection, and an inability to compensate or provide alternative land to those whose land has been too damaged by rising climate impacts like erosion.

The session closed by noting that efforts to identify climate–conflict "hotspots" have largely been unsuccessful; climate-related conflict is more likely where conflict already exists. This underlined the session's through-line: addressing climate–security requires locally grounded problem definitions, attention to governance realities, and programming that links environmental pressures, mobility dynamics, and cultural security as defined by the community being engaged with.

Breakout session 2: Thematic focus areas

The second breakout session of the workshop explored three sets of thematic focus areas to arrive at further recommendations for joint programming initiatives across Asia and the Pacific:

- Integrating climate security into defence and foreign policy;
- Food security and supply chain disruption; and
- Regional cooperation for disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention

INTEGRATING CLIMATE SECURITY INTO DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICY

Key challenges and solutions to address the integration of climate security into defence and foreign policy were explored. In particular, it was noted that security and foreign affairs institutions are often inherently inflexible, facing competing and often reactive priorities, while also undergoing institutional momentum that limits their ability to grapple with the scope and scale of coordination needed to tackle climate-amplified risks – leading to more siloed approaches. They are also often unable to grapple well with the varying timelines and levels of uncertainty encountered in climate projections for planning purposes. The combination of siloing and inability to engage with uncertainty was discussed as a contributing factor to the limited specificity found in government statements on climate and security.

To engage these institutions more effectively, two key considerations were raised. Defence and foreign affairs institutions need to hear and see issues framed in terms of existing policy priorities, while climate and security conversations should also help clarify the strategic interests and threat perceptions held by defence and foreign affairs institutions. Effective lessons on doing so were drawn from participant experiences, including by approaching climate and security not as an explicit topic, but rather identifying a common denominator of interest related to climate and security themes, and institutionalizing responses to those themes so they are less susceptible to political pressure.

Defining a shared but adaptable definition of climate-related security outcomes – centred around a clear value proposition and return on investment - was discussed as a tool not only to engender coordination within country institutions, but also to facilitate cooperation, partnership building, and social licence between governments, regional organizations, and civil society.

A key opportunity for joint programming was identified as a gap analysis effort to explore common interests among Asia and Pacific defence and foreign policy approaches around climate-security related outcomes. Doing so could build common and adaptable definitions, even at a sub-regional level, which could then be connected with mutual areas of interest across regions. This could contribute to, or be held in conjunction with, regional Climate Security Dialogues to build momentum for such conversations.

Additional recommendations to enhance the integration of climate security into defence and foreign policy included enhanced used of scenario planning to manage uncertainty challenges; developing a Common Operating Picture to develop operations, activities, and investments to manage climate-related security risks. More robust investments in science and technology, such as mapping tools, was also considered an effective solution. Reviewing defence strategy in disaster prone zones, enhancing the deployment of green technology in defence applications, and scaling up Official Development Assistance for adaptation across Asia and the Pacific. Lastly, leveraging existing multilateral efforts which have already established common redlines for engagement on climate and security – such as the Pact for the Future – was emphasized as an opportunity to capitalize on consensus-based discussions to date.

FOOD SECURITY AND SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION

The group examined how climate, peace, and security intersect through food and supply-chain security, framing food security as part of geoeconomics. The discussion stressed the importance of regional institutions mediating and managing shared food security disruption challenges; mapping which countries are closest to crisis; tailoring responses to local contexts; and pairing supply-chain needs with enhanced monitoring of supply disruptions, technology deployment, and funding.

Climate shocks that create water, food, and energy scarcities can trigger conflict and policy responses that ripple through markets. The 2007–08 crisis illustrated this: drought reduced India's wheat output, an export ban followed, world rice prices tripled, up to 200 million people became food insecure, and riots occurred in 60 countries before ASEAN and Japan released rice stocks. Recent crises in Sri Lanka (fertiliser ban amid economic turmoil leading to sharp productivity drops, widespread food insecurity, and regime change) and Bangladesh were cited as reminders that some countries are nearer a "cusp" of conflict based on food insecurity than others.

Challenges span unequal impacts across social groups, farmers' limited access to market information and technologies, entrenched practices (e.g., water-intensive crops), and food waste from overproduction. Policy cases in Egypt and Tunisia were noted.

