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Climate Change as a Security Risk

Dr. Karin Boschert, research analyst, Political Science at the secretariat of The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU)

The core message of WBGU's risk analysis is that without resolute counteraction, climate change will overstretch many societies' adaptive capacities within the coming decades. This could result in destabilization and violence, jeopardizing national and international security to a new degree. In order to avoid these developments, an ambitious global climate policy must be put into operation within the next 10-15 years. This major international policy challenge arises parallel to a far-reaching shift in the centres of power of the political world order, which will be dominated by the rise of new powers such as China and India. This transition could be accompanied by turbulence in the international system, which may make it more difficult to achieve the necessary breakthroughs in multilateral climate policy.

Climate-induced risks for international stability and security

WBGU shows that climate change could exacerbate existing environmental crises such as drought, water scarcity and soil degradation, intensify land-use conflicts and trigger further environmentally-induced migration. Rising global temperatures will jeopardize the bases of many people's livelihoods, especially in the developing regions, increase vulnerability to poverty and social deprivation. Even significant and adverse effects on the global economy are plausible. Particularly in weak and fragile states with poorly performing institutions and systems of government, climate change is also likely to overwhelm local capacities to adapt to changing environmental conditions and will thus reinforce the trend towards general instability that already exists in many societies and regions. This could result in the erosion of social order and state failure impossible to manage with traditional security policy. Climate change will draw ever-deeper lines of division and conflict in international relations, triggering numerous conflicts between and within countries over the distribution of resources, especially water and land, over the management of migration, or over compensation payments between the countries mainly responsible for climate change and those countries most affected by its destructive effects. These dynamics threaten to overstretch the established global governance system, and to aggravate existing problems in international security.

Climate policy as security policy I:

Preventing conflict by avoiding dangerous climate change

In WBGU's view, climate policy thus becomes preventive security policy, for if climate policy is successful in limiting the rise in globally averaged surface temperatures to no more than 2°C relative to the pre-industrial value, the climate-induced threat to international security would likely be averted. To this end, WBGU recommends the adoption of a global temperature guard rail limiting the rise in near-surface air temperature to a maximum of 2°C relative to the pre-industrial value. This will require a 50% reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared with a 1990 baseline. In addition, the Kyoto Protocol should be further developed and preserving natural carbon stocks should become a key goal of future climate policy. In order to be a credible negotiating partner the European Union should play a leading role in the climate process.

Climate policy as security policy II:

Preventing conflict by implementing adaptation strategies

Climate change will hit developing countries particularly hard. Timely adaptation measures should therefore be an integral element of their national policies. Especially national and international water resource management needs to be adapted to the impacts of climate change in order to avoid water crises. In agricultural development strategies and food security policy, a new qualitative focus is required in light of changing climate conditions. Sea-level rise and an increase in storm and flood disasters pose a great challenge for disaster prevention and management. Overall, international cooperation must be intensified and research on adaptation strategies, most of all in developing countries, be expanded.

Strengthening overall risk prevention

Crisis prevention costs far less than crisis management at a later stage. Hence national and international mechanisms for crisis prevention and peace consolidation should clearly grow in importance against traditional security policy, especially in the sphere of developmental, environmental and foreign policy. In general, WBGU is in favour of better coordinating the efforts of the relevant UN organizations and programmes and significantly enhancing their role in the interests of prevention. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should be upgraded by granting it the status of a UN specialized agency and the role of the Security Council be reflected in light of the new security threats.

Intensifying multilateral cooperation

In order to ensure the acceptance and, above all, the constructive participation of the ascendant new world powers China and India, a multilateral order is needed which is regarded as fair by all the world's countries. One option could be to initiate and institutionalize a theme-specific process, modelled on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and aimed at confidence-building worldwide. In order to peacefully and effectively manage environmentally-induced migration, vigorous collective efforts are needed to establish a cross-sectoral multilateral Convention. International cooperation is further needed to expand global information and early warning systems.

Climate change and climate impacts as research challenges

How climate change will impact on societal, political and economic institutions and processes and which dynamics will influence cooperation and conflict or stability and instability has to date not been the focus of extensive research. In this respect, WBGU recommends, for instance, to systematically integrate various social science research strands, such as the study on the causes of (environmental) conflicts and war, research into disaster management as well as governance and public policy studies. In close cooperation with natural scientists this will allow to more accurately reconstruct the impacts of climate change on social order.

