

CLIMATE CHANGE & SECURITY

Conference Report
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OBSERVATOIRE
DE L'AFRIQUE

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Introduction: the outline of the conference¹

Climate change is best viewed as a threat multiplier, which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability. The core challenge is that climate change threatens to overburden states and regions that are already fragile and conflict prone. It is important to recognise that the impact is not just of a humanitarian nature; it also includes political and security risks. What influence will the risks and challenges of climate change have on the African continent and how should they be dealt with policy wise?

First of all we need to delineate the nexus between climate change and conflict. Is there such a nexus and if so what are its limits? How do we not fall into the security trap without denying the security debate the attention it deserves? The causes of conflict are often multilayered and complex. This is certainly the case with climate change and international security, because climate change can intensify existing problems to which the answer is often as multifaceted as the problem itself. There are examples of pastoralist communities in the Horn of Africa² and the Sahel region³ in which tensions have risen due to the extended drought but traditionally those communities have strong conflict resolution mechanisms and are not prone to be drawn into escalating violent conflicts. On

the other hand there are examples of conflicts on the repartition of natural resources and the detrimental effects this has on local communities. These cases illustrate the need for research and contextualisation to prevent incorrect conclusions from being drawn.

What are the underlying issues at stake that pose a danger in combination with climate change? Both the AU and the EU have recognised the importance of climate change.

The AU launched its declaration of Libreville after the summit of the Ministers of Health and Environment at the end of August⁴ in which it acknowledged the importance of climate change and the need for preventive strategies for the protection of public health. The EU SG/HR identified six threats in his paper on Climate Change and International Security⁵: conflict over resources, loss of territory and border disputes, environmentally-induced migration, situations of fragility and radicalisation, tension over energy supply and pressure on international governance. The potential conflict over resources overarches food security and issues of conflict over the shortage of arable land or fresh water and energy. Desertification could trigger a vicious circle of degradation, migration and conflicts over territory. Migration in turn may increase conflicts in transit and destination areas, which may significantly increase instability in weak or failing states by overstretching the already limited capacity of governments to respond effectively to the

¹ This conference was organised by EGMONT-Royal Institute for International Relations within the framework of the Observatoire de l'Afrique and its members and in partnership with ACTED and CERI

² Nyukuri Elin in the ISS workshop report on Climate Change and Human Security 27-28 February 2008, Pretoria, South Africa.

³ Nyong, A, Fiki C & McLeman R 2006 Drought-related conflicts, management and resolution in the West African Sahel: Considerations for climate change research. African Security Review 17(3) 39-57

⁴ 28-29 August 2008 the declaration of Libreville, Gabon concluding a meeting of the African Ministers of Health and Environment: www.unep.org/health-env/pdfs/libreville-declaration-eng.pdf

⁵ 14 March 2008: Climate change and international security. Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council <http://www.obsafrique.eu/documents/Climate%20Change%20&%20international%20security.pdf>

challenges they face. The already burdened international security architecture will be put under increasing pressure to respond to these climate change challenges. All these issues are interlinked and each of them can cascade into the next, aggravating a potential conflict. The unique challenge for African countries and the international community as a whole is not so much to reduce the convergence of these multiple stressors but the fact that climate change is a non-temporal threat, with no clear defined parameters except the fundamentals mentioned above, that can not be tackled by military means. Three processes are put forward as a means to deal with climate change and its consequences by the international community: adaptation, mitigation and capacity building.⁶ These processes are largely seen as development-oriented but what could the security-based approach contribute to these processes? What is the security perspective on these processes as a means of tackling climate change?

Climate change and security: a cross cutting issue

The presentations and interventions at the conference underlined the **need for a multifaceted and multilayered approach to climate change**. Although this approach is not easily translated to policy, that is exactly what will be needed: a case by case evaluation of the underlying political, economic and social contexts to determine in what way climate change is exacerbating existing problems and how they can be remediated. Despite this very nuanced and individual approach there was consensus about the fact that **climate change is a threat multiplier** for existing concerns that are put into

⁶ Van Ypersele, J-P Les changements climatiques et la politique belge de coopération au développement : défis et opportunités Juin 2008

a new perspective. More importantly there is a need for **political engagement** to take climate change seriously and to tackle all issues related to this complex phenomenon.

