



Resolution 1851 (2011)¹

Final version

Armed conflicts and the environment

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes with concern that armed conflicts have disastrous consequences for the environment: destruction of infrastructure, pollution of water supplies, poisoning of soil and fields, destruction of crops and forests.
2. Natural resources can in themselves be a source of conflict when they are a main target of military operations.
3. The Assembly also notes that conflicts lead to the over-exploitation of natural resources, engendering food shortages, deforestation, soil erosion and the disappearance of wildlife.
4. Moreover, environmental damage is often more serious at the end of the conflict, when the population returns and the country is reconstructed. The return of refugees leads to the over-exploitation of resources to meet their food and energy needs, but also to high economic, social and political costs.
5. In this context, the Assembly recalls its Recommendation 1495 (2001) on the environmental impact of the war in Yugoslavia on South-East Europe, in which it clearly stated: "As was the case for operations in Bosnia and Chechnya, states involved in these operations disregarded the international rules set out in Articles 55 and 56 of Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 intended to limit environmental damage in armed conflict."
6. The Assembly regrets that the natural environment is not defined in Article 52 of Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.
7. In this connection, the Assembly deplores that despite the various existing international texts such as the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (the ENMOD Convention), which came into force in 1978 and is regarded as the leading reference text on environmental protection during armed conflicts, and the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 prohibiting the use of ecological warfare, armed conflicts unquestionably still have adverse effects on the environment which may persist for years or decades.
8. The Assembly urges the governments of Council of Europe member and observer states to comply scrupulously with the legal instruments on the relationship between armed conflicts and the environment and to organise awareness-raising programmes aimed in particular at those in charge of military planning.
9. The Assembly is convinced that greater international environmental accountability, coupled with the enforcement of international legislation on war crimes and human rights violations, could prevent any future armed conflicts.
10. The Assembly also considers that the international and humanitarian organisations which are directly involved in post-conflict management have an important role to play in environmental assessments. Devising strategies to deal with population movements, emergency planning and setting up refugee camps would help them pinpoint rapid solutions acceptable in both social and environmental terms.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 25 November 2011 (see [Doc. 12774](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr R. Huseynov).



11. The Assembly stresses the important role of the media in drawing public attention to the environmental impact of armed conflicts.
12. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly recommends that member and non-member states of the Council of Europe:
 - 12.1. ensure the training of civilian and military personnel and general staff in environmental issues in times of armed conflict;
 - 12.2. implement the 1994 Red Cross Guidelines for Military Manuals and Instructions on the Protection of the Environment in Times of Armed Conflict in national military training programmes;
 - 12.3. promote an exchange of information among Council of Europe member states on environmental management in periods of armed conflict and the harmonisation of existing legislation on this subject;
 - 12.4. appoint a “sustainable development” correspondent within the European Defence Agency;
 - 12.5. relaunch the ENMOD Convention in order to restrict military climate control programmes;
 - 12.6. integrate ecodesign into arms programmes;
 - 12.7. assess the risks to the environment posed by military exercises, such as noise and threats to wildlife;
 - 12.8. encourage humanitarian organisations to undertake pre-conflict environmental assessments where possible, in order to improve the humanitarian planning of conflicts and, in particular, the siting of refugee camps;
 - 12.9. release funds so that international organisations, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) can carry out pre-conflict environmental assessments;
 - 12.10. ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions which entered into force on 1 August 2010 and encourage partner states such as Israel and Afghanistan to do the same;
 - 12.11. support the drafting of a treaty to ban phosphorous weapons.
13. The Assembly calls on the parliaments of member states to take the lead and introduce legislative measures on the environment, particularly during armed conflicts, paying special attention to the issue of ecological crime.