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The flagship report "World in Transition – Climate Change as a Security Risk" and the summary for policy-makers can be downloaded at http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_engl.html

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POLICY & RESEARCH

Sudan: UNEP on Past and Future Trends

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published a Sudan Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment on 22. June 2007. The report presents the findings of fieldwork, analysis and extensive consultations carried out by UNEP in Sudan between December 2005 and March 2007, as well as detailed recommendations for follow-up action. The topics under investigation include natural disasters and desertification, the impacts of population displacement, urban environment and environmental health, industry, agriculture, forest resources, freshwater resources, wildlife and protected areas, marine environments, governance and international aid. In addition, the report analyses the complex but clear linkages between environmental degradation and ongoing conflict in Darfur, as well as historical conflicts elsewhere in Sudan. Since the interlinkages between climate change and conflict seems to be most obvious in Sudan, ECC editors asked the UNEP project coordinator, Dr. Andrew Morton, about past and future trends in this environmentally and politically sensitive region.

ECC-Editors: Against the backdrop of your comprehensive assessment, do you think it is appropriate to refer to the Darfur conflict as the first "climate change war", as more and more media and also decision makers are doing?

Andrew Morton: No it is not appropriate. The Darfur conflict has many underlying causes and aggravating factors: environmental factors including climate change are just one set. Conflict is actually not the most common social outcome of environmental degradation, whether caused by climate change or for other more common reasons such as over-exploitation. The most common outcomes are actually enduring rural poverty and population displacement to cities: conflict only arises in the presence of other aggravating factors such as inequality, a lack of rule of law and ready access to firearms.

ECC-Editors: As the report points out, most of the trends, such as deforestation and the degradation of arable land will continue in the future. Is it feasible in the near term to improve environmental governance and the sustainable resource use in such a way that conflicts could be avoided? What does UNEP regard the first and foremost priority to stop these conflict-triggering trends?

Andrew Morton: To answer your first question, it is completely feasible to improve environmental governance and natural resource management and thereby help alleviate rural poverty: this has been proven with many successful case studies across Africa and elsewhere. What is needed for such projects to succeed in general is strong local and governmental support and long term funding.

For Darfur in the near term, such work can only be implemented on a small scale in limited areas: like all large scale and long term development work it needs a secure and stable social environment to succeed and the ongoing conflict makes such work problematic. In the interim period, before peace hopefully returns to Darfur, the UN including UNEP is starting to address this issue and other recovery needs through a number of preparatory or foundational projects. This work can be done in the camps and other slightly more secure and stable areas.

To answer the second question: for the UN the number one priority for conflict prevention is actually not environmental management: it is instead the establishment of a culture where the rule of law helps manage the tensions that can arise from any source, including competition over scarce and declining resources.

Specifically for environmental issues in Darfur UNEP consider the top priority to be environmentally sustainable rural development, with a focus on conservation of pasture, soil and soil quality and tree cover. In practice this means the introduction of measures such as reduced livestock numbers, improved agricultural practices, reforestation and finally generation of alternative (non-agricultural/pastoral) livelihoods and out-migration to reduce demographic pressures.

ECC-Editors: In the report it is mentioned that the overall environmental situation in neighbouring countries is similar to that in Sudan. How can we avoid similar conflict trends emerging in those regions?

Andrew Morton: Unfortunately, very similar conflict trends are already observed in Chad and in the Horn of Africa. Again a combination of good governance and improved natural resource management is the recommended solution. In theory, sustainable development programmes should be able to partially pre-empt conflict in areas of high risk: in practice the challenge for the international community is to identify those high risk areas and provide sufficient financial support at the same time as supporting the necessary humanitarian response for areas where conflicts have already broken. At the strategic level, given the predicted impacts of climate change and the resultant concerns for the environment and food security along the Sahel belt, this region should be a priority for investment across all of central/northern Africa.

ECC-Editors: Thank you very much for the interview.

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The report "Sudan Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment" is available for download at <http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications.php?prog=sudan>

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Critical: Scope of Future Climate-Induced Migration

In the course of the debate on the security implications of climate change, the discussion on "environmental refugees" is also receiving new momentum. "More than 200 million people will have to flee their homes within the next thirty years, if climate change continues like that" claimed Greenpeace, releasing a new study on "Climate Refugees" in July, commissioned by Greenpeace. However, such numbers are far from being a consensus. There is still ongoing controversial debate on the definition of what constitutes an "environmental refugee". Estimates on future environmental migrants may vary greatly, depending on the methodologies and definitions applied. The Greenpeace report for instance refers to a study of Norman Myers, which was published in 2001. By contrast, others argue that there are no environmentally-induced displacements at all. Reasons for such opposing views are the diversity of factors that come into play as well as their complex interactions, which make it almost impossible for environmental factors

to be identified as the root cause of displacement. This is especially true when it comes to "climate refugees".

