



CLIMATE DIPLOMACY IN PERSPECTIVE: FROM EARLY WARNING TO EARLY ACTION

BERLIN, FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE, 10-11 OCTOBER 2011

Summary

During the UN Security Council debate of 20 July 2011, the Council unanimously expressed concern about the possible impacts of climate change on peace and security. This lively debate with a record participation clearly underlined the need for climate protection and early action to address the security implications of climate change.

Against this backdrop, the German Federal Foreign Office hosted - in cooperation with the think tank *adelphi* - a two-day conference in Berlin that explored ways to further develop regional cooperation and dialogue in light of a changing climate. Opened by the German Minister of State Cornelia Pieper, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner (via video message), Bangladesh's Minister of Environment Hasan Mahmud, and Mohamed Shareef, Minister of State in the Republic of Maldives Environment Ministry, the conference welcomed 100 policy-makers and experts from more than 30 countries.

The participants emphasised the need for urgent action that complements and also goes beyond international climate negotiations. To this end, they stressed the importance of enhancing the dialogue on climate change and security, building early warning capacities and fostering partnerships for early action and conflict prevention. Participants engaged in

dedicated working groups on the three thematic areas water resource management, global food security, and rising sea levels that threaten coastal areas and low-lying island states. Their key recommendations include:

- to evaluate the need for a geopolitical change management that takes into account the effects of changing physical environments on governance structures;
- to rethink the concept of national sovereignty as future challenges go beyond political borders and to consider a strengthened role for regions of common exposure such as river deltas;
- to create awareness for shared vulnerabilities and dynamic adaptation needs in the light of globalisation, industrialisation and demographic changes;
- to develop guidelines for conflict sensitive adaptation practices, which includes linking track I and track II initiatives to reflect on the interests of groups most affected by climate change;
- to build capacities to spend climate funds coherently and transparently with a special view to the governance challenges of fragile countries and regions.

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Opening: Climate Diplomacy in Perspective

In her opening remarks, German Minister of State **Cornelia Pieper** welcomed the representatives from more than 30 countries, the European Union, international and regional organisations as well as Non-Governmental Organisations, who followed the invitation to come to Berlin and discuss foreign policy options addressing the security implications of climate change. She emphasised that the conference topic is of special concern to the German Foreign Office, particularly as water and food insecurity are already threatening people around the world. This Berlin conference is one of a series of activities initiated by the German Foreign Office in 2011 as part of its initiative on the security implications of climate change. Ms Pieper highlighted the importance of the UN Security Council Presidential Statement, adopted under the German Council presidency during this year's July meeting, and asked for early action and international partnerships to support countries at risk. Climate diplomacy, she underlined, can help to build strong networks of experts and diplomats. This is a key step in developing early warning capacities and in strengthening conflict prevention.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), welcomed in his video message the Berlin conference as a meaningful next step after the UN Security Council meeting in July. He stressed that one important scientific finding is that the fundamental impacts of climate change will be destabilising. The huge challenge of climate change thus requires comprehensive responses, and climate diplomacy efforts are indeed needed to

rediscover common interests and to pave the way for an economic transition of our societies.

Hasan Mahmud, Bangladesh's Minister of Environment, outlined in his keynote speech the enormous vulnerabilities of his country not only due to the low lying coastline, but also to the fact that it is the world's most densely populated country. Glacier melting in the Himalayas, increasingly erratic rainfall, and deforestation are affecting water availability in Bangladesh – with too much water in the rainy season, and too little water in the dry season. Mr Mahmud pointed out that for the first time Bangladesh experienced lack of food grain in 2008 and 2009. Against this backdrop climate diplomacy is a matter of utmost importance. As a good example of addressing future challenges, he referred to the initiative of the countries in the SAARC region to jointly create a food bank.

Mohamed Shareef, Minister of State in the Republic of Maldives Environment Ministry, emphasised that many small island states are already suffering from inundation and coastal erosion because of their low elevation, and that the rising sea level is an existential threat for the people of the Maldives. Illustrating how seriously his government is taking this challenge he declared that the Maldives plan to become carbon-neutral by 2020. High-carbon economic development is not a sustainable option, but low-carbon growth is something all countries can achieve, in particular by significantly and rapidly scaling up energy efficiency and the widespread use of renewable energy.

In the following discussion **Maciej Popowski**, Deputy Secretary General for the European External Action Service, and **Goran**

Working Group I: Water Diplomacy

Chair: Alexander Carius, adelphi, Germany

Iskandar Abdullaev, GIZ, Germany

Mark Zeitoun, University of East Anglia, UK

Michael Werz, Center for American Progress, USA



Svilanovic, Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Affairs at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, outlined the importance of enhancing the dialogue on climate change and security with partners and building early warning capacities in partner countries and organisations. Mr Popowski framed climate diplomacy as part of the wider EU diplomatic toolbox, a “comprehensive approach” that includes inter alia crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. Mr Svilanovic stressed the special importance of the food-energy-water nexus and outlined the work undertaken by the OSCE on future projections of these converging trends, based on different regional scenarios. The results, Mr Svilanovic said, can help to inform both field missions as well as the OSCE permanent council.

