

Climate Change, Resilience, Law and Policy Cooperation in Fragile States: The Case of Afghanistan

ILSAF Conference 4th – 5th September

Friday 4 September

2:00 pm – 5:30 pm

- 2:00 pm – 2:15 pm** Welcome note
Suhailah Akbari
- 2:15 pm – 2:30 pm** The importance of this year's Conference and Program clarification
Prof. Idris Nassery
- 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm** Governing Climate Risk in a Fragile State - Afghanistan's Multi-Scalar Legal and Policy Challenges
Charity Watson
- 3:15 pm – 3:30 pm** Q&A

Climate policy and Governance Gaps in Fragile States

- 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm** PANEL I
Moderator: Prof. Idris Nassery
- 3:30 pm – 4:00 pm** Green Transition, Old Curse: Rethinking Mineral Governance in Fragile Afghanistan
Dr. Haroon Hakimi
- 4:00 pm – 4:15 pm** Q&A
- 4:15 pm – 4:30 pm** Break
- 4:30 pm – 5:00 pm** Climate Adaptation Policy and Environmental Governance Gaps in Fragile States: Lessons from Somalia for Afghanistan and Comparable Conflict-Affected Settings
Mohamed Yusuf Adan
- 5:00 pm – 5:30 pm** Q&A and concluding remarks for day 1



INSTITUTE FOR
LAW AND SOCIETY
IN AFGHANISTAN

Saturday 5th September

9:30 am – 1:00 pm

Climate Change and Digital Governance in Fragile States

- 9:30 am – 12:00 pm** PANEL II
Moderator: Tilmann Roeder
- 9:30 am – 10:00 am** Digital Climate Governance and the Future of Human Rights in Fragile States
Dr. Murtaza Mohiqi
- 10:00 am – 10:15 am** Q&A
- 10:15 am – 10:45 am** Bridging Law and Reality: Open-Access Satellite Climate Intelligence as Institutional Infrastructure for Climate Governance in Fragile Afghanistan
Sayed Abdul Baset Rahmani
- 10:45 am – 11:00 am** Q&A
- 11:00 am – 11:30 am** The role of Civil Societies and Local Communities in Climate Change Governance in Afghanistan
Abdulahadi Achakzai
- 11:30 am – 11:45 am** Q&A
- 11:40 am – 12:00 pm** Break
- 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm** From Fragility to Durability: India's Pragmatism in Shaping Afghanistan's Agriculture and Way Forward
Subrat Kumar Ratha
- 12:30 pm – 12:45 pm** Q&A
- 12:45 pm – 1:00 pm** Concluding remarks
Suhailah Akbari



CHARITY WATSON
(Keynote)

Governing Climate Risk in a Fragile State — Afghanistan's Multi-Scalar Legal and Policy Challenges

Abstract

Afghanistan's climate vulnerability cannot be separated from effective governance. This keynote argues that climate risk in Afghanistan interacts with law and policy across four interconnected scales — local practice, national policy, regional mechanisms, and international frameworks — each shaping both the drivers of vulnerability and the potential for resilience. Grounding the discussion in physical realities impacting the daily life of Afghans - including intensifying droughts and flood risk, the talk traces how governance gaps at each scale compound climate exposure, including decades of environmental governance and resource management failures, challenges in implementing policy to practice, unresolved transboundary arrangements with regional neighbors, hollowed national institutional capacity, and now an unrecognized government constrained in both its capacity to deliver resilience to the Afghan people and Afghanistan's international obligations. Rather than treating these scales as separate policy domains, the keynote discusses how durable climate resilience strategies must work across all four scales simultaneously, and that law and governance are not adjacent to Afghanistan's climate response but central to it.

Bio

Ms. Charity Watson is the Climate, Peace and Security Advisor for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. She has worked in Afghanistan for over ten years across politico-security, humanitarian, and environmental issues, and before that in East Africa and the Middle East. Her current work focuses on the intersection between climate change, peace and security, fostering dialogue and engagement with Afghan stakeholders on climate and water issues, including the Taliban de facto authorities, supporting regional transboundary water cooperation, and addressing climate security risks and peacebuilding opportunities within Afghanistan. Ms. Watson graduated *summa cum laude* in International Affairs from the University of Colorado and has a Master's in Environmental Governance and Policymaking from the Graduate Institute in Geneva.

