Centre for Environmental Initiatives 'Ecoaction'
info@ecoact.org.ua
www.ecoaction.org.ua
+380 44 357 7841;
Y. Konovaltsia str. 36E, Kyiv, 01033, Ukraine

What is common between climate change and russia's war against Ukraine?

2-years perspective of the full-scale war

Climate change and russia's war against Ukraine have a common root – fossil fuels. With its oil, gas, and coal, russia not only fuels and finances its violent war in Ukraine but is also drastically worsening the climate crisis.

Money for war from fossil fuels

Russia relies heavily on its fossil fuel exports to support its federal budget. In the two years since the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, russia earned over USD 600 billion in revenue from fossil fuel exports. In comparison, the costs of Ukraine post-war reconstruction and recovery are estimated at more than USD 480 billion.

Russia's war-related expenditures are increasing yearly and its 2024 military budget is more than two times higher than Ukrainian 2024 defense budget. This level of russia's spending is unprecedented, reaching numbers comparable to Soviet times. Russia can spend so lavishly on its military mainly because of its oil and gas production and export, which is expected to make about one third of the overall 2024 budget.

Russia's economy depends on fossil fuels and is historically the world's third-highest carbon emitter, lacking any substantial contribution to international climate efforts. Instead of directing the money to support vulnerable countries that suffer from the climate crisis or focusing on domestic policies, russia invests funds in war against Ukraine.

How does the war affect climate?

Russia's continued aggression has not only led to countless loss of lives and destroyed homes, but the war itself has greatly exacerbated climate change. According to the recent assessment, GHG emissions attributable to 18 months (or 555 days) of the russian full-scale war in Ukraine total 150 million tCO_2e. This is more than the annual GHG emissions from a highly industrialized country such as Belgium.

GHG emissions continue to grow in different dimensions of the war. Estimations show that warfare activities emit 37.0 million tCO_2e, resulting fires – more than 22 million tCO_2e, closure of

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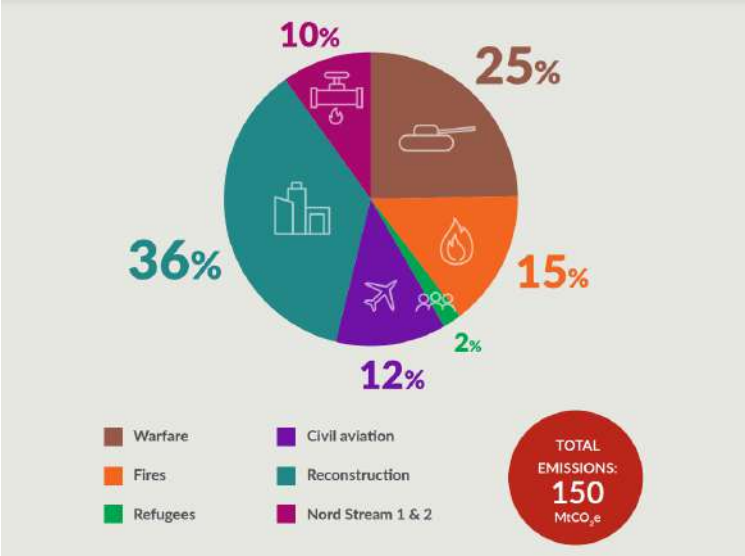
airspace and change of routes – 18 million tCO_2e, movement of refugees – 3 million tCO_2e, incidents on Nord Stream 1 & 2 – more than 14 million tCO_2e, with post-war reconstruction projected to account for almost 55 million tCO_2e.

Applying the average shadow carbon price of 64 USD/tCO_2e, the total climate damage that russia has caused amounts to almost USD 10 billion.



Source: report "Climate damage caused by russia's war in Ukraine"

What needs to be done?

Global efforts to phase-out fossil fuels and strengthen sanctions against russian fossil fuel exports are mutually dependent steps which must be taken in order to diminish the ability of russia to stage this or other wars in the future and reduce the impact on the climate.

Russia must also be held accountable for the extra greenhouse gas emissions and the resulting damage to the global climate, as without russia's act of aggression these emissions would not have happened.

Finally, planning for a green, climate-friendly and sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine is essential to reverse a big share of the war-related emissions. This would benefit the people of Ukraine, Europe and the world.

22.02.2024