



# SMC Environment, Climate and Resilience

Joint Action Plan 2023-2026



# SMC Environment, Climate and Resilience - Joint Action Plan

## 1. Introduction to the SMC view on environment, climate and resilience

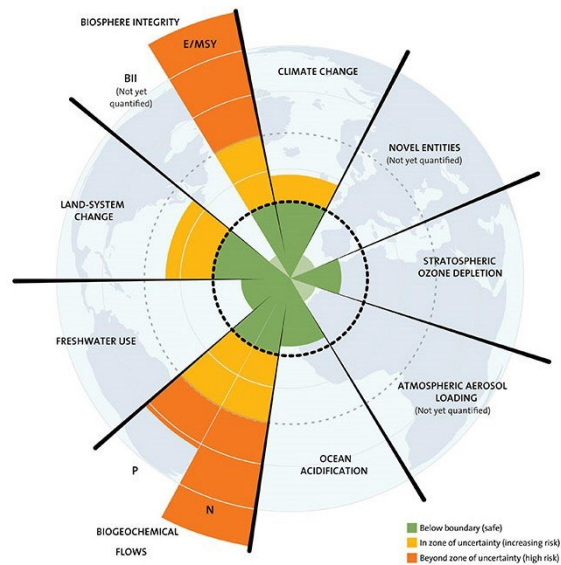
To explain SMC's view on the challenges we face and how SMC intends to work during the strategy period 2022–2026, this can be summarized in the following bullet-points:

- About the world
- SMC's view
- Approach
- International agreements
- The SMC Actor Goals for the strategy period 2022-2026

### 1.1 About the world

Climate emergency prevails and the world is facing a sixth mass extinction of a large number of animal species. This is not just an alarmist view, but in reality a very alarming situation, and the research community agrees. The world's average temperature has been moving steadily upwards for the last quarter of a century, due to human activity. At the UN climate meeting in Paris in 2015, most world leaders have agreed to limit the increase in the Earth's average temperature to 1.5°C. Emissions of greenhouse gases have, however, continued to increase since the meeting. And human exploitation of habitats has caused a 70% decline in the number of vertebrates since the 1970s.

The planetary boundaries concept presents a set of nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come. The most exceeded planetary boundary is biological diversity, species are becoming extinct at an unnaturally high rate, because of human activity. Global warming ranks only third among our exceeded planetary boundaries, but receives the most attention of the planetary boundaries.



SMC's member organisations support activities that are carried out in a world increasingly affected by climate change. This, in combination with the greatly reduced biological diversity, makes nature vulnerable and limits the possibility of recovery for damaged ecosystems and effects people's livelihoods.

## 1.2 SMC's view

SMC's view of environmental and climate issues takes its starting point in God as the creator of the world and mankind. Each individual is created in God's image and together we have the task of taking responsibility for each other and for the world we live in. The vision for our work is a world in harmony between God and people, with each other and with creation. The whole of creation is interwoven into the same fabric of life and humans are called to cultivate and nurture it with love and care.

## 1.3 Approach

SMC and the entire network of civil society actors in Sweden and the world thus need to act in a way that the vision of a creation in harmony can be realized. SMC therefore needs, together with member organisations and partners, to integrate a climate and environmental perspective for the sustainable use of natural resources in all development cooperation. We strive to support a development towards resilient organisations, societies and individuals and base our commitment during 2022-2026 on the Resilience Initiative that SMC carried out together with member organisations and partners during the strategy period 2017-2021.

To contribute to a trustworthy climate and environmental work internationally and in our partner countries, at both national and local level, it is important to have an active and self-critical approach to our own use of natural resources. Therefore, SMC strives to include an environmental and climate perspective in all our Swedish-based work as well.

## 1.4 International agreements

Sweden is connected to around forty international environmental conventions formulated to protect our common environment and manage nature's resources. These form an important basis for long-term joint environmental and climate work where actors at all levels can contribute. Here, churches and other faith based organisations have important advocacy work to do. SMC also links to these international agreements in our environmental and climate work.