On the governance side, it was noted that there is the potential for an international mediating body to help combat volatility in food prices, but global tools are limited. The FAO lacks authority over export bans; WTO early-warning requirements exist but compliance is difficult; and the G20's Agricultural Market Information System improves transparency but is voluntary. With many states turning inward during crises, regional approaches may be more practical than multilateral fixes.

Proposed approaches included: technology and practice changes (ASEAN guidelines; work by the Economic Institute for ASEAN and East Asia on optimising/adapting farming; linking "smart farming" to e-commerce so producers receive timely market signals); diversifying food sources; and, in South Asia, strengthening co-operatives over corporate concentration. Additional dynamics highlighted Gulf states' overseas land acquisitions to secure food, concerns about patent-driven monopolies marginalising smallholders, and the need for climate funding to underpin adaptation.

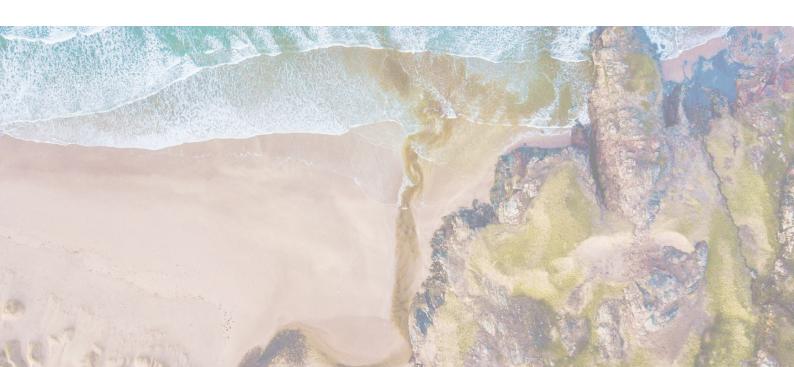## REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

The session focused on how regional cooperation can strengthen disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention, highlighting persistent challenges: the sheer scale of exposure, limited domestic capacity, the need to mobilise substantial resources, and the politicisation and strategic use of external aid that often aligns with donor, not community, priorities. The overarching tensions were that aid can undermine resilience even as it is essential; community agency must be upheld alongside external responsibility; donor strategic interests can distort needs; and the central task is defining 'good help' and building multilateral support that aligns with what local communities actually want.

Participants noted that post-disaster assistance can unintentionally erode traditional coping systems—such as food storage and kin-based relocation—creating dependency. They stressed the importance of grounding problem definitions locally (e.g., 'displacement' in places like Tuvalu may mean moving within extended family networks) and reframing from 'disaster risk reduction' to resilience-oriented, constructive language that communities understand and own. At the same time, they cautioned against shifting all responsibility to communities; 'good help' must avoid deepening dependency. Regionally, coordination mechanisms exist (e.g., a Pacific resources group and an operational deployment framework), but buy-in is uneven, and risk-reduction agendas can drift into response-mode thinking.

Geopolitical currents complicate cooperation. Australia's ongoing fossil-fuel developments and reliance on Paris rule-book flexibilities were contrasted with Pacific advocacy ahead of COP, creating both friction and leverage. There was acknowledgement that abrupt 'leave it in the ground' positions face domestic political limits, pushing some actors toward incremental approaches and coalition-building with Pacific partners.

Examples of joint initiatives underscored a strong regional ethos but also a need to unlearn imported paradigms. Pacific interlocutors noted there is no native term for 'vulnerability', yet communities are asked to 'reduce' it. Efforts such as 'Renewing Oceania' aim to re-root resilience education in local philosophy and ethics, moving beyond deficit frames. A 'both-and' approach was urged: governments should press for polluter responsibility and loss-and-damage support while recognising and resourcing existing community resilience. Practical frictions remain—donors prefer funding visible, centralised assets (e.g., a capital-city hospital) over dispersed community facilities; communities often self-organise health and relief while waiting months for formal aid. A World Bank "jobs for nature" program illustrated design pitfalls: individual cash incentives crowded out customary, community-led mangrove work and the scheme was ultimately withdrawn.