Another report recently published by the UN University Environment and Human Security Institute (UNU-EHS) states – without quoting dramatic numbers – that "[...] Although the estimates [...] of environmental refugees are based almost entirely on anecdotal evidence and intuitive judgements, it is important not to trivialize the role environmental change and resource depletion may play in population movement." The study provides a critical overview on the current debate, illustrates the problems of recognizing environmental refugees within the definition of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and presents a preliminary practical classification scheme for environmental migrants. UNU-EHS emphasizes the need for scientific programmes to allow a better understanding of the cause-effect mechanisms between environmental degradation and forced migration. In order to raise awareness for the undoubtedly dramatic situation of many people affected by climate change, one should be careful in dealing with ill-founded numbers on the extent of imminent climate induced migration. Besides strengthening the scientific basis, UNU-EHS proposes to increase awareness, improve legislation, give the means for adequate humanitarian aid, and to strengthen institutions and policies. (*Christiane Roettger*)

The Greenpeace report "Climate Refugees" (German language) can here (http://www.greenpeace.de/themen/klima/nachrichten/artikel/klimafluechtlinge_ignoriert_und_verleugnet/) be downloaded.

The UNU-EHS paper "Control, Adapt or Flee. How to Face Environmental Migration?" is available for download at <http://www.each-for.eu/contents/RENAUD%202007%20Control,%20Adapt%20or%20Flee%20How%20to%20Face%20Environmental%20Migration%20UNU-EHS.pdf>

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The Peacebuilding Commission and Valuable Natural Resources

The UN Peacebuilding Commission has a "crucial role" to play "in ensuring that natural resources become an engine for sustainable development", especially in post-conflict settings. This was one outcome of the United Nations Security Council debate on the links between valuable natural resources – such as diamonds, timber or coltan – and violent conflict. It clearly recognized that "the exploitation, trafficking and illicit trade of natural resources have played a role in areas where they have contributed to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict."

The Security Council has only recently taken up the issue of natural resource scarcity in its debate on climate change impacts (see ECC June Newsletter), but it has already been discussing the problem of wars fuelled by valuable natural resources since more than ten years. Only in April this year, the Council lifted its six-year-old embargo on the export of diamonds from Liberia that was intended to stop proceeds from the sale of conflict diamonds from fuelling wars across West Africa. Besides embargos, many speakers also highlighted democracy, good governance, rule of law, transparency, fair distribution of revenues and security sector reform as key issues for ensuring that resource revenues would stabilize post-conflict countries and contribute to development. To target conflict-related resources, speakers recognized the need for international approaches encompassing the whole supply chain and involving different stakeholders - including

states, corporations, and NGOs. Speakers from the US, China, UK, Argentina and others referred to the Peacebuilding Commission as the main body for developing and implementing such a comprehensive approach. As the speaker from India stated: "The Peacebuilding Commission should be tasked with creating a consensus on the use of natural resources in post-conflict countries." The debate unfortunately fell short of discussing a 'conflict resources' definition. Global Witness has been lobbying for such a definition to create a legal basis that allows for quick action against resource-fuelled wars. (*Maira Feil*)

For the Security Council debate, including Presidential Statement and speakers' statements, see <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9060.doc.htm>

For more information on Global Witness' campaigns, see www.globalwitness.org

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EU Central Asia Strategy: Energy for Human Rights?

Central Asia belongs to the resource-richest regions worldwide. Most probably that fact is also the main driving force of the EU's "Strategy for a New Partnership" with Central Asia, which was presented at the end of June. The new Strategy defines the EU's priorities in its bilateral and regional cooperation with Central Asian states. With the foreseen 750 Million Euro for the period of 2007 to 2013, the EU intends to implement the Strategy and open delegations in all five Central Asian states. Additionally, it plans to strengthen its cooperation with international organizations, especially the OSCE; in the environmental sphere the "Environment and Security Initiative" is explicitly mentioned in this connection.

