

EU contribution to the UN Secretary General's Report on Climate Change and International Security

The risks posed by climate change are real and its impacts are already taking place, also with regard to international security. We expect that this will intensify in the years ahead. Climate science continues to evolve and there are indications that climate change poses an increasing risk and that the window of action might be closing. Hence, urgent action is needed at the global, regional and local levels. The EU is committed to addressing these challenges through a global partnership between developed and developing countries. All human societies will be affected, albeit to a varying degree and in different ways, and the more vulnerable ones will need our solidarity and assistance. There is a need for a comprehensive approach by raising awareness, increasing understanding and promoting concrete action. Our response to the security challenges posed by climate change must draw on the full range of policy tools and diplomatic efforts, including environmental enhancement, development and humanitarian assistance, trade, crisis management as well as security policy.

EU remains committed to limiting global warming to a maximum of 2°C, a goal that was also endorsed by the Major Economies Forum in L'Aquila. Global warming beyond 2°C may trigger a number of tipping points that would lead to further accelerated, irreversible and largely unpredictable climate changes, which, in turn, may lead to unprecedented security challenges. Mitigation measures reduce the magnitude of impacts of global warming and in turn reduce adaptation needs. Mitigation will also allow us to diminish the challenges represented by the shrinking global reserves of fossil fuels. Investment in mitigation to avoid worst case scenarios, as well as ways to adapt to the unavoidable consequences should go hand in hand with efforts to address the international security threats and risks created by climate change; they should all be viewed as part of preventive security policy.

In this global age, instability anywhere in the world can affect our security more quickly and in more far reaching ways than before. Climate change is best viewed as a "threat multiplier" which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability. Climate change is likely to undermine achievements and efforts to reach the Millennium and other internationally agreed development goals. It threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and prone to conflict. Climate change presents a considerable challenge to global governance, but has also the potential to strengthen it, if the challenges are met jointly by human societies, countries and institutions around the globe.

Amongst the challenges that need to be met, are the following:

- the destabilizing effect of **global warming** to natural systems and ecological productivity
- threats to **human security** (when people's livelihoods are depleted or through increased spread of diseases such as malaria and water borne diseases)
- conflicts over shrinking or changing **resources** (including food and water, reduction of arable land, diminishing fish stock), compounded by population growth. Water shortage in particular has the potential to cause civil unrest and lead to significant economic losses, even in robust economies
- tensions over trade routes, maritime zones and natural resources previously inaccessible, as well as possible limited **accessibility** of energy supplies from

climate change prone regions

- **economic damage** and risk to coastal cities and critical infrastructure. One fifth of the world's population lives in coastal zones which are also home to major infrastructure. Sea-level rise and the increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters pose a serious threat to these regions and their economic prospect
- loss of **territory** and border disputes (receding coastlines and loss of entire countries, including small islands states). More disputes over land and maritime borders and their territorial rights are likely and will have to be dealt

- promoting further research and anal

maintain awareness and ownership beyond Copenhagen and give the necessary political traction to drive policies

- integration of climate change issues into existing security mechanisms (early warning systems, conflict prevention, management and resolution)
- sharing of analysis. We are still at an early stage of our collective understanding of this issue. Detailed analysis will be crucial on the causal links between climate change and security, on the impact of climate change on existing situations of tensions as well as on possible regional security consequences of climate change. We therefore need better sharing of assessments, particularly on early warning, between different regions and international organisations. Many UN agencies have a role to play, where UNEP and CEB would seem to have a given role in promoting UN coherence on climate change. The role

should be made to co-ordinate UN's activities in this field with that of regional organizations such as the EU, AU etc.

- emphasizing the reduction of above mentioned threats in current negotiation processes within UNFCCC on how to design adaptation strategies in the most vulnerable regions and countries

Climate change is a global challenge that can only be tackled at a global level. Solutions must be based on a just and comprehensive system of multilateralism. If these efforts fail, it is likely that, from the mid 21st century onwards, crisis management on a global dimension will have to contend with the proliferation of local and regional conflicts and the destabilization of the international system, threatening global economic development and overwhelming global governance structures. The political scope for peaceful management and mitigation of conflicts would narrow steadily while the costs of crisis response and adaptation to climate change would escalate. In order to avoid these dangerous developments, policies in response to the security implications of climate change must be put on track now. The UN Secretary General's report is therefore an important opportunity to take a lead in this process. The EU stands ready to contribute and work with its partners.

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