



**OUR GENERATION'S OPPORTUNITY  
TO ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION IN CONFLICT**

**DOUG WEIR**

**TOXIC REMNANTS OF WAR PROJECT**

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OF WAR PROJECT



Research project exploring the humanitarian impact of environmental damage resulting from conflict and military activities.

Aims to engage CSOs from the environment, humanitarian disarmament, human rights and public health.

Seeks to contribute to the debate over strengthening the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts.

Established 2012.

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Article36



Civil society network working to reduce the humanitarian and environmental impact of pollution generated by conflict and military activities.

The Network supports the development of a stronger standard of environmental and civilian protection before, during and after armed conflict.

Established 2015.









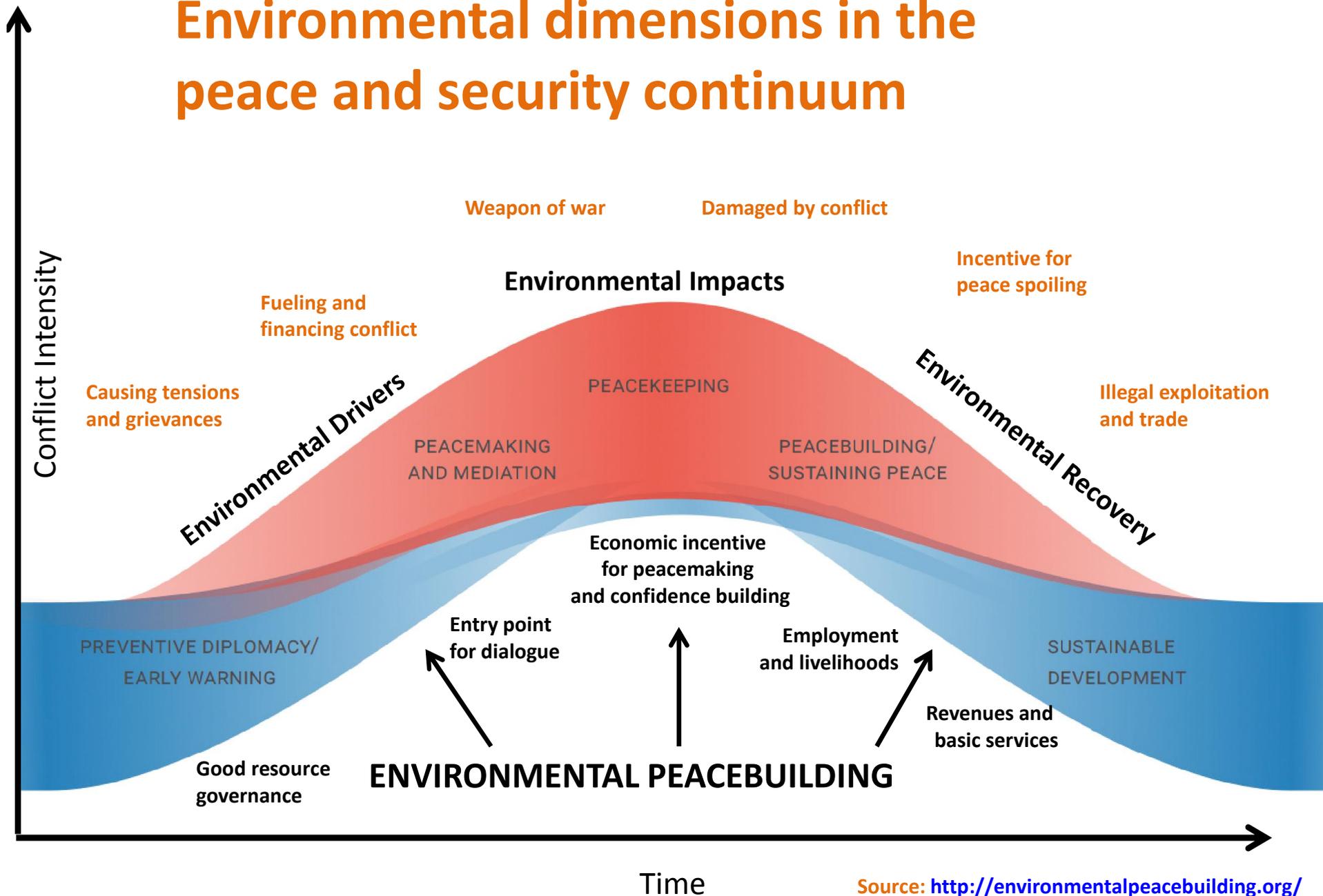
## Pathways for direct environmental damage