The fields of activity highlighted in the Strategy include democratization, education, economic development, combating crime as well as energy and water resources. Regarding the latter two, the EU explicitly acknowledges the significance of energy security and regional water cooperation for regional stability and global security. Against this background, it will support the exploration of new oil, gas and hydro-power resources, fund investments in energy infrastructure, foster the development of a Central Asian energy market and promote sustainable development of the energy sector. In the area of water resources the EU plans to, among other, promote transboundary river basin management, improve water supply and sanitation, introduce efficient technologies and increase capacities.

The success of the first EU Strategy for Central Asia now depends considerably on the follow-up measures for implementation. Critical voices point out that it lacks specific targets and mile stones. Furthermore there is concern that the topics of human rights and rule of law will drop behind the EU's security and energy interests. (*Annika Kramer*)

The EU Paper "The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership" can be downloaded at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st10/st10113.en07.pdf>

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Desert is Alive – and Growing

Sudan and Darfur are currently the most often cited examples for links between desertification and conflict. This was also the case on June 26, 2007, at the "Desertification and Security" conference, jointly organized by the German Federal Foreign Office and the Ministry for Development. The conference highlighted the role the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) could play in regard to conflicts. Panellists and participants agreed that it was mainly a preventive one: conflicts rooted in desertification are best avoided by preventing desertification in the first place. Once such conflicts are incited, they are difficult to resolve. This is equally true for migration caused by desertification: if migration occurs, this quickly results in transregional migration routes and networks. These networks, however, attract the interest of criminal organizations, in particular human traffickers, but also smugglers. They are also difficult to dissolve once they are established as they are highly profitable for those ready to profit from the misery of others.

While the UNCCD has made progress in combating desertification, desertification as such continues. It is furthermore expected to accelerate due to climate change. Several participants raised concerns, that strengthening the preventative approach of the UNCCD is not sufficient. It is also necessary to face the reality of desertification and develop integrated strategies to work equally on causes and consequences of desertification. However, the UNCCD, at least in its current form, has only limited mandate for the latter. (*Achim Maas*)

Further information on the conference is available (in German) at <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Infoservice/Presse/Meldungen/2007/070622-Desertifikation.html>

For more information on the UNCCD, please visit <http://www.unccd.int/>

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Climate Policy at Risk of Crash Landing

The fact that climate change may create new, or exacerbate existing security threats is sometimes considered yesterday's news. How real this threat already has become was, however, rarely made more explicit than at the presentation of the annual report of the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) at the 17th Forum on Global Issues. For two days, over 300 international participants discussed the results of the report, the related challenges and policy options. Participants agreed that the report's projected 15 years left for avoiding the most severe consequences of climate change – which would occur with an increase of global temperature by 2°C – is a rather short time frame. The urgency to act is additionally sped-up by the fact that global warming of 1°C compared to pre-industrial time has already been reached. One panellist used the metaphor of a short, narrow landing strip to describe this situation – perhaps too short and narrow considering the inertness of international negotiations and political cycles.

Srgjan Kerim, President-elect of the 62nd UN General Assembly (GA), stated that during his term in 2007-2008 he will put the debate on linkages between climate and security on the agenda of the GA. According to Kerim, the GA would be the ideal place to discuss

the issue in depth and to reconcile the interests of all states. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier also highlighted the need to reconcile diverging interests during the final session: A new policy of détente and inclusiveness is necessary. Its foundation must be the development of global and regional mechanisms for shared resource use and peaceful conflict resolution. This will be necessary, not only to reach the 2°C aim – and touch down on that landing strip - but also to prepare the international community in case of failure. (*Achim Maas*)

Information on the 17th Forum can be found at: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/Globales/ForumGF/17GF-Klimawandel.html>

The flagship report "World in Transition – Climate Change as a Security Risk" and the summary for policy-makers can be downloaded at http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_engl.html

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"Water Linking People" - The Potential for Water-Related Cooperation

Although shared water resources can lead to competition, confrontation and even escalate into violent conflict, there is nonetheless considerable potential for cooperation in water management. There are international as well as local examples of water linking people. A KOFF/swisspeace Roundtable on "Water Linking People" in mid-June facilitated development cooperation practitioners and researchers to exchange experiences and to achieve a better understanding of positive water management. Christine Bichsel and Willi Graf held presentations on water management, in Central Asia and Bolivia respectively. Christine Bichsel, who earned a doctorate on the basis of her work with NCCR and swisspeace in the Ferghana Valley in Central Asia, presented sections of her PhD study. Willi Graf, who works in the Natural Resource and Environment Section of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), shared insights from the "Water, Land and People" working group (SDC 2006, with support from Intercooperation). The focus was on how people manage water resources, the mechanisms for conflict resolution, and the key elements of successful water management.

