

## **Finland: Views on the Possible Security Implications of Climate Change**

### **Security Aspects of Climate Change**

In a globalising world, the UN agenda is crowded with new cross-border threats such as climate change, international terrorism, organised crime, infectious diseases, energy and food security as well as uncontrolled migratory flows.

The rate and intensity of climate change has proved difficult to forecast. Whereas some changes are immediate, others occur in the medium or even extremely long term. While the problem is global, its local effects vary a great deal.

Climate change may significantly compound the consequences of natural disasters and conflicts as well as the global redistribution of resources. It also impacts food production and access to freshwater resources. It may also spread diseases to areas in which they were hitherto unknown. The environmental effects of climate change are closely associated with poverty and may seriously harm especially the states that are already fragile.

Due to extreme and unpredictable weather conditions, e.g. drought and floods, as well as sea level rise, climate change may cause mass migrations and extensive immigration in the long term. This would result in increased instability in already volatile border regions and large changes in the ethnic makeup, more unequal population distributions among states as well as humanitarian crises. Environmental and natural resource issues may also spawn conflicts that could contain military dimensions. If one nation were to contaminate the area of its neighbour, cross-border pollution could create tensions between states. Water rights in border areas could also become a point of contention. This could cause increased migration flows e.g. from North Africa to Europe.

### **Finland's security environment**

By definition, global questions such as climate change, scarcity of energy and water resources and population movements do not constitute security threats per se to Finland. If left unsolved, they could cause widespread destruction or destabilise societies and escalate into violent conflicts, thereby indirectly impacting the Finnish security environment.

Finland combats global warming and actively participates in solving climate change and energy-related issues both within the European Union as well as in global fora. Finland regards it as important that security questions related to the environment and climate change be addressed in the UN as well as in other relevant security fora. Finland supports a comprehensive approach in dealing with environmental and climate-related security factors under the auspices of the UN system. This requires reforming the UN system and strengthening the co-operation within it.

Finland promotes multilateral cooperation in combating threats related to the environment and climate change. The most important topics include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as well as the ongoing negotiations on a comprehensive climate change convention for the post-2012 climate regime. Finland actively strives for the climate pact.

### **Arctic regions**

Climate change may spur a race for energy rights and other natural resources in the Arctic region. On the one hand, climate change improves access to oil and gas reserves as the receding sea ice opens up transport corridors in Arctic regions. On the other hand, it also increases the likelihood of disputes over rights to these resources. This may also have security policy and military implications.

The importance of energy resources in the Arctic is growing. It is estimated that the Arctic regions contain 13% of previously untapped oil reserves and 30% of undiscovered natural gas reserves. The