Proposed ways forward included re-educating and training policymakers (with resourcing from the loss-and-damage fund), backing local facilitators to share context-specific knowledge (e.g., crop diversity), and reducing reliance on imported expertise by targeting high-risk communities with appropriately scaled support. Ideas such as exchanges between First Nations in Australia and Pacific communities and locally run citizen assemblies could help reconcile diverse community and government priorities, provided they fit cultural decision-making processes and are properly resourced.

Day 2 │ Geopolitical panel: Strategic cooperation on climate security in the Indo-Pacific

The opening discussion on the second day of the workshop focused on the role of geopolitics in shaping responses to climate and security across Asia and the Pacific. This included discussions on how climate impacts are shaping regional geopolitics, and the leadership role for constructive middle powers; the impact of great power competition on the potential for climate-focused cooperation in the region; and existing platforms for regional cooperation on climate risks to security.

The panel began by underscoring that meaningful engagement and coordination on resilience depends on mutually understanding how climate change is framed across national and regional interests. Australia's approach to the Pacific as an arena for great power competition, which climate impacts may complicate, was contrasted with that of Pacific Island countries focus on climate impacts as the referent source of risk. This distinction plays out with Australia attempting to balance its interests in being seen as a partner with the Pacific's security interests at heart, while sustaining fossil fuel development and exports.

Comparative approaches underscored this divergence: in Germany and Sweden, climate security sits in foreign affairs; France focuses on managing risks in Africa and other regions; New Zealand focuses on disaster relief as part of Defence's social licence (and reducing emissions from defence-related activity). The African Union's efforts to reach a common understanding of climate, peace, and security (rooted in human security) was demonstrated as a constructive example in building a common and united position from which to coordinate and advocate for clear policy and program interests with external partners like the EU. This helped underscore that no singular definition of climate and security is needed, just clear understanding between partners.

The opportunity for Australia to co-host COP31 with the Pacific was noted as a potential catalyst for deeper and more meaningful engagement.

Viewing climate and security through the lens of great-power competition was further explored. It was noted that if competition is approached as a zero-sum game, linking climate with security can heighten mistrust and limit cooperation. It was argued, however, that strategic mistrust driven by great power competition can also drive what was termed in discussion as 'mutually assured resilience', considered in discussion as public investments that are calibrated to ensure shared resilience during and after disasters. The example of preparing for inevitable rice shortages was shared in this context, which would be to the interest of every actor to avoid given the potential for humanitarian crises and consequential disruptions to regional security.

From this perspective, the notion of decoupling between competitors like China and the US was challenged in favour of 'de-risking', in order to identify partnerships among competitors for collaboration that contribute to collective resilience.

Mechanisms to enhance cooperation were also explored. Discussions turned to the important role that minilateral fora (e.g. PIF, ASEAN, Quad) can play in bypassing obstructions to discussion and progress present in multilateral institutions, particularly through track 1.5 and 2 dialogues that can build cooperation and mutual understanding, and 'back room' support.

The panel then picked up on opportunities to support and engage on Pacific-led initiatives, including the Boe Declaration, and the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility. The revised Action Plan for the Boe Declaration was noted as a particularly critical opportunity to engage, inform, and provide input on programmatic opportunities in the Pacific. Priorities for Pacific programming were noted, including enhanced risk assessments (who is at risk and how will they respond); technologies and partners to address risks; financing and resources to implement programs; and opportunities for learning. Opportunities for South-South cooperation on climate change to advance mutual understanding were emphasized (e.g. Fiji and Bangladesh on urban migration).

An important note was raised on the importance of advancing the development of mechanisms to address the security risks posed by climate change with more coordination and awareness among partners. This was particularly noted in the context of the Pacific having often led initiatives, while partners develop their own for intervention in the Pacific, which creates a negative perception among Pacific Island countries of such partners. Geopolitical pressure was seen as a complicated framing for climate security, where Pacific countries can in some cases leverage external competition for strategic financial interests in the Pacific, but in other cases can complicate cooperation by layering hard security dynamics that some countries reject (e.g. the Pacific Response Group).