While taking these framing remarks into account, several cross cutting issues came to the fore throughout the conference that will be addressed in more detail below.

Sustainable agriculture

Climate change will have a massive impact on the availability of crops and food in Africa. The studies that are referred to in the last IPCC report are quite daunting:

- Yields could be reduced by up to 50% by 2020
- Arid and semi-arid areas are projected to increase by 60-90 M ha by 2080 (5-8%), even if this will not apply to every region.
- Greater erosion, reductions in crop growth period
- Overall, reduction of agricultural output could exceed 15%

Agriculture is a sector where climate change has a very direct impact. The IPCC report published in 2007 highlighted that Africa is the most vulnerable continent to climate change because of weak capacities to adapt. In rural environments, the adaptation strategies have already been put in place to deal with what already exists in terms of climatic variations. But it may not be able to allow the community to cope with future climate change. Food security, the use of water, salinisation, desertification and the use of crops for energy are only a few of the problems that the African continent is facing in terms of agriculture. This is an illustration of how all these nutrition related problems are a case in point for the underlying need for a paradigm shift in

agriculture. There are currently two main ways of thinking about agriculture:

The **Green Revolution** model has been influencing the entire planet for 40 years. The Green Revolution spread technologies that already existed, but had not been widely used outside of industrialised nations. These technologies included pesticides, irrigation projects, synthetic nitrogen fertilizer and improved crop varieties developed through the conventional (that is, not using biotechnology), science-based breeding methods available at the time. The African continent did not benefit from this Green Revolution or from its effects for many reasons. There were problems of technological transfers, but also a lack of political will from the part of former colonial rulers. They wished that exchanges between former rulers and colonies remained unilateral.

The new paradigm in agriculture is **agro-ecology**. It is the application of the ecological science to agriculture. It yields the potential to build resilient systems, which is the ability of a system to go back to normal functioning after a stress, such as drought or floods. Agro-ecology does not only focus on technologies such as plant breeding or fertilizers, it also limits the manageable impact of climate change and improves the situation of most vulnerable people in Africa.

The outcome of today's situation in the agricultural sector in Africa is also due to the **decrease in investments** for the past thirty years. The agricultural sector can't progress under systematic disinvestment. Even international aid for agriculture in Africa has decreased significantly over that period. This means there is a shared responsibility for both international donors and governments in Africa, who haven't given sufficient attention to agriculture although it concerns 80% of the African population. This

illustrates the fact that the agricultural sector has to tackle numerous hurdles of political, economic and social nature to get back in shape and climate change could exacerbate these underlying problems. A very recent example of the importance of political and economic parameters in agriculture is the food riots in Zimbabwe.

Human security

The UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report's definition of human security argues that the scope of global security should be expanded to include threats in seven areas: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Within the scope of this conference on environmental and political security but in the next section we will focus on food security and water to illustrate how climate change functions as a threat multiplier in a broader security approach.

Food security

According to the UNDP definition food security requires that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. According to the United Nations the overall availability of food is not a problem but the poor distribution of food and the lack of purchasing power is.

The concern for food security has brought the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to the fore. The right to food is not the right to receive food, it is not a charity it is a human right. A right on which there has been tremendous progress over the last decades. According to the human-rights approach, States are obliged to respect, protect, and fulfil or facilitate human rights. Adapted to the question of food security this means that states must

respect the existing access to food; they must not take any measure that prevent or destroy the access of people to food or food producing resources. In this context 'to protect' means that States must take the necessary measures to ensure that third parties (such as individuals, companies, or other countries) do not deprive people of their access to adequate food. States must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people's access to food and food producing resources with maximum efforts.

