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FORUM

Maintenance of International Peace and Security: The Impact of Climate Change

By Peter Wittig, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations (UN)

Over one year ago the Pacific Small Islands states urged the Security Council to consider the security implications of climate change. They appealed to the Security Council to fulfil its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The reason why these countries urged the Security Council to act is clear: Already today they suffer from the security implications of climate change. They have to deal with rising sea levels, loss of land and increasing scarcity of resources. The governments of these countries have to resettle their people and they have to assure that the distribution of basic commodities doesn't turn into violent fights for survival. For them the security dimension of climate change is crystal clear, it is their daily challenge.

The situation of the Small Island States is a compelling reason in and of itself to discuss today's matter in the Security Council. At this point it might be useful to remember that the United Nations have always drawn their unique legitimacy from the equality of states: big or small, rich or poor – each state has the same right for its existential fears and threats to be addressed.

There is, however, even more reason for the Council to debate the security dimension of climate change: Because what happens to some small island states today might well happen to other countries tomorrow. Most national security establishments consider the threat of global warming as one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century.

If we take a look at the conflicts on the agenda of the Council, we will easily see that quite a few of these conflicts are, already today, driven by desertification, lack of water and increased transborder migration. We have no doubt that the environmental degradation due to climate change very often acts as a driver of conflict. We all know that conflicts of this sort do not remain isolated within a single country, but on the contrary tend to destabilize whole regions. We should also keep in mind that not all states and societies have the same capacity to adapt to the dramatic changes in their environment.

The mandate of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. We are convinced that it is the Council's duty to act with foresight and to do its best to prevent crises before they become acute. We therefore welcome that the Council has successfully debated structural aspects of conflicts before, such as the interrelatedness of development or HIV/AIDS with security.

I would like to reiterate that Germany has a keen interest in a Security Council that rises beyond the day-to-day management of acute crisis but takes into consideration the underlying causes of conflict. The strong interest of the membership in today's debate makes one thing clear, namely, that the members want to see this topic on the agenda of the Council.

This forum is a shortened version of the statement made on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany at the UN Security Council debate on the implications of climate change on 20 July 2011.

For a concept note for the debate, please see [here](#).

For further information on Germany's contribution to the debate on climate change and international security, please see [here](#).

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POLICY & RESEARCH

Climate Security Debate Enters the Security Council

"The Security Council expresses its concern that possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security." The wording of the Presidential Statement agreed by the Security Council during its session on climate change on 20 July truly is less clear than simply calling climate change a "threat multiplier" – an expression used by many analysts and decision makers in the context. The meaning, however, may go beyond the debates that have taken place in academia and among policy makers so far. As Peter Wittig, Germany's Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), commented on the outcome: "This is a good day today for climate security." This may be true for a couple of reasons.

First, the debate in the Security Council encouraged an unusually high number of interventions by member states indicating the deep concern of many representatives – even of those against discussing the issue in the Security Council for fear of overloading the Council's agenda.

Second, after a lively debate with seemingly unbridgeable differences between proponents and opponents of addressing climate change in this Council setting, a consensus was finally achieved. In other words, the major emitters of greenhouse gases around the world agreed that these emissions may partly be responsible for further exacerbating instability and conflict. Surprisingly, Ambassador Susan Rice of the U.S. joined the proponents by framing opposition to an agreement on the threat of climate change to peace and security during the debate as "pathetic", "short-sighted" and "a dereliction of duty". China and Russia, with substantial resistance before, but also Brazil and India finally joined a compromise – all of them emphasizing the outstanding role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the key arena to address climate change. It probably will be useful to remind all these countries of highlighting the outstanding role of UNFCCC at the UN climate change conference in Durban later this year.

