

II-H. Profile of The Netherlands

Version 1 – 7 July 2006

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1. The Netherlands' Approach to Environmental Security

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, since the 1990s, acknowledged the link between peace, security and development and the particular role that environmental degradation plays in contributing to conflict and breakdown within and between societies. The importance of this nexus was first highlighted in two important Dutch Foreign Ministry policy documents, "A World of Difference" in 1990, and "A World in Conflict" in 1993.

Most recently, the 2006 Dutch "Foreign Policy Agenda" formally recognised the extent to which environmental degradation can be a world-wide threat to security. The Policy Agenda notes that the loss of ecosystems and limited access to basic services gives rise to conflicts, which in turn destabilise and jeopardise security. In most of the poorest countries, conflicts are caused by the illegal trade in timber and minerals, a lack of clarity about property rights, the exhaustion of natural resources, and insufficient access to water and food for the local population. Natural disasters such as the recent tsunami only increase the potential for conflict. The Policy Agenda 2006 highlights further the role that healthy ecosystems play in contributing to peace, security, and sustainable development.¹

2. The Netherlands' Overarching Environmental Security Priorities

One of the central environmental security-related priorities for the Dutch Government will continue to be the implementation of MDG7 on environmental sustainability. Dutch development cooperation policy will focus on three subsidiary goals, which are closely related to the promotion of environmental security. These are: (i) integrating the principles of sustainable development into policy and reversing environmental degradation; (ii) halving the number of people without access to clean water by 2015; and (iii) substantially improving living conditions for at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. In addition, Dutch development policy on the environment will focus on: protecting life support systems for biodiversity, regional ecosystems and the climate; sustainable access to energy; desertification; as well as strengthening the integration of the environment-poverty linkage into European Commission aid programming.²

The Dutch Government will also focus on an aspect of security that is rapidly gaining importance: security of energy supplies. According to the Policy Agenda 2006, the Dutch Government maintains that "*as long as innovative energy policy does not lead to sustainable energy management, the demand for uninterrupted access to fossil fuels at a reasonable price will continued unabated*". Over the next few years the Netherlands will deploy its entire range of foreign policy instruments to achieve sustainable energy policy, investing more in relations with countries that have a large impact on the world market for oil and natural gas.

¹ "Policy Agenda 2006". Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2006. *Minbuza*. 9 Jan 2006. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

² See: www.minbuza.nl and follow links to Dutch Aid Policy, Section 6.4 Environment and water.

3. How The Netherlands has Mainstreamed Environmental Factors into Foreign and Security Policy

The 2003 policy memorandum entitled “Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities: Dutch Development Cooperation en route to 2015” acknowledges the inextricable linkages between environmental protection, trade and investments, poverty, security, human rights, and migration, and commits the Dutch Government to stepping up its efforts to pursue an “*integrated approach to its foreign policy, in which development cooperation is combined with diplomacy, political dialogue and pressure, security policy, fair trade, and market access*”.³

Most recently, the 2006 Dutch Foreign Policy has committed the Dutch Government to a more dynamic and integrated foreign policy approach. To this end, it identifies priorities and translates them into coherent, deliberate strategies tailored to a number of different themes, countries, and regions. This integrated approach is designed to facilitate coordinate foreign policy with other sectors.⁴

The 2006 Foreign Policy Agenda also provides a clear expression of the formal recognition of the Netherlands that environmental degradation is a global threat to security. Indeed, one of the eight main goals of Dutch foreign policy is to protect and improve the environment. The 2006 Foreign Policy Agenda specifically acknowledges that “*the loss of ecosystems and limited access to basic services give rise to conflicts that can have a destabilizing effect at national and regional levels and jeopardize global security.*” It further asserts that many conflicts in developing countries are caused by the illegal trade in timber and minerals; a lack of clarity about property rights; the exhaustion of natural resources; insufficient access to water, energy, and food; as well as natural disasters, all of which undermine peace, security and sustainable development.⁵

As part of its commitment to integrated policy responses, the Netherlands has created the Stability Fund to provide rapid, flexible support for activities that increase peace, security, and development in countries and regions emerging from or at risk of sliding into armed conflict. The fund enables coherent, integrated use of the various foreign policy instruments and resources and draws on both the development (ODA) and general foreign policy (non-ODA) budgets.⁶

4. The Netherlands and Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention and Livelihood Protection into Development Cooperation

The Netherlands’ approach to mainstreaming conflict issues into development cooperation is reflected in the Foreign Policy Agenda 2006. The Policy Agenda emphasises the links between peace, security, and stability as prerequisites for poverty reduction and commits Dutch development cooperation to promoting stability in post-conflict situations. The Stability Fund, described above, has been an important instrument in this regard since it enables both ODA and non-ODA funds to be used to solve problems at the junction of security and development.