The added value of the human rights approach in climate change discussions lies in the shift of focus. It brings out the effect of climate change on people's lives, particularly the most vulnerable populations. It provides an additional accountability framework for the different actors. These arguments could be important in the coming negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Water

Water scarcity, desertification and salinisation are important environmental problems in Africa. Climatological projections paint a grim picture for the African coastal cities, since six of the ten largest African cities are located near the coasts. In West Africa, a roughly 500 km long metropolitan belt is developing between Accra and the Niger Delta, which will be highly vulnerable in the face of any rise in sea level. In terms of political risk and security analysis security trends like drought, famines and flooding are major drivers of migration and further regional destabilization. In the worst case the sea level rise and the factors mentioned above could create a transcontinental belt of fragile states.

This projection confirms the cascading effect that climate change could have on a lack of water management and the way that could influence a

myriad of existing political, economic and social issues. Regionally the adaptation and mitigation capability are lacking, as is the comprehensive policy approach to make the necessary provisions. On the international level the UN has taken the initiative to draw up the Water Convention at Helsinki in 1992. This convention is intended to strengthen national measures for the protection and ecological sound management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters. For the Water Convention to become effective 35 members need to ratify it and so far only 16 members have done so, which is proof of the lack of political commitment on the issue of water for the last 17 years.

Be that as it may we still have to be very careful in assuming the link between climate change and conflict. The conflict between Mauritania and Senegal from 1989 to 1991 on the water management of the Senegal River Basin Development Authority was strongly linked to political tensions between the two countries. The core of the conflict lay in the tensions between the majority of the people in Mauritania and the government on one side and the black minority on the other. Thousands of people from the black minority of Mauritania were denied their Mauritanian nationality and deported to Senegal due to the conflict. The water management in the river basin could have been the trigger of the clash but not the origin of it.

The next section will further explore the link between climate change and conflict and give some examples of conflicts in which climate change has played an important role.

Climate change and conflict in the Horn of Africa

Destabilising effects of climate change on pastoralist communities: from food shortages to cattle raiding

The **Karamoja** is a region northeast of Uganda bordering with Kenya in the West and South Soudan in the North. This region is prone to food shortages due to unpredictable weather patterns but also illustrates how the difficulties with food production and management can cascade into other coping mechanisms like cattle raiding and the proliferation of guns. In the Karamoja region rainfall is unpredictable and there has been a drastic reduction of the vegetation cover of between 4 and 8% in the last 10 years. Throughout the century, it has changed from savannah grassland over steppe to thickets and shrubs today

The World Food Programme (WFP) has a permanent base in Karamoja and distributed food there since 1963. It was one of the first operations that WFP did in Africa. The droughts reoccurred almost permanently since 1982. Prolonged drought periods like this have destabilising effects on a society. People flee the region if they can, but the most tangible effects are for the pastoralists who have to roam the land in search of suitable pasture for their cattle. The reduction of pastures reduces the number of cattle and intensifies cattle raiding. In the past, raiding was mainly a survival response, taking place when disease and famine struck a community. To restock depleted livestock, they went and raided others. Now people do raids to get income, it is done at any time and perpetrated for commercial gain. Raiding used to be controlled by the Council of Elders who allowed the use of small weapons like spears, bows and arrows but currently armed youth gangs use machine guns to control crowds to take their cattle.

In the **Ilemi Triangle**, a disputed territory that seats where the border of South-Eastern Sudan joins with North-western Kenya, and South-western Ethiopia the problems are very similar. Due to climate change the pastoralists had to cross over into each other's grazing grounds thereby disrupting the traditional co-existence in this transborder region and resorting to armed conflicts. Climate change also has its bearings on the cultural traditions of pastoralist communities in the horn of Africa, more specifically on the initiation of young warriors. After initiation, the warrior is allowed to marry by paying an appropriate bride price, which ranges from 50 to 100 cattle or a few Kalashnikovs... The dowry places enormous pressure on young men, whose choice is between accumulating livestock through traditional animal husbandry, which could take many years, or resorting to a quick fix, and that is raiding.

