

Delivering Climate Security, Copenhagen 17 December

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Dear friends and colleagues,

First of all I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to attend this event and allow me to be in Copenhagen during these, I hope, historical moments.

Before going any further I would like to make a few points:

First of all, as my name suggests I'm Greek, and even if unconsciously I may think otherwise it, I'm definitely not a successor to Socrates and Aristotle. So if I begin philosophising, just cut me. And by the way, I'm anything but an expert on climate issues, so please bear with me.

Secondly, I work for the NATO Secretary General, who was here a couple of days ago. My challenge is to say something that will not be repetitive and boring on the one hand and on the other make sure that I won't lose my job.

On a more sober note, as we speak the negotiations on reaching a new climate deal, or deals are still on-going. What eventually comes out of Copenhagen will greatly influence the way we see things at NATO. If things in the end turn up well, then it's good news for us, it will mean less work in the future. If things don't go as well, then we need to prepare for the worst. Independently of the outcome, NATO has to mitigate. It has to prepare itself for the future. Nevertheless, before moving into that stage, we need to adapt to existing realities.

As you may know NATO's major engagement nowadays is in Afghanistan. The success or failure of our engagement there is to a large extent affected by climate factors, even if we don't see it that way. The presentation on Afghanistan made this quite clear and I will try hard to ensure that this presentation is made to NATO Ambassadors.

Because the first problem we face is exactly this: in a collective body of 28 nations, there is no consensus on the need to address climate change as a security concern. There are two reasons for that: awareness about how climate affects security is still low in many if not most NATO nations. A few have done a lot in this field, but the majority have not even begun. We need to wake them up and make them see the obvious: climate change is affecting our operations and will even do more in the future.

The second problem is that some states think that a regional security organisation, relying primarily on military instruments, should not deal with this issue. There is fear that NATO is trying to move beyond its traditional remit and step on the toes of other Organisations, or dilute its core mission, the defence of the security and territorial integrity of its member states.

How to address these?

Well, for a start we have started to engage slowly, but steadily all of the Allies. It's no easy task. The elaboration of a new Strategic Concept, the framework document that will guide Alliance policy for the coming decade, is a perfect opportunity. We are committed to insert, for the first time in a NATO document, language on climate change. Not only to say that it constitutes a security challenge, but especially provide guidance on how to respond to this challenge. We are still in the beginning of the process, which will culminate at the Lisbon Summit a year from now.

However, we have taken some initial steps. First of all, we want to reform our "cold war structure" within the HQ. As of next year, a new Division will be created, which will specifically look at new threats and challenges such as climate change, but also other related ones such as proliferation of WMD, energy security and terrorism. The difficult thing will be to show to everyone that all these challenges are interlinked.

Secondly, our integrated military planning, when it comes to defence planning or operational planning will have gradually to include the environmental dimension as an essential element.

Thirdly, we need to examine how to better utilise the tools at our disposal in order to respond to emerging climate-induced crises. The rapid deployment NATO Response Force should be further adapted. The very first time it was deployed, was in a disaster relief operation in Pakistan back in 2005. We are working on the lessons learnt from that operation, so as to better use it next time. We also have a Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre, whose potential should be adapted to new requirements.

Fourthly, looking at the issue of potential overlap with other organisations, we need to be clear: NATO does not want to become an all-encompassing organisation. It seeks to be present, where its involvement can be of added value. Given its comparative advantage when it comes to military operations and pooling together resources from different countries, it can help by providing the hard-core military support often needed. Cooperating with other organisations, especially the EU and the UN, which have more experience and more instruments at their disposal, is fundamental. In this effort we also need to pool-in all our resources and reach out to the NGO and the Scientific Community.

Finally, a word about NATO's partnerships. Our intention is to include the issue of climate change in the agenda of our discussions with a series of non-NATO countries, spanning from Europe's neighbourhood to the Pacific. Climate change will affect the whole world and no one will be spared. Therefore NATO's engagement has to be global. Let me in that respect underline that the Alliance has been working, since the 80s, with several third countries, through projects that aim to help them address the effects of climate change such as water scarcity and desertification. In the future, we need to examine how we can further develop targeted actions aiming at developing capacity building in these countries.

However, let me clarify one point: this does not mean that NATO will become an international policeman or will act as a surrogate of the UN. It is primarily a regional Organisation and will intervene, whenever and wherever its member states believe

that their security is at stake. Therefore we should not expect that NATO would be ready to act any moment, any place. This simply is not going to happen. The security challenges that climate change will produce, unless we take measures to limit it now, will be immense and NATO does not have the ambition, nor the resources to address all of them simultaneously.

That brings me to my final point: mitigation. It is difficult to make predictions about the evolution of NATO's policies in the long term, because first of all, we do not know how the situation will look like and how important will be the future challenges.

Moreover, NATO when dealing with its component states is in a sense like the US President dealing with Congress. The Organisation can propose, can persuade, can try to influence, but can not impose any policies. It is up to individual states to decide how much they will spend on R&D, whether they will produce more "green friendly" fighter planes, whether they will include climate factors in their national defence planning. What NATO can do is act as a clearing house and a facilitator. The only thing I can assure you is that we shall spare no efforts in order to ensure a better future for mankind.

Thank you.