



CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICTS

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change is not located in the future; it is happening now. At the current rate, we will reach the critical 1.5 degree limit set by world governments in a couple of decades. Unless we act quickly, the global average temperature will rise by 3-4 degrees by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times. This would jeopardise the whole of human civilisation.

Climate change mitigation is the most important issue for young people for them to be able to live well in Finland in 2050. Young people see climate change as the most important point of change in terms of the future, and their concerns about it have increased dramatically. Unfortunately, only six percent of young people believe that climate change mitigation will succeed. A third of young people feel that they aren't heard on key issues concerning their future, such as the climate issue.

Climate change has an obvious link to intergenerational conflict: the younger generations feel that the generations that are causing the problem do nowhere near enough to curb climate change, even though they have the power to make major decisions. Another major conflict is between the so-called global North and the South: the countries that produce the least emissions are the hardest hit by climate change. At the same time, those who are actually responsible are the least affected.

Climate change has an impact on societies in many ways. Countries that are currently experiencing the worst effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events, are often states that are prone to conflict or are otherwise fragile. Climate change is seen as a potential accelerator of conflict. It is a factor that can exacerbate the tensions existing beneath the surface of society. Climate change must therefore be taken into account as an important and growing factor in international peace and security. Dialogue and adaptation are needed to prevent climate change leading to violent conflicts.

The exercises in this package tackle the relationship between climate change and conflict at different levels. The point is to respond to the concerns of young people and the questions they face about the relationship between climate change and conflict, while at the same time inspiring them to take action. Martti Ahtisaari has said of conflicts: "What people have started, people can end." The same goes for climate change.