Third, in the Presidential Statement, the Secretary-General is asked to provide conflict analysis and so-called 'contextual information' when climate change trends are endangering the process of consolidating peace. In this case, the mandate of the Security Council most obviously is at risk. It will be interesting to see how the required conflict analysis will be provided. However, regular peace and conflict assessments of climate change impacts can be a crucial step towards mainstreaming climate change in the field

of foreign and security policy and contribute to strengthening crisis and conflict prevention. (*Dennis Taenzler*)

For the Presidential Statement, please see

http://ecc-platform.org/images/CCIS/UNSC_Presidential_Statement.pdf

To find more information on the debate, please see

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10332.doc.htm>

For the overall context on climate change and security, please see

http://ecc-platform.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1874

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Famine in Somalia: Food Security Requires Stability

For months now Somalia, particularly the southern part of the country, has been ravaged by the worst famine since the early 1990s. Tens of thousands of people have died. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), over 120,000 people fled into neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya in June and July alone. Within Somalia, a further 1.5 million people are moving from rural areas into the country's urban centres to seek food and refuge. While the provision of aid to the starving people in refugee camps in neighbouring countries and even in Somalia has been improving, estimates by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net) indicate that international assistance will be needed until at least December 2011 to overcome the humanitarian crisis.

Decades of armed conflict have made Somalia highly vulnerable to rising food prices and the negative impacts of climate change. Experts had warned of an impending food scarcity in the Horn of Africa several months ago. The drought conditions prevailing for the last two years may have served to trigger the current crisis, but man-made factors have exacerbated its magnitude. The ongoing conflict has fomented violence and instability and also hindered Somalia's economic recovery. At the same time, poverty and the precarious food situation are exacerbating the spiral of violence, as underlined in the "Five Year Strategy in Somalia 2011-2015," published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The refusal of the radical Islamic al-Shabab militia to allow foreign aid into the country during the present crisis only worsened the suffering of the Somalis. Increased food prices on the world market also made it more difficult to procure food for the starving population.

At a donor conference hosted by the African Union in Addis Ababa on 25 August, over 350 million US dollars were pledged for aid operations in the Horn of Africa. The international community was also called upon to support medium- and long-term climate adaptation measures in the region to mitigate the impact of global warming on food security. (*Kerstin Fritzsche*)

The FAO publication "5 Year Strategy and Plan of Action" for Somalia is available at

<http://faosomalia.org/uploads/FAO%20Somalia%205-year%20strategy.pdf>

Regular Food Security Updates on Somalia by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net) can be accessed at:

<http://www.fews.net/Pages/country.aspx?gb=so&l=en>

Visit the UN OCHA website for further information on the situation in Somalia:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/Default.aspx?alias=ochaonline.un.org/somalia>

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Resource Curse Revisited – A Nigerian Nightmare

Natural resources, particularly oil, can give rise to the so-called resource curse affecting resource-rich countries, where large parts of the population live in poverty and where there are high corruption rates. A comprehensive assessment of the consequences of oil operations in Nigeria now reveals another aspect of this resource curse: The extent of environmental contamination in Ogoniland outlined by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) is nothing less than shocking. As Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, said: "The oil industry has been a key sector of the Nigerian economy for over 50 years, but many Nigerians have paid a high price, as this assessment underlines."

UNEP scientists identify severely contaminated underground areas, which appear unaffected at the surface. In at least ten Ogoni communities, drinking water is contaminated with high levels of hydrocarbons. As a consequence, the organization asked for immediate action to protect human health and to reduce the risks of affected communities. An alarming example is the case of a community in Nisisioken Ogale. Here, families are drinking water from wells that is contaminated with the carcinogen benzene, which is obviously caused by a nearby petroleum pipeline. The respective levels are more than 900 times above World Health Organization guidelines.

So, what to do? UNEP suggest a combination of activities. Whereas the clean-up of selected contaminated land areas in Ogoniland can happen within five years, the restoration of other heavily-impacted mangrove stands and swamplands will take up to 30 years. The report recommends establishing new institutions in the country to support a comprehensive environmental restoration exercise. Among them are an Ogoniland Environmental Restoration Authority to oversee implementation of the study's recommendations and an Environmental Restoration Fund for Ogoniland, equipped with initial funding of US\$1 billion. The oil industry and the government should provide the respective initial funding, according to UNEP. This would be a first step toward stopping the resource curse in this region. Prospects for further action may not be negative: The company Shell funded the independent assessment by UNEP. (*Dennis Taenzler*)

For more information, please see <http://www.unep.org/nigeria>

To read Shell's response to the report, please see [here](#).