The reinforcement of the culture of arm bearing is the synthesis of various factors. First the insecure social relationships, where the traditional instruments of intercommunity conflict management are weak, and pristine tradition is an enormous burden of young male right of passage. Rustling for livestock and using guns are means to actualise the right of passage into manhood. Secondly, there is a symbiotic relationship between security and economic development, in the sense that as climate change degrades the productivity of land, raiding becomes a coping mechanism. Finally the proliferation of guns in the periphery of the State is the outcome of international vectors, particularly civil conflicts, which have emanated from State collapse and a product of domestic manipulation by irresponsible leaders.

The politics of climate change and security in Africa

Climate change is an intricate issue for policy makers because it is a cross cutting subject that has repercussions on decisions and operations from planning over the deployment to the exit strategy on all levels. There is willingness from the EU and African institutions to work closely together on this subject taking into account the complexity of the matter. The EUFOR mission in Chad is a clear example: the EU has taken the environment on board as a factor in its operation but is fully aware that their presence and the security they want to bring, has a burden on the environment.

One of these unintended feedbacks from the conflict on the environment in Chad and Sudan is the change in the set-up of the population. There is an **increase of urbanisation** in Darfur and Eastern Chad due to the improved security. The increase of urbanisation attracts **Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and (climate) refugees** next to urban centres, which is problematic because it takes away the best cultivable lands. That in turn puts **food security** under pressure due to a lack of arable land and water.

The IDP's and (climate) refugees have a willingness to return and the EU is encouraging it when possible, but some of these demographic changes are irreversible. Many of the refugee camps have become semi-permanent. In addition returning seems not always feasible when villages have been burnt down, destroyed and the necessary resources to rebuild the villages are not available. On top of that the return of refugees to Sudan might make the current conflict and the environmental situation worse than before.

The analyses of facts on the ground in Darfur and Chad have shown a cascade of interlinked problems or

dilemmas relating to climate change and conflict. The complex relationship between climate change and conflict has been used politically by different actors to take position. Staging climate change suits the Sudanese government, and takes away a sense of responsibility for the current conflict and its history. That might have been the reason why the UN Secretary-General put it forward in the hope to revive dialogue between the West and the Sudanese government. In other contexts, such as Ethiopia, the same argument of climate change has been put forward to justify food aid which was in reality chronic for several decades. Nevertheless, to deny the role of climate and opt for a purely political vision of the conflict would be a simplification, and one should accept the accumulation of factors in such a complex conflict, including climate.

What lessons for the EU-African relations?

As we have seen in the previous sections climate change has been used as an argument in political discussions on peace and security, confronted policy makers with unexpected consequences for which they have not yet formulated adequate answers. We have seen several examples: the EUFOR mission in Chad that was confronted with the intricate issue of refugees in the area, the UN that used of climate change as an argument to get out of a political impasse with the Sudanese government, and the AU Pastoralist Policy Framework that is confronted with ill informed perceptions of policymakers on pastoralists. These examples illustrate **the need for further fundamental and policy oriented research on the multifaceted relations between climate change and conflict in Africa**. This is not only an opportunity to develop new insights in the causes and consequences of the complex relation between conflict and climate change on the African continent, it is first and for most a new perspective on existing problems on in Africa. .

In terms of climate change, international and African Institutions have initiated interesting initiatives like the pastoralist policy framework, a collaboration between the AU and OCHA, but **the African continent is still lacking effective mitigation and adaptation capability** to face existing and future challenges as we have illustrated with the cases of the Karamoja and the Ilemi triangle.

There is a need to encouraging greater regional cooperation Although the emphasis throughout in the EU-Africa strategy is that African problems need African solutions, there can be a role for the EU. It could act as an outside source of advice, a catalyst, helping countries to talk together about these problems.

The investment in and the development of long-term **Early Warning Systems** is crucial to gain a insight into climate change. As part of the **EU-Africa joint strategy**, there is work on supporting **the development of a situation room based in Addis Ababa** as part of the crisis management structures. This situation room should function as an observation network for gathering data on climate change and underlying problems on the African continent that cause distress and lead to conflict.