In an address to the March 7, 2006 International Environmental Security/Adelphi Forum on Environment and Cooperation held in the Hague, Dutch State Secretary for the Environment Pieter van Geel described the Dutch Government’s new development

³ See: www.minbuza.nl. Follow links to “Dutch aid policy”.

⁴ “Policy Agenda 2006”. [Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.minbuza.nl). 2006. [Minbuza](http://www.minbuza.nl). 9 Jan 2006. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

⁵ “Policy Agenda 2006”. [Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.minbuza.nl). 2006. [Minbuza](http://www.minbuza.nl). 9 Jan 2006. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

⁶ www.envirosecurity.net/activities/ECC/VanGeelSpeech.pdf

policy, which firmly acknowledges that challenges related to peace, security, the environment, and migration cannot be addressed within countries alone since in many cases, their causes and consequences extend beyond national borders. The State Secretary further highlighted that Dutch development cooperation policy is focused increasingly on combining cooperation policy with conflict prevention, control, stability, and reconstruction. Dutch development cooperation policy also aims to promote a regional approach to cooperation – especially as regards the complex interaction between conflict management, post-conflict stabilization, and reconstruction.

Dutch Development Cooperation Minister Agnes van Ardenne has also formally acknowledged that in many parts of the developing world the achievement of the MDGs is directly linked to progress in the field of peace and security. This reality requires a new approach to development that is grounded in an integrated approach that works and is based on close cooperation between all relevant actors.”⁷

Although the budget for the next few years is unlikely to be fully disbursed, the Netherlands is committed to attaining its spending target of 0.1% of GNP for the environment by no later than 2007. Furthermore, and as noted above, over the coming years, the development cooperation environment programme will dovetail more closely with MDG7, with focus on: (i) integrating the principles of sustainable development into policy and reversing environmental degradation; (ii) halving the number of people without access to clean drinking water by 2015; and (iii) substantially improving living conditions for at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

The Netherlands will also seek to intensify its development cooperation activities in those partner countries where it is active in the environment sector. In partner countries where the environment is not receiving support from the Netherlands, the government will devote more attention to capacity building, compiling environmental action plans, integrating ecological sustainability into other sectors, and providing support for civil society organisations to help with lobbying, research, and model projects. In terms of partner countries, increasing focus will be directed towards the Great Lakes Region through the development of a regional environment programme to address the rapid depletion of its natural resources and its contribution to growing instability in the region.

As a side note, the overall coherence of Dutch development policy with other sectoral challenges, such as aid, trade, environmental protection, and peace and security has been recognised by the independent Washington-based Centre for Global Development, which produces the coherence index measuring spending in these different areas. In recent years, the Netherlands has obtained the highest overall score.⁸

5. The Netherlands and Environmental Cooperation in Conflict Zones

In his keynote address to the March 7 Forum on Environment, Conflict and Cooperation (hosted by the Institute for Environmental Security and Adelphi Research), State Secretary for the Environment Pieter van Geel acknowledged that the environment lends itself - perhaps more than any other theme - to peace-building and peacekeeping.⁹ The State Secretary acknowledged that cross-border environmental cooperation is often difficult to achieve, whether the borders are political, cultural, economic or social. But where it takes root its effects are usually positive. As he states, *“Parties learn to trust each other and to work together. Regional identities emerge around shared resources. Mutual rights are recognised and prospects improve.”*

⁷ “Security and Development: Making the Nexus Work”. Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2004. [Minbuza](http://www.minbuza.nl). 20 Dec 2005. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

⁸ See: www.minbuza.nl. Follow links to “Dutch aid policy”, Section 5.2: Coherence.

⁹ www.envirosecurity.org/activities/ECC/VanGeelSpeech.pdf

The Dutch Government has undertaken a range of environmental security and cooperation activities. For example it actively supports Environment and Security Initiative in its work in Southeast Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. In many areas, the Netherlands is focusing on water-related conflict. It has been actively involved in Nile Basin Initiative, which involves all the countries in the Nile river basin and plays an important role in conflict prevention, promoting economic growth through better water management. It has also led to regional cooperation in other fields - like agriculture, the environment and energy. The Netherlands is supporting similar partnerships for the Mekong, the Limpopo and the Ganges. As noted above, The Netherlands has also developed a programme in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa. The aim is to bring peace and stability through sustainable development of natural resources.