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Assassinations in the Amazon – Setbacks in the Struggle to End Deforestation

The struggle to save the Amazon rainforest received some major setbacks in recent months. A series of murders of rainforest activists have shaken Brazil. Moreover, lawmakers are contemplating relaxing laws protecting the rainforest.

Things were looking up in the Amazon region. Between 2004 and 2010 the deforestation rate declined by 70 percent. Quality seals, such as that of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), certified wood from legal, sustainable forestry. But now, land speculation and deforestation are on the rise again, partly due to higher food prices. Those who oppose illegal logging activities put their lives at risk. Many activists have been murdered in recent months. The death of the activist Da Silva in the state of Pará in the eastern Amazon Basin attracted widespread attention because he predicted his murder in an interview a few months earlier.

Brazilian politicians are debating relaxing forest protection laws. Under certain conditions, an amnesty would be granted for illegal logging. This would favour companies engaged in illegal activities as well as small farm holders involved in land speculation. The deforestation rate shot up after the draft bill for the new legislation was passed by the lower house of parliament. Approval by the Senate, however, is still required. President Dilma Rousseff has already threatened her veto if the law passes, one reason why the bill is still in negotiation. For instance, a clause that 80 percent of the forest cover must be maintained on small land holdings now likely will not be revoked.

At the international level, too, problems are emerging. Illegal logging was systematically taking place under the WWF certification scheme due to its lack of transparency and accountability. Some companies were also guilty of human rights abuses. The international community must act quickly to establish clarity in the matter and also accelerate negotiations for international compensation payments so the indigenous population is provided a viable alternative to illegal logging.

The Brazilian government must act to curb crimes associated with deforestation instead of seeking to relax protective legal provisions. In doing so, it would both protect the rainforest and strengthen the rule of law. (*Stephan Wolters*)

More information on the series of murders and the planned amendment to the law is available [here](#) and at

http://www.wwf.org.uk/news_feed.cfm?5222/Brazils_Forest_Law_debate_heats_up

More information on the assassinations is available [here](#).

For more information on the WWF scandal see

<http://www.globalwitness.org/Panderingtotheloggerspress>

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

Urbanization and Energy: New Perspectives on Water Security

We run the risk of losing the battle for water and sanitation in many cities around the world. Anders Berntell, Executive Director of the Stockholm International Water Institute

(SIWI), issued this warning in his opening statement at this year's World Water Week which took place in Stockholm from 21-27 August. He thereby also framed the theme of the conference, which focused on urbanization's water-related challenges.

Coupled with weak governance, financially unviable operations, and other risk factors, water security threatens to deteriorate particularly in urban settings, as the urban population is set to double between 2000 and 2030. This is also among the early findings of the "World Water Development Report: Managing Water under Risk and Uncertainty," by the UN World Water Assessment Programme, to be released in March 2012. Rick Connor, who presented the findings, emphasized that accelerating changes in key external pressures on water resources - foremost among those being demographics - bring about new risks and uncertainties.

But Connor also drew attention to the significant water-energy-security trade-offs, which were the topic of several seminars at the conference. Examples discussed include water pollution through energy production from shale gas or tar sands, and energy insecurity induced by water scarcity. In advanced economies, almost 40 percent of water withdrawal is due to energy production. Participants also emphasized the potential of hydropower development for Africa to supply energy and improve livelihoods. This, however, will require greatly improved cooperation because of the uneven distribution of energy sources across the continent. Regarding water and sanitation commitments in Africa, the EU Water Initiative warned that they are drastically underfunded and that related aid is poorly coordinated and inefficiently used. Against this backdrop, WaterAid launched a new online platform intended to monitor government policy commitments in the water and sanitation sector, and hence improve accountability.

The water chapter of the Green Economy Report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), also released at the occasion of the conference, highlights a key message of World Water Week: Current practices and policies do not live up to the importance and the magnitude of the coming water challenges. (*Stephan Wolters*)

For the UNEP Green Economy Report, please see
http://www.unep.org/pdf/water/WAT-Water_KB_17.08_PRINT_EDITION.2011.pdf

For the water and sanitation monitoring tool WASHwatch, please see
<http://www.washwatch.org/>

For further information on the 2011 World Water Week, please see
<http://www.worldwaterweek.org/programme2011>

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Minimizing Conflict in Climate Change Responses

"What are the conflicts or risks associated with response to climate change?" asked Geoff Dabelko, Director of the Environmental Change and Security Program (ECSP), at the panel discussion "Minimizing Conflict in Climate Change Responses" hosted by the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington D.C. on 18 July. "How we respond to climate change may or may not contribute to conflict," he said, but "at the end of the day, we need to do no harm."