Water Diplomacy

One of the key impacts of climate change will be that of variable and often less predictable water availability, which will in particular affect water stressed regions. The importance of water for domestic use, agriculture, energy and industrial production will further grow in our century due to rising global demands. Thus, providing sustainable and equitable access to water within and between countries is a key condition for regional stability and development.

Water diplomacy needs to deal with conflict settings at different levels as water conflicts may occur at the local level, between cities and rural areas or between different sectors, and at the regional level in transboundary basins. As the example of northwest Africa illustrates, areas facing water and climate challenges overlap with areas of existing insecurity and migration routes stretching up from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean Sea. In this region, it becomes obvious how climate change impacts and resource scarcity interact with these mobility patterns, as well as with internal and transnational security challenges. Many governments already recognise the

critical nature of increased water scarcity. This becomes evident in planning documents – for instance those of the US administration over the last few years. The climate change, water and security nexus demands policy solutions that cut across levels of governance and unite traditionally distinct fields such as diplomacy, development, and environment.

For an efficient climate and water diplomacy, knowledge is needed to understand the local climatic, political and social context in which water conflict and cooperation takes place. This is also true for the interdependent social, physical and political processes that determine perspectives of water security as well as its interdependence with food, energy, climate, and human and national security.

The following main activities for water diplomacy have been identified:

First, generating knowledge and developing capacities in support of water and climate diplomacy. Diplomatic activities are required based on sound knowledge of context-specific resource and climate conditions. To achieve sustainable results, they need to be complemented by developing institutional capacities to implement cooperative agreements and integrated water resources management. This should include building capacities to develop and assess long term scenarios taking a nexus approach incorporating energy, food, climate change, and security issues.

Second, establishing platforms for policy learning is a suitable approach to support translating existing knowledge and legal frameworks into decision-making and implementation. This requires technical resources and capacities of the state and civil society to manage and monitor water resources. To improve transboundary water cooperation, such platforms can ensure coordination of activities and provide programmes to harmonise national water policies with regional development goals.

Working Group II: Food Security

Chair: Salomé Bronkhorst, ACCORD, South Africa

Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, EPA, Ethiopia

Dennis Hamro-Drotz, UNEP, Switzerland

Malini Mehra, Center for Social Markets, India



Third, re-evaluating existing institutional and legal arrangements should be done to ensure that they are inclusive, adaptive and flexible in addressing the consequences of climate change. Water diplomacy will be facilitated by building on existing regional cooperation agreements and established regional water cooperation organisations. However, due to climate change impacts, existing water sharing agreements may not be able to provide long-term solutions to future water disputes. The necessary adjustments can be informed by international water law, which provides a guiding framework for water diplomacy.

Fourth, building capable institutions to address the climate-water-security nexus. River basin organisations are often not sufficiently equipped in terms of resources and authority to address wider policy issues, and their mandates are restricted to water issues. Diplomatic efforts are needed in order to address wider political and especially security issues to complement water diplomacy for specialised water bodies. Regional organisations such as the African Union or the Southern African Development Community may assist in tackling such complex security issues. These regional efforts may also provide opportunities to advance international water law, for instance by translating innovative cooperation approaches into legal provisions or by linking water cooperation to wider regional development.

Food Security

Climate change is likely to reduce food production globally, with large parts of Africa and Asia suffering particularly negative impacts. Increasing food insecurity will not be the only challenge, as many countries still rely heavily on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods, including subsistence and income generation. Climate change impacts on food

security together with other global trends such as population growth, therefore, have simultaneously humanitarian as well as social and economic repercussions.

If these trends are not reversed, this may result in social unrest and political instability. Tensions often occur between communities and livelihood groups over fertile land and water. In the Sahel region, for instance, some of the main risks are already observable: food insecurity is due to changes in growing conditions i.e. higher temperatures or increased climate variability. In addition, resources are depleted, such as fish stocks, which may be negatively affected by sea-level rise or reduced river flows causing increasing saltwater intrusion. Fluctuations in food prices, largely depending on speculations, may cause tensions as well as lead to environmentally induced forced migration, which is increasingly visible in the Sahel region. These trends can be observed also in other regions of the world.

Solutions however, are available on many different levels. Sustainable agricultural practices for instance, which make use of crop poly-cultures, rotating crops, or returning organic matter to the soil are options on a more technical level.

