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MAIN THEME: SECURITY AND SOCIETY
EVOLVING CHALLENGES AND COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSES



ABSTRACT

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Outlook Address: Human Security and Climate Change

The effects of human-induced climate change on the security of people address what should be considered the core issue of our global security agenda. No other inter-state, societal, economic or technological development will have a broader impact on the enjoyment and denial of fundamental human rights.

Some UN member countries still insist on the lack of clarity of the concept of human security (par. 143 of the 2005 Summit Outcome Document, A/RES/60/1). International academic discourse and the executive branches of international organisations are increasingly aware of the statistical significance, broad victimisation and focus on the preventive action requirements addressing human security. The interregional Human Security Network of Foreign Ministers, under its Greek presidency, is addressing the issue of climate change and human security at its annual ministerial meeting in Athens in early June 2008.

While the original conceptualisation of human security (Bonn IPU conference, Ottawa SID conference, Stockholm UNDP Study Programme, UNDP Human Development Report) parted from the global development agenda, the challenges of the effects of Climate Change are considerably more profound in their interrelatedness, the time dimension and in their spill over potential into the classical security agenda. The effects of climate change will deny victimised societies their right to food, to life, to health etc. Climate change induced scarcity of land and water resources may lead to violent conflicts. It might eventually also affect the traditional security of those societies considered to be the prime perpetrators of climate change whose capacity to adaptation reduces their vulnerability to the consequences of climate change. The climate change agenda has not yet been marked by the potential of conflict of interest and – beyond that – ideologies of revenge, hatred and destructive responses by victims or their sympathizers. Terrorism may change its functionality from political/inter-religious/intra-societal dimensions to a response by victims of climate change to the societies, economies considered prime perpetrators.

The UN Security Council, starting with the Canadian chairmanship in 1999, has effectively transformed its agenda to increasingly focus on human security issues. In April 2007 the Security Council held its first ever debate on the impact of climate change on peace and security. Even though some UN member states raised doubts regarding the Security Council's role with regard to climate change, the discussion

reflected the essence of the new security agenda of the international community and the growing need to launch preventive programmes with time horizons not addressed in past security related policy deliberations.

Similarly the European Commission's and the EU High Representative's Report on Climate Change and International Security of 3 March 2008 deals with the unprecedented situations of climate change induced mass migration estimated by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to reach 250 Mio by 2050. While the EU report focuses on the impact of massive climate change induced migration it clearly underlined the new global security interdependence with human security at its core.