Dabelko was joined by Christian Webersik, associate professor at the University of Agder, Norway, and Dennis Taenzler, senior project manager at adelphi, to discuss how responses to climate change may lead to new conflict. As we think about adopting biofuels, solar and nuclear energy options, and geoengineering, "we have to do it with our eyes open," Dabelko said.

We are "both the victims and agents" of climate change, Webersik said. We are affected by it, but we are also responding to it, through adaptation and mitigation efforts, geoengineering proposals, and emissions avoidance. "These strategies themselves have ripple-on effects," he said. For example, the fuel-food crisis in 2008, in which higher demand for biofuels led to more competition over arable land and increases in food prices, contributed to riots and political instability in some places.

Taenzler presented two divergent views on our world's forests. On one hand, these remote and often disputed lands have been home to many clashes over resources, which are sometimes further fueled by timber revenues. On the other hand, forests also present "sustainable opportunities," he said. "1.2 billion people depend on forests for income and livelihood."

The United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) programme aims to stimulate action on forest management and provide payment for ecoservices. It provides new income opportunities, creates forest monitoring structures, and reduces illegal logging. To address the potential negative effects of REDD, Taenzler recommended "to focus on clarifying ownership and legal issues, installing transparent forms of benefit sharing, and ensuring international support for capacity building and REDD-readiness."

To minimize the conflict from climate change responses in the energy sector, Webersik called for a focus "away from corn and sugarcane" and on to second generation biofuels, such as algae grown in salt water and residue from the logging industry. He also stressed the need to experiment with carbon capture and storage, and new energy-efficiency techniques. "Climate change is a reality," Webersik said. "Let's get our focus back on adaptation and reducing the vulnerabilities in countries and increasing their resilience. This is also an opportunity to bring together the disaster community."

"We need much greater fluency and cooperation across communities and disciplines, much greater flexibility in program design and communication across offices," Dabelko said. "Back up at the 30,000 foot view, [we need to] avoid the hyperbole in either direction that either the sky is falling or that there is no problem at all, which can set back the policy discussion." (*Jason Steimel with Meaghan Parker and Schuyler Null*)

The conference report in full length is available at

<http://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2011/08/backdraft-minimizing-conflict-in.html>

For more information about REDD, please see

<http://www.un-redd.org/AboutUNREDDProgramme/tabid/583/Default.aspx>.

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Arctic Debate at blog.krium.de

Over the summer, the krium blog hosted a discussion series about the *Potential for Conflict in the Arctic*. Graduates of the Berlin Studies Centre (Studienkolleg zu Berlin) put up selected results of their research projects for debate. The six lead postings identified five key areas of conflict: (1) geopolitical, (2) economic, (3) environmental, (4) participation of indigenous peoples, and (5) appropriate governance structures for conflict situations.

Although the areas may appear diverse, the authors and commentators were in relative agreement that while the potential for conflicts does exist, there is currently no risk of these conflicts turning violent. The existing governance structures and agreements in addition to economic incentives are adequate for peacefully resolving conflicts. Media hype is usually to blame for war and crisis rhetoric. The discussion on the individual conflict areas raised the following points:

(1) While the planting of the Russian flag on the North Pole sea bed in 2007 was a dramatic action, negotiations about the still unresolved border issues in the Arctic are peacefully conducted under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea or bilaterally, as recently was the case in the Barents Sea dispute between Russia and Norway.

(2) The economic potential of the Arctic region is growing, primarily in the areas of natural resource exploitation, shipping, and fishery. However, the Arctic's increased economic significance has also resulted in conflicts of interest, for instance between governments, indigenous peoples, fishing companies, and environmental activists with regard to fishing quotas or relating to EU restrictions on marine mammal products. Conflicting interests also need to be balanced in the development of the Northeast Passage through Russian waters.