Speakers



ABDUL BASIT RAHMANI

Bridging Law and Reality:

Open-Access Satellite Climate Intelligence as Institutional Infrastructure for Climate Governance in Fragile Afghanistan

Abstract

Afghanistan faces a clear contradiction in its climate governance. On paper, the country is committed to evidence-based disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, through the 2012 Disaster Management Law, its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and the new 2024–2025 ANDMA Strategic Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Management. In practice, the institutions that should turn these commitments into action do not have the data, the systems, or the technical capacity to do so. Since August 2021, more than USD 826 million in climate adaptation projects have been suspended, and access to the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility has effectively been cut, despite an original NDC request of more than USD 17 billion for adaptation and mitigation. The national hydrometeorological observation network, which did not exceed around 150 stations even at its 1980 peak, has not been rebuilt and can no longer support modern early warning. GRACE satellite analysis indicates groundwater storage anomalies consistent with deficit conditions across all 34 provinces, and the April 2026 multi-hazard emergency confirmed the human cost of working without real-time climate intelligence.

This paper argues that, in fragile states like Afghanistan, open-access satellite intelligence platforms can help fill part of the gap left by weakened institutions and keep evidence-based climate governance functioning. The argument is developed through the Chashma-Sar Afghanistan Multi-Hazard Climate and Water Intelligence Platform, the country's first such system, integrating NASA, ECMWF, and Google Earth Engine datasets across 50 indices, all 34 provinces, and more than 400 districts, with a record extending back to 1950. The paper examines how UN agencies, humanitarian partners, and government counterparts used the platform during the April 2026 emergency; situates the findings within Afghanistan's legal framework and its Sendai and NDC commitments; and discusses what this experience means for inclusive climate governance, access to international climate finance, regional water cooperation, and the protection of climate-displaced populations.

Bio

Sayed Abdul Baset Rahmani is a water resources and disaster risk reduction specialist based in Herat, Afghanistan. He is the Founder and CEO of the Mirab Social Service and Development Organization (MSSADO), an Afghan-registered NGO working on community-based DRR, WASH, and climate resilience programming. He serves as Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering at Jami University, Herat. He previously served as Senior Hydrometeorology and DRR Advisor to Afghanistan's State Ministry for Disaster Management (ANDMA), where he co-authored the National Hazard Atlas of Afghanistan (2020). He holds an M.Sc. in Hydraulic Structures and Water Engineering from the Islamic Azad University, Tehran, and a B.Sc. in Civil Engineering from Jami University.



DR. MURTAZA MOHIQI

Digital Climate Governance and the Future of Human Rights in Fragile States

Abstract

Climate change is increasingly reshaping fragile states through the intersection of environmental vulnerability, institutional fragility, digital inequality, and social exclusion. In response, governments and international organizations are rapidly adopting forms of digital climate governance, including artificial intelligence (AI), predictive analytics, satellite monitoring, and data-driven vulnerability assessments to manage climate risks and humanitarian responses. While these technologies are often presented as neutral and efficient tools for strengthening climate resilience, their human rights implications in fragile and conflict-affected contexts remain insufficiently examined.

This paper argues that digital climate governance is not merely a technical transformation in environmental management, but also a structural shift in how vulnerability, visibility, and protection are politically determined. In fragile states, where legal safeguards and institutional accountability are weak, algorithmic systems increasingly shape who is recognized as vulnerable, which communities receive assistance, and whose suffering remains invisible within data-driven governance frameworks. As a result, digital climate governance risks reproducing existing inequalities under the appearance of technological neutrality.

The paper critically examines how AI-driven climate systems may reinforce exclusion affecting women, displaced communities, minorities, rural populations, and persons with disabilities, particularly in contexts where official data infrastructures are incomplete or deeply unequal. It further explores how predictive and automated forms of governance challenge fundamental human rights principles, including transparency, participation, accountability, and equality.

Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from human rights law, digital governance, and climate justice, as well as the author's experience as a legal technology specialist and law professor who has researched and taught across the Global South and Global North for more than a decade, the paper argues that climate resilience cannot be separated from questions of data justice and human dignity. It concludes by proposing a human rights-based framework for digital climate governance grounded in algorithmic transparency, inclusive participation, and substantive equality in fragile states.

Bio

Dr Murtaza Mohiqi is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Agder, Norway. He is a law lecturer, legal columnist, and human rights researcher with experience in both human rights and private law at domestic and international levels. He is a researcher and educator working at the intersection of human rights, law, and technology, with more than a decade of teaching and interdisciplinary research experience across the Global South and Global North. His scholarship examines digital governance, migration, freedom of expression, and the social implications of emerging technologies, particularly in contexts shaped by displacement, inequality, and political vulnerability. His work has been published internationally and presented at more than one hundred conferences and academic workshops worldwide.