In 2022, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a new resolution; "The right to a healthy environment". This decision strengthens the link between climate, unsustainable management of natural resources and human rights. The resolution has the potential to strengthen climate legislation and offer support to, among other things, indigenous peoples who previously had few opportunities to defend jointly managed lands and other natural resources.

The Paris Agreement from 2015 is part of the UN Climate Convention. Basically, all the world's countries have signed the agreement, which includes an ambition to keep global warming well below 2-degrees and strive to limit it to 1.5-degree. At the UN climate meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh in 2022, it was decided that the objective remains to keep the 1.5-degree target alive. The conference also decided on a new fund for financing damages and losses caused by climate change. This can be seen as a breakthrough for climate justice for the countries hit hard by the climate crisis. How the fund will be financed is not yet clear.

Furthermore, in December 2022, a new Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted at the UN Biodiversity Conference, CBD COP 15, in Canada. The new global framework contains goals that are expected to contribute both to reversing the negative trend for biodiversity and to stopping the extinction of animals and plants. The main goal of the agreement is that 30 percent of the planet's surface should be protected by 2030. The rights of indigenous and local communities have also been strengthened through the agreement.

At the upcoming CBD COP 16 in November 2024, all member states must present National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, revised, or updated, in line with the framework. These strategies and plans are the main tool for implementing the framework, including national targets communicated in a standardized format.

In 2022-2023, a Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in 2015, is being conducted. In May 2022 SMC and some member organisations and partners participated at the Global Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction, organised by the United Nations Organisation for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), to take part in the midterm review and advocate for localisation of the framework.

## 1.5 The SMC Actor goals for the Strategy period 2022-2026

SMC has decided that during the strategy period for 2022-2026, work more focused on three prioritised areas. One of these areas is environment, climate and resilience where the objective for the period is:

*"A vital and resilient civil society that actively contributes to a green transition to secure sustainable societies also for future generations in line with international commitments and our mission to manage God's creation."*

SMC has concretized this overall goal through three actor goals.

### 1. Member Organisations and Cooperating Partner

As active influencing and development actors, our member organisations and their partners contribute to sustainable social and supply systems. Through green conversion work, they also contribute to an improved environment, reduced climate impact, increased biological diversity and resilient societies.

### 2. Decision makers and officials in Sweden

Decision-makers in government and the Parliament and officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sida consider the policy recommendations that we put forward, together with various civil society actors and networks. Our purpose is to contribute to a green transition with sustainable social and livelihood systems that protect the environment, the climate and biodiversity and strengthen the resilience of local communities.

### 3. Decision makers and officials internationally

Decision-makers and officials at the international level consider the policy recommendations that we put forward together with various civil society actors and networks. Our purpose is to contribute to a green transition with sustainable social and livelihood systems that protect the environment, the climate and biodiversity and strengthen the resilience of local communities.

[Link to the "SMC Strategy" - Prioritised Areas p. 12](#)

## 2. The SMC Environment, Climate and Resilience - Joint Action Plan

SMC achieves these goals through:

- Advocacy through cooperation in networks
- Capacity development and exchange of experience
- Integration of perspectives on environment, climate and resilience within the SMC/Sida-funded program activities, as well as support for special Environment-Climate-Resilience operations.

Below is a description on how these three parts work.

### 2.1 Advocacy through cooperation in networks

In its advocacy work, SMC focuses on the implementation of the following commitments at global, national and local level:

- The Paris Agreement within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),
- The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) within the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

SMC works for increased network cooperation at national and local level in the various partner countries in terms of advocacy and knowledge exchange. A main idea is to connect the global agendas with the local reality and to work for so-called "rooted advocacy".