An important conversation was held on approaching climate and security as an explicit area of focus, and on concerns regarding securitization of climate responses. Evidence was raised that even for countries who have securitized climate change where defence institutions are the main bodies for action, policy responses have not driven negative outcomes for human security – but rather, increased resources and efforts have helped reduce emissions from defence operations. The discussion on securitization was also linked to where climate and security sits among philosophies of resilience and a spectrum from human, cultural, ecological, national, and geopolitical security.

The ideological pushback against climate change as an area of activity was noted to challenge the institutional moment and longevity of programs designed to reduce climate-related risk. From that standpoint, it was suggested that it is best to build in longevity around neutral goals that are relevant to climate security outcomes (e.g. disaster preparedness, energy security) with institutions and individuals capable of translating findings back to climate security as a concept to highlight opportunities and gaps. NATO's growing interest in climate change has persisted despite major geopolitical events like the war in Ukraine, because as an institution it grasps how climate impacts will affect its focus on security for the alliance.

Interactive workshops: Designing joint programming & roadmaps for action

The remainder of the workshop focused on developing joint programming initiatives that could be developed and presented to policymakers as roadmaps for action. This split the workshop into three groups, which independently discussed opportunities and returned to summarize and discuss initiatives in plenary. The results of those discussions are summarized below across each group.

FOOD SECURITY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

A clear program for action was identified in this session, namely to coordinate activities and priorities across Asia and the Pacific that could drive towards a joint declaration of support in managing the food security-related risks driven by climate change, ahead of COP31.

Food security was selected as a theme for coordinated action because it is a core issue across Asia and the Pacific. This was seen as a way to help simplify and streamline messaging around climate, peace, and security into existing frameworks that can help promote connectivity, scaleability, and inclusion of the policy space in the region (including for related priorities like the Women, Peace, and Security agenda).

Activities to advance this would include:

- building opportunities for knowledge exchange through Australia, ASEAN, and the Pacific Island Forum;
- a mapping of capabilities of roles in who the key actors to respond to food security are across regions;
- case studies, and research supported through funding, and scholarships, potentially including academic journals (e.g. special edition, or a new journal);
- foresight exercises, and capacity building on climate, peace, and security research methodologies to advance thinking and policy preparation;
- exploring the integration of food security into National Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans; and
- exchanges between First Nations communities and Pacific Islanders with an intergenerational and youth lens.

Outcomes and mechanisms for these activities would include a drive towards publications and research on food security for Asia and the Pacific that could be reflected in key knowledge products (e.g. IPC reports); reflect the local realities of food security in policy; and build clarity on the intersection between food security and security framings.

It was noted that a critical means for this work to be advanced wouldbe strong networks and communities of practice, which can help facilitate sustained engagement and activity within and across regions (including through Track 1.5/2 discussions). The Climate Security Expert Network was identified as an over-arching vehicle which could help drive and inform discussion on these issues.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TO SUPPORT PACIFIC CLIMATE, PEACE, AND SECURITY DIALOGUE

The session focused on initiatives to grow the community of practice and partners on climate and security, emphasizing the need for consultative dialogue processes that to identify priorities within and across regions through learning and reflection.

The primary recommendations of this group was to establish a Community of Practice on climate and security under the Pacific Resilience Partnership, as a technical working group aligned with the Boe Partnership and contributing to the 'Ocean of Peace' vision. The community would convene multidisciplinary technical experts from all 18 Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) countries, as an organizing body to facilitate climate-related activities, and advance working groups on technical issues (e.g. mobility, food security). Potential projects were discussed, including a systems mapping exercise to identify how climate-related issues cluster, with a geographic focus decided by the community of practice.

Through stakeholder mapping, the community of practice could then be leveraged to engage with external partners (e.g. China and India) and relevant institutions (e.g. government, security actors, civil society organizations, regional institutions, media), to support dialogue on areas of common interest on climate resilience. It was noted the framing, nature of conversations, and focus would need to be managed among all potential partners – particularly around concerns related to great power competition – but that this could help expand greater awareness and knowledge on climate resilience and adaptation responses that many partners will be needed to support and resource. Existing regional discussions and other minilateral fora, including ASEAN's humanitarian assistance efforts, and the trilateral format held between Indonesia, India, and Australia, could also be leveraged to advance conversations on common climate issues of concern.