DR. HAROON HAKIMI

Green Transition, Old Curse: Rethinking Mineral Governance in Fragile Afghanistan

Abstract

As the world races to decarbonize, the global appetite for critical minerals, including lithium, copper, cobalt, and rare earth elements, has turned fragile, resource rich states into the new frontier of the energy transition. Afghanistan, sitting atop vast untapped mineral wealth, is being pulled into this race precisely at the moment when its institutional capacity to govern such extraction is at its weakest. My argument is that Afghanistan is on a trajectory not toward prosperity, but toward a familiar and preventable catastrophe: a resource curse now compounded by climate stress and environmental neglect. Four structural failures converge to produce this risk. Afghanistan lacks a coherent national vision or policy framework for environmental protection. Extraction methods currently proceeding on the ground raise serious environmental and safety concerns. The country lacks the professional, legal, and educational capacity, including trained regulators, environmental lawyers, and geologists, required to monitor and enforce even minimal standards. Furthermore, many foreign partner companies, notably Chinese firms operating under opaque contractual arrangements, have demonstrated a pattern of disregard for international environmental and labor norms, thereby deepening rather than filling this governance vacuum. Drawing on my doctoral research and book, *Resources, Power, and Nation Building: Afghanistan and the Promise of Minerals* (2026), I will move beyond diagnosis toward prescription. I will outline a set of prevention concepts for mitigating the resource curse, including enforceable environmental and contract governance standards, independent technical and legal capacity building, revenue transparency mechanisms, community consent frameworks, and international oversight mechanisms capable of partially substituting for weak domestic enforcement. I conclude by examining what international law, regional cooperation, and sustained international engagement can realistically achieve before Afghanistan's mineral wealth becomes its next crisis rather than its path to recovery. Keywords: critical minerals, resource curse, climate transition, environmental governance, fragile states, Afghanistan, regulatory capacity.

Bio

Dr. Haroon Hakimi is an academic practitioner with more than fifteen years of experience across media, public policy, research, teaching, and diplomacy. His career bridges government service and scholarly research, focusing on the connections between energy and mineral security, national resilience, and international stability. A former diplomat and senior government official, Dr. Hakimi, has advised on foreign affairs, resource policy, and strategic communications at the national and international levels. He has served as Deputy Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Tourism of Afghanistan, and Head of Chancery and Latin America Affairs at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington, D.C. Currently, Dr. Hakimi leads the Energy Security and Minerals Program at the America–Eurasia Center and serves as a Research Analyst at the Global Policy Institute, focusing on the evolving role of critical and rare earth minerals in the global energy transition. His research explores how energy resources shape national policy design and the architecture of state building in post conflict and emerging economies. Dr. Hakimi holds two master's degrees: one in International Service from American University, Washington, D.C., and another in National Security Affairs from The Institute of World Politics, where he also earned his Doctorate in Statecraft and National Security.



SUBRAT KUMAR RATHA

From Fragility to Durability:

India's Pragmatism in Shaping Afghanistan's Agriculture and Way Forward

Abstract

India's rising footprint in the current world order has been backed by pragmatism and reliable policy outcomes. The visibility of that pragmatism sufficiently contributes to the mainstream scholarly literature, underscoring India's outreach, both at the global and regional levels, as a widely acceptable phenomenon. At the regional level, in the recent decade, India's pragmatism surpassed the earlier connotation of Idealism and moved towards a more assertive regional order. Afghanistan, in India's considered view, has been under a serious transition from fragility to an aspiration of durable development. In the post-US withdrawal scenario, Afghanistan's independent existence has become critically obstructed, resulting in widespread political instability, economic downturn, and wider institutional incapacities. Considering the recent development, India's Afghanistan policy has become multidimensional, ranging from security arrangements to humanitarian engagements. Apart from the largest regional donor, India's humanitarian commitment to Afghanistan touches the Agricultural sector with a pragmatic engagement with the Taliban. Based on the above assertion, this paper, in particular, asks how India's pragmatic policy towards Afghanistan shapes the agricultural sector in collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Moreover, this paper also highlights the continuity of India's pragmatic policy in Afghanistan despite the Taliban takeover and post-US withdrawal bilateral relations in the agricultural sector, signalling the novelty of the paper, adjoining India's pragmatism with Afghanistan's agricultural development. In adjudicating India's pragmatism in Afghanistan's agricultural sector, this paper has been convinced by India's efforts in integrating the various stakeholders responsible for framing the roadmap of Agricultural development. As part of the discussion, the paper also unveils the serious challenges of extremism, interference of Pakistan, and lack of international recognition of Afghanistan, which would curtail the long-term impact of India's pragmatic role. In response, through the data collected from primary and secondary sources, India's humanitarian efforts in shaping the agricultural sector in Afghanistan remain a policy commitment of India to upgrade the livelihood of Afghans. Keywords: India, Pragmatism, Afghanistan, Agriculture, Taliban