Another solution is the support for informal diplomacy approaches that help to engage new actors. The track II Indo-Pakistani Cooperation Initiative, for instance, is engaging young leaders in climate diplomacy through joint discussions addressing natural disasters or transboundary water management. These groups have a vested interest in changing the discourse and moving beyond a traditional foreign policy focus. Informal diplomacy can also be inspired by experiences from community-based water resource management as well as peace parks from the Middle East. The initiative EcoPeace by Friends of the Middle East helped to successfully build trust among local communities around water issues in Israel, Palestine and Jordan.

Working Group III: Coastal Stability

Chair: Tom Spencer, Insitute for Environmental Security, UK

Abdoulkarim Traore, ACMAD, Niger

Major General A N M Muniruzzaman, BIPSS, Bangladesh

Cleo Paskal, Royal Institute for International Affairs, UK



The following main areas of action for food security have been identified:

First, improving early warning systems by going beyond national borders. To address the risks of food security, the contexts at regional and local levels need to be considered and capacities should be developed for joint risk mapping. Climate diplomacy should support early action to formulate enabling national and international policies and laws and ensure their early implementation at the local, and thus also at the global, level.

Second, developing guidelines for conflict sensitive adaptation practices are needed to address climate change impacts such as land degradation and changing precipitation patterns in conflict-prone areas. This also includes strengthening preventive action, resource rights and means of dispute resolution.

Third, supporting regional cooperation - also between groups at the subnational level. This can also help to link track I and track II initiatives, including mechanisms of informal diplomacy, to reflect on the interests of the affected populations. Climate diplomacy activities can strengthen confidence building among practitioners in jointly addressing climate change risks.

Fourth, building capacities to spend climate funds coherently and transparently with a special view to governance in fragile countries and regions. Climate diplomacy activities should help to provide further guidance in this respect for national and regional policy-makers.

Coastal Stability

Unprecedented in recent history, climate change-induced sea-level rise may alter maritime territories and increase the severity of extreme weather events and natural disasters. This will affect coastal communities and livelihoods, including their infrastructure, trade, and ultimately their borders. Concurrently, changes such as the melting of the Arctic or varying marine economic zones can create new conflict constellations over maritime resources. Countries are highly vulnerable to these changes, as political and physical infrastructures were created with a stable, unchanging environment in mind.

Major commercial hubs such as New York, London, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Mumbai are in low-lying coastal areas. Already, flooding is a regular event leading to the evacuation of thousands of people. Most critical infrastructure, such as pipelines, is close to coastlines as well. Singular events such as a disaster can therefore have impacts that are disproportionate in nature and are felt throughout the world.

The challenges can create a self-re-enforcing 'environmental trap' increasing the risks of state failure and conflict. Bangladesh is a key example: 35 million people live in areas at risk of inundation by sea-level rise. This may result in one of the largest population movements in history, occurring moreover in a region suffering from political instability and polarisation, unresolved conflicts and border disputes, and with three nuclear powers in close proximity.

The potential results of such a chain of events are visible at the Gulf of Aden: environmental degradation and state collapse resulted in a social and humanitarian catastrophe that threatens the present and future of a whole region. The Gulf is a choke point for trade, and piracy emerged as lucrative business for armed groups which continue to threaten international trade and pose significant risks to local communities and ship crews.



Major parts of South Asia and Eastern Africa but also other regions provide a glimpse of what the future impacts of climate change may hold. Climate diplomacy is necessary to prevent such developments and mitigate unavoidable impacts. Particularly, climate diplomacy needs to design and negotiate the international political framework to cope with coastal threats.

Four priorities emerged in the discussion:

First, raising awareness for interlinked vulnerabilities. Climate change is a cross-cutting challenge and thus requires a cross-cutting response. Settlement policies, demographic trends, and economic development lead to increased concentrations of people and assets in coastal areas – mostly to further human development, but thereby increasing exposure to climate threats. Climate diplomacy must raise awareness for underlying driving forces and mutually enforcing vulnerabilities by providing a platform for dialogue.

Second, building a shared understanding. While global climate change is decreasingly disputed, much uncertainty exists over the concrete regional and local impacts. This cannot be an excuse for inaction. Climate diplomacy must therefore engage in science-diplomacy and promote a shared understanding of common threats and challenges. This also requires a change in mindsets to think in changing geographies: as for instance the Mekong and Nile deltas originate from rivers several thousand kilometres upstream, it is necessary to move from a nation state-oriented approach to an integrative approach encompassing geophysical, geo-economic and geopolitical relationships.

Third, engaging new stakeholders. Environmental changes such as the redrawing of coastlines are upsetting geographic and thus geopolitical and geo-economic relationships. An open Arctic is an attractive trade route and mining area even for distant countries such as China – focusing on conflicting interests of littoral states alone is too narrow a focus. Climate diplomacy must accommodate the emerging stakeholder constellations and can actively encourage relevant players to engage into a joint dialogue.