Like many other OECD Member States, The Netherlands is committed to active, constructive participation in peace and security-related organisations, such as the European Commission, NATP, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, but also through partnerships with other regional organisations such as the EU Africa Peace Facility and sub-regional organisations as ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD.

6. The Netherlands and Inclusion of Environmental Factors in Monitoring, Mapping, and Early Warning Systems

The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment, the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, along with the Dutch Geological Survey and the Dutch Environmental Assessment Agency Netherlands, are working with the European Commission in its efforts to pursue co-cooperation on global monitoring for environment and security. The Netherlands is actively involved in the EU Global Monitoring for Environment and Security initiative, in which information about the environment is being gathered from space satellites and compiled in order to make it available to scientists, policy makers, and industries. This data can be used for environmental security planning and preventative actions.¹⁰

7. The Netherlands and Environment and Security Risk and Needs Assessment and Management

The Dutch Government has created the *Stability Assessment Framework (SAF)*, which incorporates a wide variety of early warning models, assessment frameworks, and practitioners' guidelines. The SAF is designed to assist in the development of integrated responses to sustainable stability promotion. The various parts of the SAF can be applied for stability assessment and context analysis, as well as a tool for political dialogue, to develop conflict-sensitive policy plans and implementation schemes, or to promote multi-donor cooperation.

The SAF has been tested by the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Mozambique, Rwanda and Kenya. A key component of the SAF involves a number of mapping and analysis exercises, including: trends analysis to identify priority concerns; institutional analysis to assess the effectiveness of key institutions; and political actor analysis. The SAF helps to build local capacities for analysis, awareness, and response, and to mainstream stability promotion into governance reform efforts.¹¹

¹⁰ See: www.gmes.info

¹¹ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "The Stability Assessment Framework: Designing Integrated Responses to Security, Governance and Development". Prepared by the Clingendael Institute for the Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs. 2005. Pages 10-11.

8. The Netherlands and Environmental Conflict Prevention and Resolution

The Dutch Government's 2001 White Paper on conflict prevention asserts that conflict prevention is a core task of Dutch foreign policy in the broadest sense. The Dutch Government maintains that the primary focus of conflict prevention should be international co-operation, rather than developing specific national policies, by using instruments such as diplomacy, economic aid, humanitarian aid, and possibly military activities. The Dutch Government perceives post-conflict rehabilitation as a form of conflict prevention, in light of the fact that after an armed conflict, there is a 40% chance that hostilities will flare up again.¹²

The 2001 White Paper also distinguishes between structural long-term prevention, in the form of pro-poor development, and short-term 'operational' prevention and asserts that the promotion of good governance, democracy and human rights must be at the heart of every strategy for conflict prevention. Other key principles of Dutch conflict prevention policy include:

- “- support for the international rule of law;*
- early warning and early action;*
- well-co-ordinated and coherent use of national and international resources;*
- active use of, and support for, multilateral fora;*
- broad poverty reduction to tackle long-term causes of conflict;*
- special attention for good governance, democratisation and human rights, including the protection of minorities;*
- local ownership and participation;*
- a regional approach to prevent 'spill-over' effects”.*

In a recent speech to the SID and NCDO Conference on Security and Development, Foreign Minister Dr. Bernard Bot asserted that the key to success in conflict prevention and resolution is the overall political framework that gives logic and coherence to the political, military and developmental efforts undertaken.¹³

Minister Bot maintains that maintaining cohesion between political, security and development efforts is especially relevant in regions affected by conflict, or regions that serve as safe havens for extremists and terrorists. Coherence and cohesion at the national level involves close cooperation by the ministries involved. To this end, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Development Cooperation and Defence, as well as their staff, hold regular consultations with each other at various levels. Another important coherence innovation is the creation of a Security Sector Reform (SSR) team that consists of employees of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. This SSR team's remit is to assist governments in formulating and implementing plans to improve the provision of security for their citizens. The SSR team can draw from a pool of qualified experts on security issues.

Another important feature of Dutch conflict prevention is the emphasis on the role of civil society. In a 2005 speech entitled “The World's Banlieues”, Dutch Development Cooperation Minister Agnes van Ardenne emphasised that civil society organisations must play a more prominent role in conflict prevention and to this end, the Dutch

¹² Netherlands Minister of Development Cooperation Agnes van Ardenne. “The world's banlieues”. Speech presented to the symposium on the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. European Centre for Conflict Prevention. Utrecht, 15 November 2005.