Bio

Subrat Kumar Ratha is a PhD Candidate at the Department of International Relations and Politics, Central University of Kerala, India. Recently, he submitted his PhD Thesis, entitled "China's Afghanistan Policy in Post-US Military Withdrawal: Prospects and Implications for India" to the Central University of Kerala for the Award of PhD in International Relations and Political Science. He completed his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the School of Political Science, Gangadhar Meher University, Odisha (2019), with a distinction and Gold Medal. He also received his Master's Degree in Political Science from the Department of Politics and International Studies at Pondicherry University, Puducherry (2021). Subsequently, He obtained an M.Phil. Degree in Political Science from the PG Department of Political Science, Utkal University, Odisha (2022). His research areas include international relations (Especially in South Asia, focusing on Afghanistan), Indian politics, and political theory/philosophy. In addition, he has presented his research papers relating to his research areas at various national and international conferences and seminars. He is also interested in exploring the spaces in international relations and geopolitics to be understood using different theoretical frameworks available in political theory and philosophy

Speakers



**MOHAMMAD YUSUF
ADAN**

Climate Adaptation Policy and Environmental Governance Gaps in Fragile States: Lessons from Somalia for Afghanistan and Comparable Conflict-Affected Settings

Abstract

Climate change is increasingly reshaping the governance, security, and development challenges of fragile and conflict-affected states. While Afghanistan and Somalia differ in geography, political history, and institutional arrangements, both countries face overlapping pressures from drought, water scarcity, land degradation, displacement, food insecurity, weak regulatory capacity, and limited access to climate finance. These pressures demonstrate that climate change in fragile settings is not only an environmental concern but also a legal, institutional, and policy challenge.

Drawing on my recent research on climate adaptation policy and environmental governance gaps in Somalia, this presentation examines how fragile states struggle to translate climate commitments into effective governance practice. It highlights four key challenges: fragmented institutional mandates, weak coordination between national and subnational actors, limited integration of climate-security risks into policy frameworks, and insufficient community participation in adaptation planning. The presentation then reflects on how Somalia's experience may offer useful comparative lessons for Afghanistan, particularly in relation to legal reform, institutional coordination, locally grounded resilience strategies, and international policy cooperation.

The central argument is that climate resilience in fragile states requires more than technical adaptation projects. It requires governance systems that connect law, policy, local knowledge, environmental protection, conflict sensitivity, and inclusive development. By comparing Somalia's experience with the wider challenges facing Afghanistan, the presentation contributes to interdisciplinary debate on how fragile states can build more responsive, legitimate, and cooperative climate governance frameworks under conditions of institutional constraint and political uncertainty.

Bio

Mohamed Yusuf Adan is a Somalia-based researcher, lecturer, and higher education administrator at Mogadishu University, where he serves as Registrar and Partnership Coordinator for Postgraduate Programs and Research. His research focuses on climate-security, peacebuilding, governance, fragile states, environmental governance, and institutional resilience. He has published widely on climate adaptation, human security, peacebuilding, education, governance, and post-conflict reconstruction, including the article "Climate Adaptation Policy and Environmental Governance Gaps in Fragile States: Insights from Somalia" in *Environmental Policy and Governance*. His work combines academic research, policy analysis, and practical engagement with governance and development challenges in Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa.



ABDULHADI ACHAKZAI

The role of Civil Societies and Local Communities in Climate Change Governance in Afghanistan

Abstract

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Bio

Mr. Achakzai is climate change advocate, currently he serves as the Founder and Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Trainings and Development Organization (EPTDO) based in Afghanistan. He has managed and lead several programs, also bringing over 15 years of expertise in managing complex projects. His experience spans several esteemed international organisations, including the United Nations, NEPA, DABS, ICRC, USAID, GIZ-IS, and UNDP. Throughout his career, he has successfully managed and delivered hundreds of projects funded with multimillion-dollar budgets from diverse donors and UN agencies. He also possesses more than a decade of experience in external representation, reporting, and research & advocacy, with a strong focus on sustainability and climate change.

Mr. Achakzai is a climate change advocate and has attended several UN International conferences such as the Conference of the Parties (COPs). He attended COP27 in Egypt, COP28 in Dubai, UAE, COP29 in Azerbaijan and virtually attended COP30 held in Brazil. In these conference he has conducted several advocacies and represented for climate change adaptation and mitigation related issues.