Within advocacy work, SMC has a special task in highlighting the role of religious actors in addressing the triple crisis (climate, biodiversity and emissions) we are facing. Climate, environment and resilience are also important areas where SMC has a particularly good opportunity to find new and constructive examples to show the need for religious literacy, among all types of actors. We can contribute with an understanding that the crises are not only economic, technical, or social, but also moral and spiritual. Religious actors bring material and social resources but also a narrative, moral and spiritual capital. Religious literacy provides a holistic view of the triple crisis. The work with environment, climate and resilience thus offers an arena for explaining the need for religious literacy as an integral part of our advocacy work. We also need internally, within SMC's network, to work on our own "bilingualism", i.e. our ability to simultaneously speak a theological language and a rights-based language, so that our work together with religious actors becomes visible.

## Paris Climate Agreement

SMC is an active member of CONCORD Sweden's working group for environment and climate justice, which carries out advocacy work, mainly in connection with the annual climate summits (COP) organised by UNFCCC. SMC encourages its member organisations to also participate in CONCORD's working group and work together to develop common positions. SMC works for increased and coordinated participation among SMC's member organisations and its partners at the annual climate summits, digitally or physically.



Regarding **faith-based networks**, SMC mainly, in Sweden, on Knowledge Forum for Religion and Development, being a co-operation of ACT Church of Sweden, Diakonia, Islamic Relief, Sweden and PMU. On the international level SMC seeks co-operation with UNEP - Faith for Earth and the We care workstream within PaRD (International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development).

**Important themes** include children's and young people's participation, Right to a healthy and safe environment and climate, Principles for locally-led adaptation, Loss and Damage, and Carbon Neutrality, as well as the importance and unique contributions of faith-based actors in meeting the climate crisis.

## The Convention on Biological Diversity

SMC is an active member of CONCORD's working group for environmental and climate justice, which carries out joint advocacy work, mainly in connection with the recurring global CBD COP organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. SMC encourages member organisations to also participate in CONCORD's working group working together to develop common positions. We work for a coordinated participation among SMC's member organisations and its partners in the regular global meetings for follow-up of the Global Biodiversity Framework, digitally or physically.



For biodiversity, SMC collaborates with the same **faith-based networks** as for the implementation of the Paris Agenda.

**The central issue** in 2023 and 2024 is to raise awareness and build capacity among member and partner organisations to engage in advocacy and support the development of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, ahead of the upcoming summit in November 2024.

**Important themes** include Creation Care, Ecosystem restoration, Eco-based solutions, Food Security (No Hunger), Agroecology and Food Sovereignty.

## Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030

SMC is an active member of the Swedish Resilience Network and a part of its Advocacy working group. SMC is also an active member of GNDR and our representative is currently the GNDR National Focal Point in Sweden. Position papers and statements are developed within the network and together with GNDR. SMC works for coordinated digital or physical participation among SMC's member organisations and its partners at the next Global Platform for DRR in Geneva in May 2025.



Regarding **faith-based networks**, SMC collaborates with Tearfund and the other faith-based organisations that endorse previous statements from faith-based organisations in relation to the Sendai framework (FBO joint statements at the Global Platform for DRR 2019 and 2022).

**Important themes** are Strengthen the collaboration, solidarity and mobilization of civil society organisations, Champion a localization moment, and Strive for risk informed development, in line with the GNDR's strategy 2020-2025. Principles for locally-led-adaptation, Loss and damage and Nature based solutions (NbS) are also key themes.

The Sustainable Development Goals SMC's thematic focus on environment, climate and resilience mainly relates to the goals that deal with our biosphere, i.e. goals 6, 13, 14 and 15 which are the basis for a sustainable society and a sustainable economy. Goal 2 No hunger is also important, where the prerequisite for food production is a sustainable natural environment.