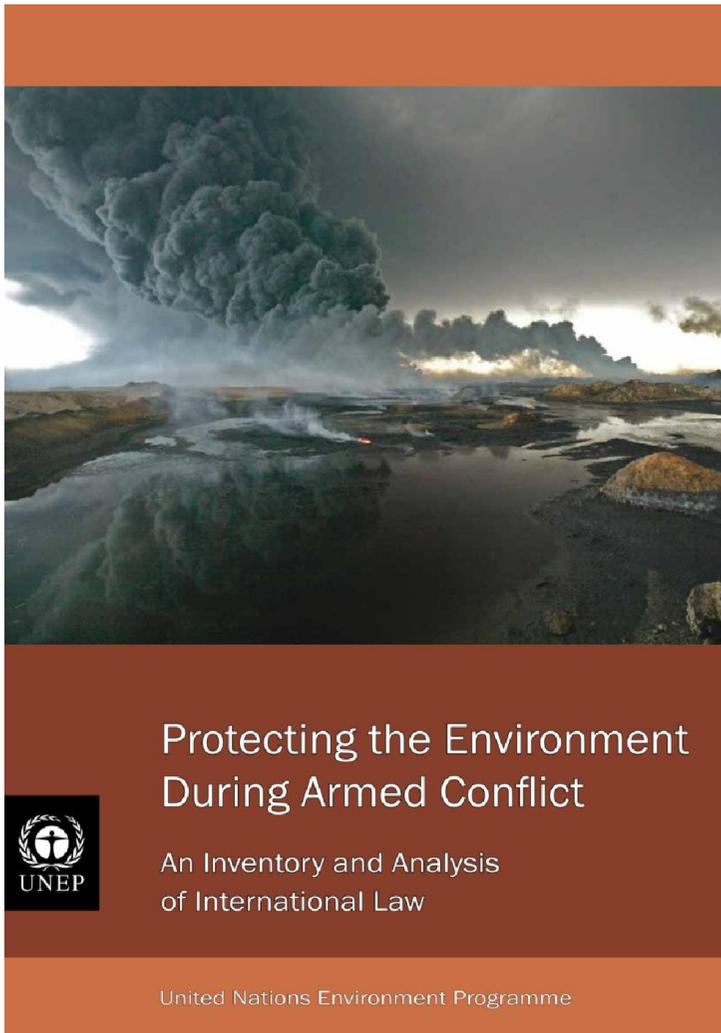
- Toxic hazards from damaged industrial sites and urban infrastructure.
- The legacy of weapons' use.
- Human displacement.
- The use of extractive industries to fund conflict.
- The loss of water supply, sanitation, and waste disposal infrastructure.
- Direct targeting of natural resources i.e. scorched-earth tactics.

## Pathways for indirect environmental damage

- Conflict and the loss of economic opportunity may compel affected populations to engage in unsustainable coping mechanisms or survival strategies.
- Disruption to state and local institutions undermines the enforcement of laws and the protection of resource rights, leading to poor resource governance.

# Environmental dimensions in the peace and security continuum





## Potential sources of law protecting the environment in relation to armed conflict

- International Humanitarian Law
- International Criminal Law
- International Environmental Law
- International Human Rights Law
- International Security Law
- 2009 report initiated long-overdue discourse on how protection could be increased...

## 2011 ICRC report on strengthening legal protection for the victims of armed conflicts

*“The protection of the natural environment has gained increasing prominence in the last few decades... As a result of this awareness, international environmental law has expanded considerably.*

*“At the same time, the protection of the environment has also come to be seen as important during armed conflicts, including non-international conflicts. However, the clarification and development of international humanitarian law for the protection of the environment has lagged behind.*

*“The ICRC is of the opinion that international humanitarian law in this area should be made more explicit and developed to safeguard the well-being and livelihood of present and future generations.”*



## International Law Commission study on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts (PERAC)

- ILC is mandated by the UN to undertake the progressive development of international law.
- Reports published between 2014-16 consider law before, during and after conflicts.
- Setting legal agenda and forcing states to engage.