Fourth, steering institutional change. Most international organisations and treaties were not designed to cope with a changing climate. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is a prime example, as the Convention has no provisions on changing sea-levels. UNCLOS needs adaptation, either by changing the treaty, preparing a new protocol, or using other appropriate means. Similar to UNCLOS, other international institutions may need to be re-evaluated in the light of climate change. Climate diplomacy can help facilitate the establishment of dynamic and adaptive institutions to address climate change challenges.



Closing: International Cooperation for Climate Diplomacy

Based on the presentation of key findings from the working group sessions, **Jan Kubis**, Executive Secretary at the UN Economic Commission for Europe, **Joseluis Samaniego Leyva**, Director of the Sustainable Development and Human Settlement Division at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and **Halldor Thorgeirsson**, Director for Implementation Strategy at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat, discussed key challenges to addressing the security implications of climate change within their respective regional and institutional mandates. Mr Kubis referred to the water sector playing a crucial role for instance in Central Asia. Binding regional water conventions like that of the UNECE are important as a legal framework by de-securing the discussion and providing a solid ground for solving disputes. Mr Samaniego Leyva stressed the need to clarify the risks of climate change and suggested that a vulnerability atlas of Latin America may be useful. Indeed, 40 percent of water basins are shared in this region, but not a single water agreement exists. Mr Thorgeirsson argued that the challenge of climate change exceeds the current capacity of the global governance system to address it. While the UNFCCC itself is important, it will not deliver a safe world but needs to align climate change with other strategic concerns such as trade and the transition to sustainable economies.

In the closing session, **Viktor Elbling**, Director General for Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development at the German Federal Foreign Office, and **John Ashton**, Special Representative on Climate Change from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, stressed the progress made during the last years to considering climate diplomacy as an integral element of the foreign policy agenda.

Mr Elbling outlined that climate diplomacy combines existing capacities of risk analysis in foreign ministries with sustainable solutions in areas such as water, energy, or technology cooperation. As a result, a new "value chain" of foreign policies must be created that moves beyond traditional patterns of diplomacy, for instance by addressing different regional levels of engagement. Mr Ashton emphasised that, given the scope of the challenge, climate change should be at the heart of diplomatic conversations. He argued that foreign ministries have significant convening power through the network of diplomatic representations, and can complement the efforts of sectoral policies as well as give them a global voice by disseminating relevant outcomes.

In order to further develop this agenda, both countries – Germany and the UK – will further promote proactive elements of climate diplomacy to complement the efforts of international climate change negotiations. In doing so, they aim to address the challenges of climate change and develop respective policies in international fora such as the United Nations Security Council, in various regional settings, as well as within the European Union.



Programme

Day 1, 10 October 2011

- 13.00 Registration**
- 13.30 Opening & Introduction**
Opening: **Cornelia Pieper**
Minister of State, German Federal Foreign Office
Video Message: **Achim Steiner**
Executive Director, UN Environment Programme
Keynote: **Honourable Hasan Mahmud**
Minister of Environment and Forest, Bangladesh
Honourable Mohamed Shareef
State Minister, Ministry for Housing and the Environment, Maldives
- 14.15 Panel Discussion** moderated by **Jeanne Rubner**, Süddeutsche Zeitung
Maciej Popowski
Deputy Secretary General for the European External Action Service
Goran Svilanovic
Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Affairs, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Honourable Hasan Mahmud
Minister of Environment and Forest, Bangladesh
Honourable Mohamed Shareef
State Minister, Ministry for Housing and the Environment, Maldives
Viktor Elbling
Director General for Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development, German Federal Foreign Office
- 15.30 Coffee Break**
- 16.00 Session I: Parallel Thematic Working Groups**
WG I: Water Diplomacy
WG II: Food Security
WG III: Coastal Stability
- 19.00 Reception at the “Internationaler Club”**
Hosted by State Minister Cornelia Pieper

Day 2, 11 October 2011

- 09.00 Session II: Parallel Thematic Working Groups**
Continuation of Working Group Discussions
- 10.30 Coffee Break**
- 11.00 Session III: International and Regional Perspectives**
Moderated by **Viktor Elbling**, Director General for Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development, German Federal Foreign Office
Feedback from the parallel thematic Working Groups
- Panel Discussion**
Jan Kubis
Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Europe
Joseluis Samaniego Leyva
Director, Sustainable Development and Human Settlement Division, UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Halldor Thorgeirsson
Director for Implementation Strategy, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat
- 12.30 Closing Session**
Viktor Elbling
Director General for Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development, German Federal Foreign Office
John Ashton
Special Representative on Climate Change, UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office

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