Programme

9.00 *Welcome and registration*

9.30 Introduction:

- **Koen Vlassenroot** (Egmont, Director of the Central Africa Programme)
- **Pascal Bernard** (ACTED, Operations Director)
- **David Knaute** (ACTED, Project coordinator)
- **Elizabeth Paula Napeyok** (Ambassador of the Republic of Uganda to France)

9.45 **Panel 1:** *'Governing Climate change and human security in Africa'*

Facilitator: Roland Marchal (senior researcher at CNRS/CERI)

- **Fabrice Renaud** (UNU/Institute for Environment and Human Security)
- **Bertrand Charrier** (Director Chirac Foundation for Sustainable Development)
- **Daniel Compagnon** (Science Po Bordeaux)
- **Dennis Tänzler** (senior project manager at Adelphi Research)
- **François Jullien** (AFD)

11.15 *Coffee*

11.45 **Panel 2:** *'Structural causes and mitigating factors of climate change : case study food'*

Facilitator: Vincent Foucher (senior researcher at CEAN-IEP Bordeaux)

- **Gaëtan Vanloqueren** (Advisor to the Special rapporteur on the right to food DE SCHUTTER)
- **Gilles Hirzel** (Alliés Contre la Faim)
- **Victor Onenchan** (ACTED)

13.15 *Lunch*

14.30 **Panel 3:** *'The multifaceted impact of climate change: pastoralism'*

Facilitator: Sacha Kagan (researcher and coordinator of Karamoja campaign at euphana Universität Lüneburg)

- **Nene Mburu** (*Independent Scholar*) *Ilemi triangle : the complexity of disarming 'fragmentary' societies*
- **Neil Clarke** (Minority Rights Group International)

- **Ben Knighton** (Oxford Center for Mission Studies) *Security and the Incidence of Rainfall in Karamoja: The problems with “peace”*
- **Romain Benicchio** (OXFAM)
- **Jérôme Tubiana** (Independent researcher)

16.00 *Coffee*

16.30 Panel 4: *‘Climate change and security in Africa: What are the consequences for the relations EU-Africa?’*

Facilitator: Koen Vlassenroot (Director of the Central Africa Programme of EGMONT)

- **Ali Wario** (Chair of the Specialist Task Force for the AU Pastoralist Policy Framework for Africa and Kenya Assistant Minister of State for Special Programmes)
- **Bwango Apuuli** (Deputy Director of IGAD Climate prediction and applications centre)
- **Torsten Ahren** (Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for Sudan BRYLLE)
- **Richard Crowder** (Policy Unit in the EU Council)

Mission Statement

The 'Observatoire de l'Afrique' is a network of independent institutes and experts coordinated by the Central Africa Programme of the Brussels based EGMONT – Royal Institute for International Relations. The network aims at encouraging discussion between African and European experts on African security and political issues. This project was initiated to remedy the non-existence of a comprehensive forum for academic and professional exchanges on African issues of relevance for CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and the ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy), including a wide range of African stakeholders. The overall aim is to create a forum for open, constructive dialogue and debate, and provide useful conclusions to a wide range of policy makers.

The Observatoire is based on two types of meetings. Two policy-relevant major conferences are held each year. Of these seminars, one is to be held in the EU and another in Africa. In addition, a number of punctual meetings (Africa Briefings) are organized that aim at providing insights into relevant political and security issues in Africa. The Observatoires' website (www.obsafrique.eu) provides permanent space for debate, publications and relevant information.

The target audience for these debates include: policy makers at different levels, including the EU institutions, the AU, diplomatic staff, MFA and MOD officials and representatives of key think tanks and academia.

The Observatoire is developed in association with the 'Délégation aux Affaires Stratégiques' (DAS, Ministry of Defence – France). EGMONT is an independent think-tank based in Brussels.

Associated Members

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