(3) Environmental activists and industry often tend to be at loggerheads. Environmentalists are concerned that oil and gas exploitation, in particular, could result in irreversible damage. There are also inter-industry conflicts between fishing, shipping and energy companies.

(4) The land claims and livelihoods of the roughly 400,000-strong indigenous population in the Arctic remain open issues. Linked to these is ensuring the equitable distribution of natural resource wealth.

(5) The Arctic Council, which is comprised of eight members, is the key institution for international policy decisions in the Arctic region. There is a contentious debate on the possible expansion of the Council to include permanent observers. Opponents of the move fear that efficiency and decision-taking could be impaired in a larger body.

In conclusion, the areas of potential conflict in the Arctic are manifold and require close observation. The existing mechanisms for resolving issues, though occasionally slow, are quite effective. Moreover, positive economic incentives are facilitating cooperation.
(Markus Leick)

The discussion on the Arctic can be accessed (in German) at

<http://blog.krium.de/?cat=21>

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events are also regularly published at <http://www.ecc-platform.org/>.

"Inaugural Conference on Environmental Diplomacy and Security" in Burlington, Vermont (21-23 October)

Organized by the University of Vermont, this conference aims to discuss how environmental issues can be raised to the sphere of "high politics of war and peace" to ensure ecological, economic, and social sustainability. The conference is the inaugural event of a new research and practice center on environmental diplomacy and security at the University of Vermont. The various conference themes revolve around topics such as polar diplomacy, energy in Eurasia, and environmental regionalism and globalization.

For further information, please see <http://www.uvm.edu/ieds/node/521>

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"Climate Change and Migration in the Asia-Pacific: Legal and Policy Responses" in Sydney, Australia (10-11 November)

This conference seeks to present and discuss research on climate change and migration with a focus on the Pacific region. Topics of the sessions include climate change migration and (human) security, institutional responses, relocation and land tenure, and international legal frameworks and governance. It is organized by the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales.

For further information, please see [here](#).

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"Bonn 2011 Conference: The Water, Energy, and Food Security Nexus - Solutions for the Green Economy" in Bonn, Germany (16-18 November)

Organized by the German Federal Government, this international three-day conference will focus on better understanding the interlinkages between water, energy, food, and their respective security implications. Participants will include high-ranking decision-makers and decision-shapers from the spheres of politics, academia, the United Nations (UN), civil society and the private sector. Against the backdrop of the upcoming UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, the conference aims to provide integrated policy recommendations and concrete initiatives.

For further information, please see <http://www.water-energy-food.org/en/conference/home.html>

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IN BRIEF

Transboundary Conservation in Europe, Early Warning Systems in Pakistan, Land Deals and Climate Change in Africa, and an Environment Outlook for the Arab Region

In its new publication ["Crossing Borders for Nature – European Examples of Transboundary Conservation"](#), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assesses challenges and benefits of cross-border conservation in Europe. It finds that apart from bringing about large-scale benefits to nature, cross-border conservation also helps resolve social and political conflicts.

The United Nations Environment Programme has released the ["Environment Outlook for the Arab Region"](#). It provides a comprehensive assessment of environmental challenges in the region, particularly population growth, water scarcity, unsustainable management of land resources, loss of biodiversity, and climate change.

In a special report entitled ["Climate Change Adaptation and Conflict in Nigeria"](#) by the United States Institute for Peace, Aaron Sayne examines the conflict implications of climatic shifts and related resource shortages in Nigeria.

The Fund for Peace has released the [Failed States Index 2011](#). Composed of a variety of indicators, the index includes information on environmental pressures such as access to water, food supply, and natural disaster hazards.

In the recently published report ["Understanding Land Investment Deals in Africa"](#), the Oakland Institute explores how large-scale investments in Africa can cause food insecurity, the displacement of small farmers, conflict, environmental devastation, water loss, and further impoverishment and political instability.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has launched a [project aimed at strengthening flood forecasting and management capacity in Pakistan](#). Among its efforts to upgrade early warning systems there, UNESCO will risk map flood plains along the Indus River.

In response to increasing food security concerns, Oxfam has released an [interactive world map on food price pressure points](#). The map contains country-specific information on food insecurity, its causes and impact, as well as supplementary statistics.

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