



Summary Report of IES Conference

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# **CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY AT COPENHAGEN - II**

**The Contribution of the Global Security Community to Success**

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7-8 October 2009  
European Parliament, Eastman Building  
Brussels

October 2009

*“Don’t get involved in partial problems, but always take flight to where there is a free view over the whole single great problem, even if this view is still not a clear one.”*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

*Security is about maintaining preconditions for human prosperity and development and ‘security challenges’ are actions that threaten to undermine these preconditions.”*

Sven Holtsmark & Broke Smith Windsor  
NATO Defence College Paper 2009

On 7 and 8 October 2009, the Institute for Environmental Security and its partners met at the European Parliament in Brussels to discuss the state of affairs in the lead up to the December UNFCCC COP15 meeting in Copenhagen, focusing particularly on the aspect of Atlantic Relations on the first day and on Glacial Melt in the Hindu Kush / Himalayas / Tibetan Plateau, the security dimensions of climate change and the Climate Change and the Military Project and the perspectives for Copenhagen and Beyond on the second day.

“We need to wake up and wake up in time,” were the words of Air Marshal A.K. Singh, the Chairman of the CCTM Military Advisory Council and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi, during the opening of the conference. In his keynote address Nick Mabey, Chief Executive of E3G called for a “joint agenda for action in order to develop robust understanding of the impacts and drivers of future climate change scenarios.” This sentiment was echoed all through the two day conference with the panellists and speakers agreeing that there is now a pressing need for the military to play an important role in raising awareness on the security implications of climate change.

Here below is a session-by-session description of the conference with a summary of the discussions of each of the sessions.

Day 1 was dedicated to **Atlantic Relations in 2009** with panellists including **Christopher Murray** - Chargé d’Affaires, US Mission to the European Union, **Gen Charles F “Chuck” Wald (Ret)** - USAF / Member, Military Advisory Board, Security and Climate, CNA, **Steven Everts**- Cabinet of Javier Solana, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, **Nigel Inskter**, CMG, Director, Transnational Threats and Political Risks, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and **Ulrich Eckle**, Energy Climate Change, Food Safety & Security, US Desk, DG RELEX, European Commission



The panel reiterated that what is felt around the world when it comes to adopting climate change policies is that there is a deep divide among countries in the management of this issue and especially a strong disparity between the North and the South.

Countries and governments have to understand that a global response is what we need now to face the threats of climate change. Globalisation has come into play even in climate change making it a phenomenon without boundaries. Gen. Wald rightly explained this by saying, “The world is so interconnected today that everyone has the same problems.”

It was argued that the US and the EU alone will not solve this problem. Governments need to tackle this issue by joining forces, looking around the world globally to develop robust understanding of the impact and drivers of future climate change scenarios and co-operating intellectually and politically.

All the same Gen. Wald added, “Not a lot was going to happen without the leadership of the US,” with other speakers adding that the EU was indebted to the US with respect to leadership issues concerning climate change and security. Nigel Inkster also agreed that without a credible US component not much was possible, saying that deployment of capabilities were key in this process.

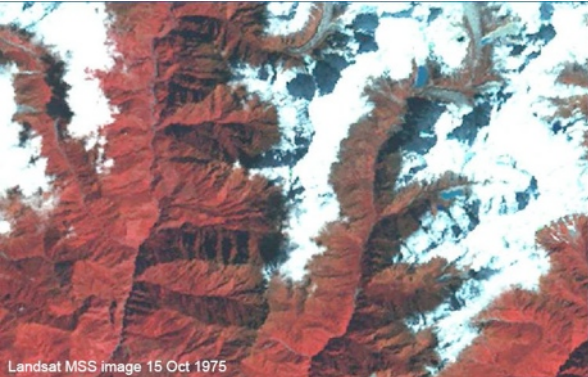


Day 2 unfurled with discussions on **Glacial Melt in the Hindu Kush / Himalayas / Tibetan Plateau - A Case Study in Geopolitics and Environmental Security** led by **Tom Spencer** - Vice Chairman, Institute for Environmental Security and **Maj Gen (ret) Muniruzzaman** - President, Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies

With respect to the debate on climate change, the problem of glacial melt in the Tibetan Plateau is probably one of the most important.