¹³ Dr. Bernard Bot, Minister of Foreign Affairs. “The Dutch Approach: Preserving the trinity of politics, security and development”. Speech presented at the SID and NCDO Conference on Security and Development, The Hague. 7 April 2006.

Government as one of the main donors of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, has initiated the European Centre for Conflict Prevention.¹⁴

9. The Netherlands and Post Conflict Environmental Rehabilitation, Environmental Cooperation and Peace Building

The Dutch Government's 2002 White Paper on Post-Conflict Reconstruction highlights the Netherlands' key priorities with regard to post-conflict reconstruction and related physical, economic, socio-cultural and political development challenges. The White Paper asserts that political stability and the consolidation of peace and security are prime concerns in post-conflict conditions and require international support. It also recognises that ownership of the peace process must reside with the parties directly involved in the conflict, that quick fixes are not viable in situations of conflict, and that longer-term support is essential.

The White Paper also affirms that coherence and co-ordination must be enhanced with regard to other donor countries and to the various aid organisations in order to close the gap between humanitarian assistance and structural forms of development cooperation. The regional character of conflicts, which should be taken into account when attempting the reconstruction process, is stressed as well. And finally, The Netherlands recognises that the chance of reoccurrence also necessitates the adoption of an early warning and action approach in post-conflict situations.¹⁵

The 2006 Foreign Policy Agenda further describes the Dutch approach to sustainable reconstruction as one that integrates the various instruments of foreign and security policy. These include: diplomacy, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and economic and military support.¹⁶

The Netherlands remains concerned about the limited effectiveness of ODA in supporting effective solutions to the interlinked problems of failing states and post-conflict aid. To address this problem, the Dutch Government is preparing a compendium of state practices for the OECD/DAC with particular focus on situations where ODA flows impede the implementation of integrated policy at the juncture of peace, security and development. The Dutch Government is also preparing guidelines for improving donor conduct in fragile states.¹⁷

The Netherlands Stability Fund is an important instrument in the post-construction process. As noted above, it supports integrated approaches in the promotion of peace, security, and development both prior to and after conflict emerges. In post-conflict situations, the Dutch Government focuses reconstruction efforts on conflict management to restore stability and re-establish conditions for sustainable development. "Good governance" initiatives like fostering participation and decision-making processes and strengthening the state apparatus are high priorities.¹⁸ Moreover, the Stability Fund is

¹⁴ Van Ardenne-van der Hoeven, Agnes. "The World's Banlieues". 15 Nov 2005: Utrecht. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. 9 Jan 2006. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

¹⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOB Policy and Operations Evaluation Department. "2003 Dutch Policies and Activities directed at peacebuilding and policy initiatives". Undated. See: <http://www.euforic.org/iob>

¹⁶ "Policy Agenda 2006". Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2006. Minbuza. 9 Jan 2006. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

¹⁷ "Policy Agenda 2006". Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2006. Minbuza. 9 Jan 2006. <<http://www.minbuza.nl>>.

¹⁸ Clingendael Institute. "The Stability Assessment Framework: Designing Integrated Responses to Security, Governance and Development". Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2005. Pg: 65-6.

used to boost local peacekeeping capacity in post-conflict countries and to help build an effective security sector managed under civilian control.

10. The Netherlands and Natural Disaster and Conflict Mitigation and Adaptation

The Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2005 Grant Policy Framework for Humanitarian Aid outlines the government's approach to humanitarian aid and disaster relief. In brief, Dutch humanitarian aid strategy promotes coordinated approaches between donors such as UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and NGOs.¹⁹

Dutch efforts in acute crisis situations are guided by the Emergency Appeals of the United Nations, the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Dutch humanitarian aid also focuses on large-scale, acute emergencies resulting from natural disasters, epidemics, or escalating conflicts. The Netherlands is guided by the OCHA, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, and/or IFRC/ICRC, as well as whether international support has already been provided, the magnitude of the natural disaster, and the support base of the local community.

11. Conclusion

The Netherlands' foreign policy has evolved considerably in the last fifteen years to recognize environmental degradation to be one of the principle global threats to security. One of the eight main goals of current Dutch foreign policy is to protect and improve the environment.

The 2006 Foreign Policy Agenda emphasizes the links between peace, security, and stability as prerequisites for poverty reduction and commits Dutch development cooperation to promoting stability in post-conflict situations. The Dutch Government has launched several initiatives that help in achieving peace and security. The Stability Fund is an important example of the commitment of the Dutch Government to ensure that all necessary resources are used to redress threats to environmental and human security.

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¹⁹ See: www.minbuza.nl and follow links to humanitarian aid.