## 2.2 Capacity development and exchange of experiences

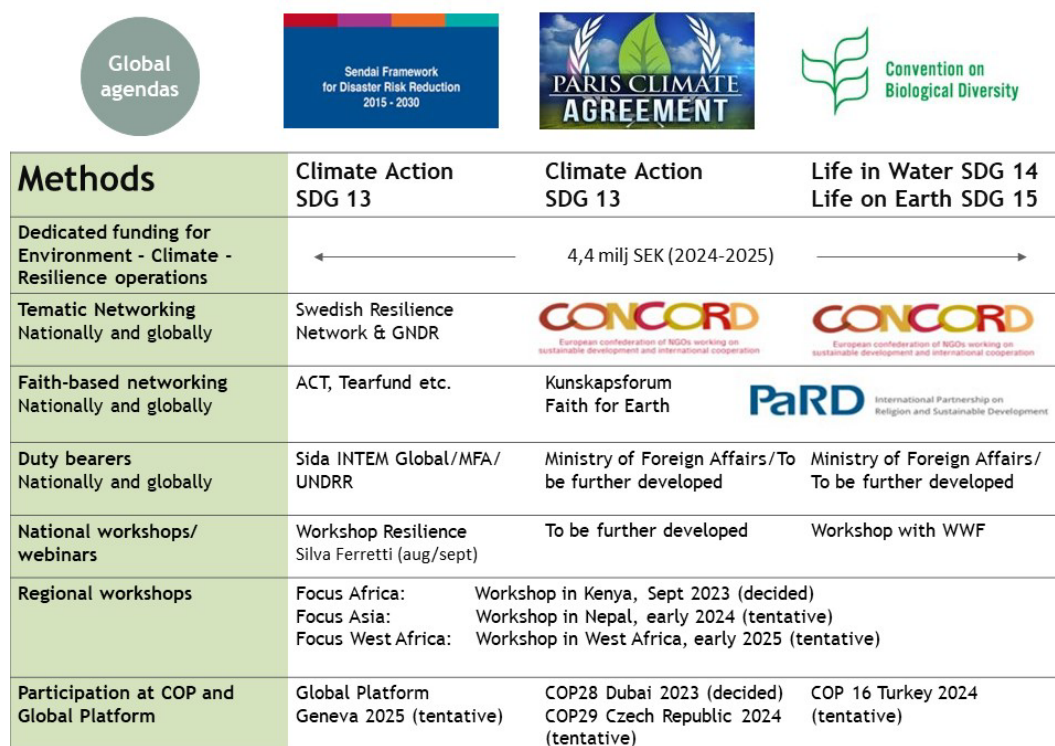
SMC's capacity development work is focused on current themes that relate to the various global agendas as well as the themes/areas that are prioritised at national and local level within the program activities that the member organisations and their partners work with. Exchange of experience between different member organisations and partners, as well as other organisations, is an important part of the capacity development work.

SMC works with capacity development primarily through workshops and seminars where SMC has a driving and facilitating role. SMC includes member organisations and partners in the planning and execution of these. As a complement, as well as to strengthen relationships and networking, SMC will also explore the possibility to carry out regional Environment, Climate and Resilience



workshops in Africa (Nairobi 2023), Asia (Kathmandu, 2024), West Africa (2024) and a global learning week in 2025.

SMC strongly promotes networking on national and local level with other civil society organisations and faith-based actors. SMC finds that optimal knowledge sharing and advocacy results are found when thematic competence and the perspective of faith based actors is combined. Formation of “Community of Practices” is encouraged. Kenya4Resilience in Kenya, which is supported by SMC, is a good example. <https://kenya4resilience.org/> Community of Practices add value to national and global network collaboration.



The figure describes the global agendas and global goals that SMC is working towards within the environment-climate-resilience initiative, as well as the various methods we work with to create change in relation to the global goals. The figure aims to create an overview and understanding of the investment as a whole and forms the basis for a more detailed planning of annual activities.

### 2.3 Integrating environment, climate and resilience perspectives within the Sida-funded interventions

Below is a compilation of the SMC's steering documents that must ensure the integration of the environment, climate, biological diversity and resilience in the planning and implementation of interventions that are financed through the grant Support through Swedish organisations in civil society (the Civil Society Grant).