According to recent estimates, the Himalayan region is now warming faster than anywhere else on the planet and its glaciers are receding faster than in any other part of the world. The temperature increase has been greater than the global average (0.74 °C over the last 100 years) given that the higher the altitude the more rapid is the warming. Black Carbon which has been settling on the ice and snow is also speeding up the melting of the Himalayan glaciers by 40%.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forecasted that under the current trends 80% of Himalayan glaciers will be gone in 30 years.



Snow cover in the Himalayas - 1975



Snow cover in the Himalayas - 2006

Due to the possible loss of the *Third Pole* glaciers and consequently of the summer melt waters, we could get into a geo-political turmoil within a generation. The consequences would be visible on an enormous variety of elements, such as the current hydroelectric power schemes of this area, changes in the monsoon patterns, loss of biodiversity and human habitat, extra sea level rise and degrading of the health of the great rivers of Asia (Ganges, Indus, Brahmaputra,...) which could in all probability become seasonal rivers in the near future. As glaciers melt, river runoff will initially increase in winter or spring but will eventually decrease as a result of loss of ice resources. Maj. Gen. Muniruzzaman also pointed out that “around 1.5 billion people are sustained by this region and therefore we are talking in big terms and the scale and magnitude of the problem can have devastating impacts.” Tom Spencer concluded, “Humanity faces a security crisis.”

Many countries are involved in the risks underlying the Hindu Kush / Himalayas / Tibetan Plateau: India – Pakistan – Afghanistan – The Central Asian Republics – China – The Mekong Riparian Countries – Burma/Myanmar – Bangladesh – Nepal – Bhutan. But in some of those the problems could also lead to a domino effect with climate change aggravating the pressure on the already fragile political, social and economic system.

In this context, the military can play an important role with their ability to analyse situations in the problem solving process. It was mentioned that the involvement of the military, together with the sharing of intellectual resources and the reduction of black carbon could be potential threat minimisers.

The morning continued with panellists **Olivier Deleuze**- Head, UNEP Brussels Office, **Marc Baltes** - Senior Advisor, Economic and Environmental Activities, OSCE Secretariat, **Karen Laino** - Assistant-Director, International Military Staff, Intelligence, NATO, **Maj Gen RNLMC Kees Homan (Ret)** - Clingendael Security and Conflict Programme (CSCP), Netherlands Institute for International Relations – Clingendael and **Maj Gen Joseph Singh (Ret)** – Guyana, speaking on ‘**The Security Dimensions of Climate Change: Beyond the UN Secretary General’s Report**’



For the first time, in 2007 the UN Security Council decided to include climate change on its agenda.

Climate change is considered today by many as one of the critical forces shaping the 21st century and as a potential source of conflict and disruption of peace. Extreme events, such as extreme precipitations, heat waves, floods and droughts or the melting of glaciers across the globe are among the phenomena producing impacts on human health and biodiversity that are becoming more and more frequent and intense. This implies that human societies could suffer serious consequences resulting from climate change.

The re-conceptualisation of security has already resulted in a widening of dimensions from the narrow political and military focus towards an inclusion of economic, societal and environmental dimensions. Indeed, environmental issues, such as resource access and resource quality, are now recognised as major variables in regional instability and conflict.



They can exacerbate tensions resulting from ethnic, religious and other local differences such as socio-economic disparities between urban and rural areas, rapid economic development and border disputes.

But in practice, the relationship between climate change and security is not a direct and clear-cut one. As Marc Baltès put it, “It is difficult to convince all [OSCE] delegations to see climate change as a potential security threat. The very notion of climate change and its scope is contested by many delegations.”

