

<http://lipietz.net/Presentation-du-rapport-Changements-climatiques-et-securite-internationale>

# Présentation du rapport "Changements climatiques et sécurité internationale"

- Député européen (Verts, France) - Mes initiatives - Sécurité collective et environnement -



Date de mise en ligne : Thursday 12 June 2008

---

Copyright © Alain Lipietz - All rights reserved

---

<doc727|center>

<doc792|center>

# Introduction

I would like to thank the organisers of this debate for inviting me to participate in this timely and important discussion on Collective Security and Environment.

I am sure you are all aware that Javier Solana and the European Commission recently presented to EU Heads of State and Government a joint report on the security implications of climate change.

The report's core argument is that climate change is already having a profound impact on international security; that this will intensify in the years ahead; and that we need urgent action to safeguard our own interests.

The European Security Strategy of 2003, which we are currently reviewing already highlighted this aspect, stating that "competition for natural resources – notably water – will be aggravated by global warming over the next decades and is likely to create further turbulence and migratory movements in various regions."

The most appropriate way of viewing climate change in the security context is as a threat multiplier: it aggravates the stresses and strains within and between countries. Climate change threatens to overburden those countries and regions that are already fragile and conflict-prone. The critical variable is governance.

The scientific argument about climate change is over - climate change is occurring and human activity is contributing to this. Even if we switched off for good all the lights today, the consequences of past emissions will be felt tomorrow and we must prepare for them now. This equally applies to the security consequences. So this is not another report on climate change or development - the difference is the focus on the security dimension.

Let me be clear: saying that climate change poses security risks reinforces the need to stick to our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We cannot give up on mitigation nor on finding ways to adapt to unavoidable climate change. Doing so is tremendously important. But it is not the whole story. Both mitigation and adaptation should go hand in hand with addressing the international security threats of climate change. Both should also be seen as preventive security policy. Investment in Mitigation and Adaptation is also conflict prevention policy.

We do not want to "securitize" the debate but simply say that the report reinforces the need for curbing emissions and acknowledges that Mitigation and Adaptation remain in the centre of the EU and international efforts (UN framework) to combat the adverse effects of climate change.

If anything the message of the report is resolutely non-military. The report demonstrates that climate change can lead to the creation of hard security threats but that there are no hard power solutions. No weapons system can hold the advance of a hurricane bearing down on a city, no weapons system can stop the rising sea. The truth is that if we don't act now we will be faced with very hardcore options tomorrow and to avoid that we have to put together our capacities to act today. The EU is well placed to respond. We have at our disposal a unique combination of

instruments; economic and development aid, humanitarian assistance, support for good governance, human rights and the rule of law, security sector reform and civilian crisis management capabilities, only to name but a few. This combination is the special "value added" that the EU can bring also to tackling the security impacts of climate change.

Let me highlight just three of the threats and give some geographic examples:

### **1. Conflicts over resources, especially where access is politicised. Food, water and energy.**

#### *Africa*

Africa is the continent that is most vulnerable to climate change and water scarcity. Many people believe that water and land shortages are at the root of the conflict in Sudan. It has often been said that the conflict in Darfur is in many ways the first conflict to be caused by climate change. There are also conflicts over water in the Nile Basin and Lake Chad.

#### *Middle East*

The Middle East is one of the most arid regions on earth. It accounts for five per cent of the world's population but has only one per cent of its fresh water resources. The quantity and quality of water available in the region is declining and is likely to have fallen by half in 2050. Control over water resources in order to ensure water security has been a prime cause of tension and conflict in the Middle East.

#### *Central Asia*

The terms water and security are synonymous, particularly in Central Asia. Tajikistan lost a third of the surface area of its glaciers during the second half of the 20th century alone, while Kyrgyzstan has lost more than a hundred glaciers over the past four decades. There is already tension in Central Asia between countries upstream that have easy access to water but no oil and countries downstream that have oil but depend on the countries upstream for water.

### **2. Increased migration is putting extra pressure on transit and destination countries. This could also lead to political and ethnic tensions.**

### **3. Political tensions are likely as coastlines change, islands disappear or access to new routes and resources open up. We are already seeing countries asserting claims in the Arctic.**

I will not enter into more details of the report which I am sure that you are all familiar with. But I would like to look to the future and outline, from the Council's perspective, what some of the next steps could be.

Firstly, the report is simply a springboard for future action. I am glad that initial reactions from the European Parliament and Member States have been very positive. As you know I and my Commission counterpart briefed the Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence on 31 March 2008 about the joint report. The High Representative also spoke to MEPs about the importance of this issue when he addressed both the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on 8 April 2008 and the plenary of the European Parliament on Wednesday, 4 June 2008 on the EU's foreign, security and defence policy. We should build on this. It is not the end of the story

but the beginning of a process.

The European Council gave a deadline for appropriate follow up, in particular on how to intensify cooperation with third countries and regions, by the latest December 2008. This will be important to maintain momentum.

### **The report sets out a range of recommendations:**

More focused research and analysis. Sharing papers and analysis of those areas of the world where the climate change issue is likely to have greatest impact (sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and Central Asia).

Engagement with third countries and international organisations as we already do with energy security. The report is now part of the agenda in our political dialogue with third countries.

Need to address the implications on territorial claims, exclusive economic zones and access to new trade routes. We should implement the existing provisions and, where appropriate, strengthen the existing legal framework. The intention was not to call into question the Law of the Sea.

Factor in climate change induced threats in our Early Warning Mechanisms.

Link with climate change negotiations. Up to now climate change has predominately been discussed from a scientific perspective (IPCC).

Public Diplomacy: In all our relationships - from Africa to the Middle East; from Latin America to Central Asia and beyond - we should raise awareness about the security effects of climate change.

Further integrate adaptation and resilience to climate change into our EU regional strategies such as for Africa and the Middle East. The report also proposes an EU Arctic Policy.

Initiate a dialogue process with International actors (organisations and partners) on the collective approach of the subject. I would like to highlight in particular the Conflict prevention workshop of Madariaga Foundation and Folke Bernadotte academy of last April (24-25 April Brussels) which brought together Government and NGO representatives as well as international and regional organisations in a stimulating debate. We plan to continue and reinforce this dialogue.

## **Conclusion**

This report does not have all the answers and it doesn't claim to have them. It opens the door for future concerted action across the pillars of the EU policies. With the support of the Presidency, (present and incoming ones), the Member States and the Commission we aim at a more detailed action plan to be presented by December this year.

We would welcome opportunity for further exchange of views with MEPs.