These consist of:

- The SMC Guidelines
- Environmental assessment
- Special investment in environmental and climate initiatives
- Integration of perspectives

### The SMC Guidelines

The Civil Society Grant is an important resource in the green transition work. SMC therefore requires that all SMC/Sida funded interventions contribute to improvements for the environment, climate and biological diversity. Collaborators are thus not only expected to work according to the "do-no-harm" principle, but also to work actively against environmental destruction, reduced biological diversity and/or work for climate improvements where possible. These positions are formulated in SMC's climate and environmental policy.

[Link to the "SMC Environment and Climate Policy"](#)

In addition to SMC's overall goals for the grant, internal goals have been set. These are:

- increase the proportion of core support.
- increase the proportion of environmental and climate initiatives.
- improve the inclusion of religious literacy including the freedom of religion and belief perspective.

In the guidelines for the grant, it is stated that all interventions financed through the grant must have goals that are: "clear and possible to assess, of which at least one sub-goal is to contribute to a better environment, more stable climate and/or increased biological diversity. The sub-goal can also be linked to increased competence and capacity of the organisation and/or the target group to contribute to improvements in the area of environment, climate and biological diversity."

[Link to the "SMC guidelines" p. 10](#)

### Environment Assessment

The guidelines and application template also state that in the planning stage of an intervention, an environmental assessment must be carried out, which is then attached to the application. Carrying out an environmental assessment is mandatory for all interventions that SMC supports via the grant.

The environmental assessment should identify and analyse which environmental risks the project has. See also SMC's template for environmental assessment.

[Link to the "SMC Environment Assessment"](#)

Sida's guide can be helpful for planning and carrying out an environmental assessment.

[Link to "Guide to partners: How to conduct an environmental assessment"](#)

### Guidelines for dedicated funding

As part of SMC's objectives to increase results within the environment, climate and biological diversity via the Civil Society Grant, SMC is allocating a part of the grant to encourage innovative elements in the design of interventions.

SMC has separate guidelines for the dedicated funding and applications can be made twice a year (1<sup>st</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> May).

SMC strives for as many member organisations as possible to apply for funds from the initiative, as the goal is to contribute to increased learning within the network. For further reading, see the guidelines.

[Link to "Guidelines for dedicated funding for environment and climate interventions 2022-2026"](#)

### Integrating of perspectives

Respect and tenderness for the planet is a prerequisite for the resilience of ecosystems and people's livelihood opportunities. People living in poverty are often the ones most affected by environmental degradation, reduced biodiversity and climate change. To contribute to better conditions for vulnerable people, SMC integrates perspectives on the environment, climate and biological diversity within all interventions funded by the Civil Society Grant.

To be assessed to have integrated the perspectives of environment, climate and biological diversity in an intervention:

- member organisation and partner must have carried out an environmental assessment.
- results from the assessment must have contributed to the design of the intervention.
- at least one sub-goal should clearly describe how the intervention intends to lead to environmental and climate improvements and/or biological diversity.
- the intervention must contain clearly described results, indicators and activities to achieve the objectives. This must also be read in the budget.
- results (or absence of results) are commented on in relation to the environment, climate and biological diversity.
- member organisations and partners must have the competence and capacity to implement the intervention with a clear integration of the environment, climate and biological diversity.

## Appendix

- Policy for Climate and Environment (SMC)
- Guidelines for development cooperation (SMC)
- Guidelines for dedicated funding for environment and climate interventions 2022-2026 (SMC)
- Application for development cooperation – Template (SMC)
- Environment Assessment – Template (SMC)
- TRO PÅ EN BÄTTRE VÄRLD - SMC Strategy 2022-2026
- Guide to partners: How to conduct an environmental assessment (Sida)

Links can be found in the document above.