Nevertheless, the impacts of unabated climate change, severe environmental degradation and environmentally induced conflicts can be regarded as a threat to international security and world peace. Olivier Deleuze remarked that in the next ten years the gap between what is necessary from a scientific point of view and what is possible from a political point of view will widen.

The discussions then moved on to the role of the military. Citing the example of disaster relief assistance, one of the speakers explained that a key variable that influences contributing countries’ policies on sending military assets for international disaster relief assistance is their national strategic culture, which relates to the perceived and actual role of the military in the society and the world. In some countries, it is considered normal for the armed forces to play a central part in response to natural or man-made disasters. In others, disaster relief is considered as an inappropriate role for armed forces.

The Oslo Guidelines, which were formulated in 1994, are intended to address the need for principles and standards and to provide improved co-ordination in the use of military and civil defence assets in response to natural, technological and environmental emergencies in peacetime.



In the next round the ‘**Climate Change & the Military Project, 2009-2010**’ was elaborated upon by **Air Marshal AK Singh (Ret)** - Chairman, Military Advisory Council, **Brig Gen Wendell C. King (Ret)** - US Army Command and General Staff College, **Chad Briggs** - Co-ordinator, International Assessment Team on Abrupt Climate Change, Global Energy and Environmental Strategic Ecosystem (Global-EESE), US Department of Energy (DOE) / Vice Chairman of IES-North America and **Rear**

**Admiral Neil Morisetti** - Climate and Energy Security Envoy, UK Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The project on [Climate Change and the Military](#) - based on the co-operation of a group of leading think tanks, in Asia, Europe and North America - is aimed at sending a strong message from the armed forces and the security community to the December 2009 climate change negotiations taking place at COP 15 in Copenhagen.

Owing to its capacity to analyse different situations the military can be useful in understanding the new variables of climate change in international security dynamics. The interrelation between climate change and security is now much clearer than it was in the

past: due to environmental changes distribution of dwindling natural resources can represent points of stress and conflict, especially when vulnerable strata of society are involved. Armed forces will face increased demands to deploy as part of crisis management efforts as a result of the increase in frequency and severity of these extreme events.

Military assets have been an integral part of the international community's humanitarian responses to many major, rapid-onset natural disasters, and they are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. It has been recommended that steps should be taken to improve the capacity of military commanders and forces to take part in natural disaster relief alongside humanitarian actors.

The final panel discussion was entitled **'To Copenhagen and beyond - What needs to be done?'**

**Catherine Jane Lorenzen**, Head of Section, Department for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark, **Philippe Lamberts**, MEP, Greens / EFA, **Alessandro Villa**, Project Manager / Crisis Response Planner, Unit A2: Crisis Response and Peacebuilding, DG RELEX, European Commission and **Theodoros Skylakakis**, MEP, EPP formed the panellists of this last session.



Agreeing on the necessity to find solutions to mitigate the effects of climate change, the panel insisted that everyone has to be included in the Copenhagen discussions and beyond.

According to the experts there are some key actions that could be realised to try to reach a successful result: overcome the short-term thinking, start thinking with the idea of limits, create an approach based on mitigation and adaptation, start up a real collaboration among States and think about climate change as a challenge that goes beyond single countries' borders.

There is no clear-cut solution for the problem but it is necessary to act and to do it now because whatever we do today it will have a positive effect in 20-25 years. Many politicians are still not facing this problem, waiting for others to act first but there's no more time to waste. We are not able to predict precisely what is going to happen and therefore it is necessary to come up with a clever adaptation programme that could evoke a global response regarding a possible crisis situation in the future.

The challenges raised by climate change are also hurdles faced by the existing system of international security governance. This is a global phenomenon that will have consequences for the future security architecture of our planet. It is vital that all international institutions perform at their best and co-operate closely in addressing this crucial challenge.

The final session ended on a positive note with Catherine Jane Lorenzen saying, "We also need to give [the people] a dream and not just a nightmare. We need to have that positive leadership about how this can be a brighter future and opportunity for us."