The following discussion focused on how international development actors integrate local conflict resolution mechanisms in their strategies. Since local water management systems reflect societal systems, changes in water management patterns often indicate changes in power structures. And since water management is always highly political, it is important for international development actors to understand the complicated underlying societal power structures and to support solutions appropriate to the specific context. In this regard, conflict-sensitivity-tools such as "Do no Harm" and "Conflict Sensitive Programme Management" can help to more efficiently assess the risks and opportunities involved in internationally supported programmes.

KOFF-swisspeace is planning the temporary opening of a thematic learning platform within the Community of Practice "Water for Food" in July and August, to be moderated by Helvetas. Furthermore, the swisspeace annual conference on 13 November 2007 will be themed: "Environmental Peacebuilding: Managing natural resource conflicts in a changing world". (*KOFF – Center for Peacebuilding*)

A list of specific links to this article can be found in the corresponding KOFF Newsletter Nr. 59 at <http://www.swisspeace.ch/typo3/index.php?fid=1067&id=502>

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UPCOMING EVENTS

"Regional Workshop on Sustainable Land Management in Mountainous Regions" in Xinping, China (9-11 August 2007)

This annual workshop of the Sustainable Land Management Network in Mountainous Region of the Mainland Southeast Asia (SLM-MMSEA), extending to Northeastern India serves as a sustainable land management forum from a wide range of disciplines and broad geographical areas in the region. It will focus on a comparative review of local governance of increasingly scarce land resources, past government policies on land use and their impacts on field sites of the network members. Specific attention will be given to land tenure systems and land ownerships.

For more information, please contact Mr. Luohui Liang at liang@hq.unu.edu

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KOFF-Workshop "Practical experiences with tools and approaches of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding" in Berne (20 August 2007)

KOFF would like to offer the space to share and discuss past experiences and current challenges of applying conflict sensitivity and managing peacebuilding programmes. The focus will be on the very hands-on experiences of KOFF member organizations and international and national partner organizations. The following approaches will be discussed: Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP), Do no Harm (DnH), Conflict-sensitive Programme Management (CSPM) and Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA).

Please find more detailed information at

http://www.swisspeace.ch/typo3/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/KOFF/KOFF_Events/2007/KOFFWS20082007.pdf

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"Third International Conference on Climate and Water" in Helsinki, Finland (3-6 September 2007)

The Finnish Environment Institute has already arranged two conferences on Climate and Water, the first one in 1989, the second one in 1998. The objective of the third conference is to provide an opportunity for hydrologists, water managers and decision makers to exchange research results, ideas and concerns on impacts, adaptation and mitigation in the water sector, facing climate change.

For more information and the preliminary programme, please visit <http://www.environment.fi/default.asp?contentid=242260&lan=EN>

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"Parks, Peace and Partnerships Conference" in Waterton, Canada (9-12 September 2007)

The International Peace Park designation legitimized a spirit of cooperation that has been used to seek ongoing designations and other forms of cooperation that may not have been anticipated at the time. This conference, therefore, aims to document that ripple effect and consider its potential and realization around the world. Several sectors of cooperation have been identified: managerial, scientific, public/private, intergovernmental and educational. The aim is to share success stories, embrace challenges, and advance the theory and practice of transboundary management, especially in the context of international peace parks.

Further information on the conference is available at <http://www.peaceparks2007.org/index.php>

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This section serves as a platform for Institutions and Initiatives to present their activities on Environment, Conflict, and Cooperation.

Global Peace Index

The Vision of Humanity website was launched in May 2007 as the reference point for the Global Peace Index (GPI) and to highlight the relationship between global peace and sustainability. The Global Peace Index has been developed in conjunction with the Economist Intelligence Unit, an international panel of peace experts from peace institutes and think tanks, and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, Australia. The GPI ranks 121 nations according to their relative peacefulness and is composed of 24 indicators, ranging from a nation's level of military expenditure to its relations with neighbouring countries and the level of respect for human rights. The index has been tested against a range of potential "drivers" or determinants of peace—including levels of democracy and transparency, education and material wellbeing. It is intended to contribute significantly to the public debate on peace and aims to:

1. Highlight to the general population the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness;
2. Catalyze philanthropic support for further research of peace and funding of peace initiatives;
3. Serve as a foundation for primary, secondary and tertiary educational study;
4. Emphasize the need for governments to consider the drivers of peace in policy decisions.

For more information, please visit <http://www.visionofhumanity.com/>

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