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY:  
**PARLIAMENT OF  
THE ENVIRONMENT**  
**#UNEA2**

**WHAT IS UNEA?**

-  **Parliament of the environment**
-  First global platform after the adoption of the **#2030Agenda** for Sustainable Development and **#COP21**
-  Sets **UNEP's** agenda

**WHY UNEA?**

Platform for leadership on global environmental policy to:

-  Build a **sustainable future**
-  Protect the **environment**
-  Safeguard **human health**

## 2016 UN Environment Assembly resolution

- Most significant UN resolution on the topic since 1992.
- Ukraine, co-sponsored by Jordan, the DRC, Iraq, South Sudan, Norway, Lebanon, Canada and the EU.
- Hybrid humanitarian/environmental approach.
- States urged to minimise and mitigate harm.

## Parallel initiatives

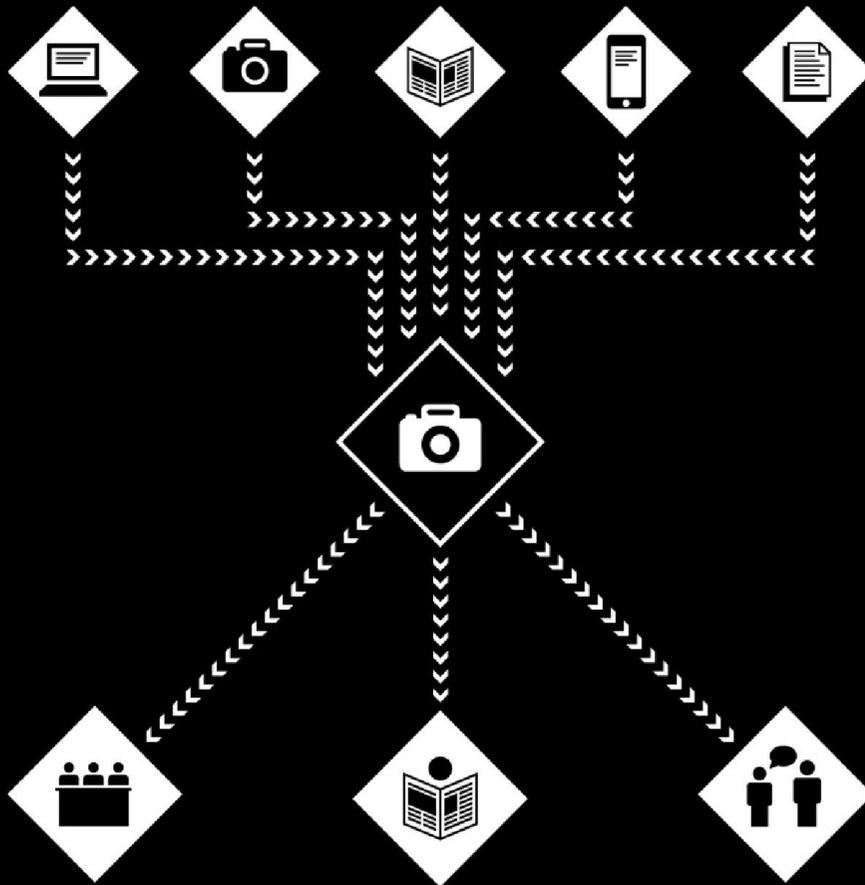
- The ICRC is updating its guidelines for militaries and has called for better ways to address the short and long-term impacts, and for preventative measures.
- The ILC process will continue to consider the draft principles and other relevant areas of law.
- The International Criminal Court has announced that it will increasingly focus on environmental crimes.
- Governments are now engaging and more work can be expected in the UN Environment Assembly and beyond.
- Good things are now in motion but can they be sustained?

## A role for us

- Progress will not happen without civil society engagement.
- Unfortunately, the environment is a cross-cutting issue.
- Fortunately, the environment is a cross-cutting issue.
- Public health? Conservation? Human rights? Humanitarian response? Development? Gender? Environment?
- We failed in the 1970s because we didn't know enough or care enough.
- We failed in the 1990s because we lost interest when the fires went out and left it to the military lawyers.
- Our generation doesn't have to repeat these mistakes.



# Thank you



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