

About the Conflict and Environment Observatory

CEOBS provides a voice for our environment — and those who depend upon it — when it faces harm from armed conflicts and military activities.

Healthy environments and functioning ecosystems underpin human health, wellbeing and livelihoods but can be harmed or disrupted by armed conflicts. This can accelerate biodiversity loss, pollution and land degradation, and exacerbate the environmental impacts of the climate crisis.

Mapping environmental harm

Wars are often when the environment is least protected and cared for. By making the environmental impacts of conflicts more visible through our activities, we make it more likely that the environment will be protected, assessed or restored, and that people affected by any damage will be helped. At CEOBS, we use a range of different tools to map and assess damage, including satellite remote sensing, open-source intelligence and novel data collection methods. We work closely with a wide range of academic partners to help encourage and support research, and to engage future researchers. Through collaboration with the media we help these stories reach wider audiences, and through working with legal experts, we explore how those responsible for harm can be held accountable.

Taking the long view

The environmental impact of conflicts is not limited to wartime, and neither is our work. For example, everyday military activity is responsible for an estimated 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and so we coordinate a diverse network of campaigners and researchers working to understand and tackle this huge contribution to the climate crisis. Additionally, clearing the landmines and other explosive ordnance left by wars can have negative impacts on the environment. We work closely with the humanitarian mine action sector to help minimise these impacts, and to promote actions that build climate resilience and environmental restoration for affected communities.

Making change

Our research underpins our advocacy in international policy spaces. We work to highlight the environmental costs of conflicts in processes on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, whilst advocating for greater attention on the environment in those discussing humanitarian disarmament, peace and security. We amplify our impact through collaborative partnerships with local and international civil society organisations and with governments, and by catalysing new ideas, initiatives and relationships.

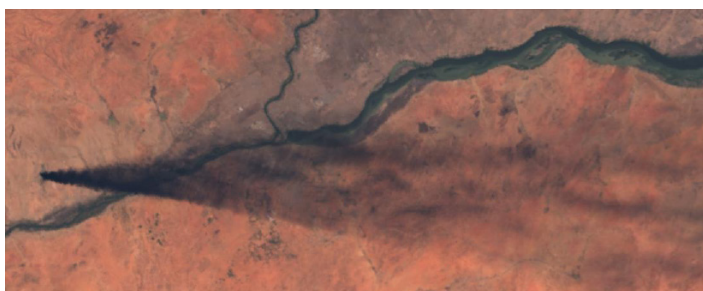
Recognition of our work

Launched in 2018, CEOBS has been recognised as a thought leader in monitoring and communicating harm. Our specialist research informs the work of organisations such as the UN Environment Programme, UN Development Programme and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe.

A UK charity in Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council, we are also accredited to the UN Environment Assembly and have observer status at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Support for our activities comes from a range of sources, including grants, consultancies, and public fundraising.

Examples of our impact

Through mapping environmental harm



- Gathered and shared remote assessment data on thousands of environmentally harmful incidents in Ukraine and Sudan.
- Documented environmental harm in Gaza, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Sudan, Tigray and Yemen.
- Helped develop the role of environmental citizen science in conflict-affected areas.
- Established the Conflict and Environment Academic Network to encourage research.

Through advocacy



- Helped Ukraine negotiate a UN resolution establishing guidance for monitoring wartime environmental harm.
- Contributed to hundreds of media stories on conflict and the environment.
- Dedicated years to strengthening the legal framework protecting the environment in relation to armed conflicts.
- Spoken out at UN meetings and regional and national parliaments.

On humanitarian mine action



- Established and co-chair the Environmental Issues and Mine Action working group.
- Successfully advocated for the environment to be included in the Action Plan to implement the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.
- Helped update the International Mine Action Standard and draft the Technical Note on environmental management in mine action.
- Developed an environmental screening tool and open-source data platform to help address risks linked to mine action.

On military and conflict emissions



- Estimated the military's 5.5% contribution to global emissions, now cited by media, civil society, governments *and* by militaries.
- Organised events on military and conflict emissions at climate COPs.
- Established and coordinate a network of experts on military and conflict emissions, aligning research and advocacy for greater influence.
- Helped Palestine argue the climate cost of occupation at the International Court of Justice.