To advance the community of practice's longevity, it was noted that a secretariat would need to be resourced and formed to sustain its activities. Initial resourcing for the secretariat, and PIF country members, was considered a modest investment that could be resourced either from supportive non-governmental research institutions, philanthropic organizations, multilateral institutions, or regional governments. The discussion focused on aiming for the community to be established before the end of 2025 in order to help inform the Boe Declaration action plan, with the aim for the community to be endorsed by Pacific institutions, and help drive discussions in the lead-up to COP31 in late 2026.

STRENGTHENING SUB-REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE, PEACE, AND SECURITY

This session recommended strengthening sub-regional engagement on climate, peace, and security across Asia and the Pacific as an alternative to a cross-regional framework, by identifying sub-regional strengths and gaps to avoid one-size-fits-all designs.

The activities associated with this involve defining an umbrella of existing sub-regional fora with networks of technical experts to build dialogue and coordination; encouraging these networks to collaborate by mapping sub-regional strengths and weaknesses on climate, peace, and security programming; prioritise discussions on shared, high-traction themes (food, oceans, mobility, financing, gender) that can deliver practical outcomes; build learning networks that can transfer expertise and knowledge; and align timelines to milestones of building momentum for and launching these activities, such as the upcoming Boe Declaration action plan's reset in late 2025, and COP31 in late 2026.

This would help both enhance coordination across Asia and the Pacific, and communicate sub-regional interests to facilitate expanded engagement with other sub-regional fora advancing climate, peace, and security programs globally (e.g. the African Union). It would also help build support for approaches to climate, peace, and security that are better understood within and between partners across Asia and the Pacific.

This was envisioned as advancing mechanisms for cooperation (e.g. engagement across communities of practice and networks, Track 1.5/2 discussions) between the Pacific Island Forum, ASEAN, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. This could help build cooperation and coordination across regions on issues of mutual concern that affect regions across Asia and the Pacific, while also 'leveling up' the capacity and interests of different regional organizations from those with greater involvement (e.g. PIF).

Common core interests, and experiences in adaptation, that appeared as likely opportunities for discussion included food security, maritime security, climate mobility, coastal and marine management, accessing climate financing, and gendered dimensions of climate impacts. The discussions emphasized that the focus of these networks should remain focused on regional cooperation where it works, but locally-driven implementation and finances – acknowledging that what works in one region will not necessarily work in all (e.g. Pacific to Southeast Asia, or vice versa).

Potential activities and outputs would including mapping strengths and gaps in addressing climate and security (including how climate and security is framed), identifying opportunities to learn across regional fora from what each does best, and create opportunities for dialogue and knowledge transfer on policy responses to common climate risks. Rather than framing conversations exclusively in terms of climate, peace, and security, these efforts would focusing on embedding a common core understanding of climate and security across institutions.

By ensuring these networks are tied to, and have opportunities to inform government representatives, the knowledge transfer and policy development outputs from these activities will be more likely to inform the direction of sub-regional climate resilience priorities. Embedding women leaders through intensive placements or training was also highlighted as a catalyst for cultural understanding and sustained uptake.

Governance options centred on using minilateral fora as anchors for engagement while keeping participation open and inclusive, including external partners. COP31 was flagged as a potential rallying point to build momentum and launch tracks of collaboration, potentially backed by partners such as UNDP and ADB. The basis for these networks, and sub-regional priorities, should be built from existing centres (e.g., SPREP and other climate/indigenous knowledge hubs; ASEAN's climate bodies), while additional partners can then be identified to help fill gaps in knowledge and networks.

Closing remarks

A closing discussion of the workshop was held, which emphasized the need to recognize diversity of the regions within Asia and the Pacific. By honing in on sub-regions, policy research and priorities can be tailored to distinct needs and institutions, but then also brought back together at a higher-level of framing for cross-regional collaboration.

The diversity of needs and perspectives across Asia and the Pacific also highlighted the need to engage diverse ways of thinking, including philosophies of resilience and relationality. This was brought back to the importance of advancing south-south cooperation on climate change, as well as the impacts of climate change and climate policies on culture and spirituality.

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