

Round Table on Climate Security Risks, March 21, 2012

NATO HQ, Brussels

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This informal round table was organised jointly by NATO's Emerging Security Challenges Division (ESCD) and Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) with the aim to facilitate a transatlantic dialogue on climate security risks. About 30 participants from NATO IS, IMS, Allies and partners joined the discussion on 21st March.

The US delegation that visited NATO for this purpose took part in a one-week business trip to Berlin, Brussels and London, which was organised by the non-governmental organisation *Third Generation Environmentalists* (E3G).

Members of the US delegation:

- Dr. Daniel Y. **Chiu**, US Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy
- Ms. Esther **McClure**, US Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Head Arctic Climate Change and Energy (ACE) Team, Strategy
- Captain Wayne **Porter**, SECDEF Chair, Systemic Strategy and Complexity, Naval Postgraduate School
- Ms. Sherri W. **Goodman**, Centre for Naval Analyses (CNA), Sr. Vice President; General Counsel and Board Secretary
- Ms. Cheryl **Rosenblum**, CNA, Director of Strategic Development

Members of *Third Generation Environmentalists*:

- Dr. Martin **Frick**, E3G, Programme Leader for Climate Diplomacy
 - Mr. Nickolas **Mabey**, E3G, CEO and Founder of E3G
 - Ms. Kate **Hodgkinson**, E3G, PA to Directors
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Welcome and Introduction

Ms. Antonella CERASINO, PDD, and *Mr. Michael RÜHLE*, ESCD, welcomed the guest and participants to the round table and explained the role and position of energy, environmental and climate security in the overall NATO framework. Mr. Rühle pointed at the challenges to conceptualise climate change and other environmental security issues as regular agenda items at NATO, due to differing national priorities of Allies as well as concerns about militarising environmental and energy security. He expressed the hope that gathering subject matter expertise and raising the visibility of national efforts to focus more systematically on climate change and its implications would contribute to making this subject more acceptable for Allies.

Prioritizing Climate Change for Policy Makers

Mr. Nickolas MABEY argued that climate change and its security implications needed to be addressed urgently as a concrete policy issue. He mentioned that this was easily discernible for climate scientists and experts, as their work delivered independent facts & figures and was based on a long-term focus. However, politicians and policy makers usually worked with a shorter time horizon and often did not consider the effects of climate change as tangible enough for making concrete policy decisions that could have wide-ranging effects on their citizens. Mr. Mabey, therefore, suggested that the nexus between climate change and security should be portrayed with concrete and tangible examples in order to bridge the gap between climate experts and policy makers. The aim should be to make the issue an integral part of the security policy agenda.

Dr. Daniel CHIU considered the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review to be an acknowledgement by the US leadership of the existence of climate security risks. What the leadership needed now were risk-benefit scenarios as part of a decision making tool.

Ms. Sherri GOODMAN mentioned the need for consistent observational data on the impact of climate change, with more standardized and tangible material that could facilitate knowledge transfer to policy makers.

The Use of the Military in the Context of Climate Change

Dr. CHIU stated that although the US DoD was not the U.S. Government lead on climate change, it was an affected and relevant stakeholder. He saw the DoD as embedded in a holistic approach of various bodies of the US Administration towards climate change and security. While the DoD maintained its aim to ensure meeting the traditional challenges of military defence, he stressed that the changing security environment required a higher level of flexibility and adaptability. This manifested itself in the DoD's changed structure and processes to allow for broader scenario analyses, incorporating a wider range of plausible threats and challenges related to defence and envisaging more diverse operations beyond traditionally planned major combat operations. Dr. Chiu called this the diversification of risk management in order to deliver options for political decision makers as the difficult and more recent tasks of the DoD.

Ms. GOODMAN referred to the CNA Military Advisory Board (MAB), comprised of some of the nation's most respected retired military leaders, and their 2007 landmark report "National Security and the Threat of Climate Change". This report urged policy makers to look at climate change as a threat multiplier. It concluded that "Climate change, national security, and energy dependence are a related set of global challenges."

Captain Wayne PORTER stressed that humanitarian issues should not be an integral task of the military, arguing in favour of concentrating the responsibilities of the military on deterrence, prevention of military threats and prevailing in physical conflicts. Due to the recent fiscal constraints on defence budgets, including in the US, Captain Porter stressed that the military should concentrate on its above mentioned core tasks. Furthermore, he pointed to the paradox that aid delivered by armed members of the military sends mixed messages and diminishes the military's credibility as a fighting force over time; civilians would be better suited for humanitarian disaster relief in case of natural disasters caused by extreme weather events. He argued that this was the right moment to engage civil society of allies and partners in sharing the task of humanitarian relief, not least since some Allies were better equipped for this challenge, allowing the US military to remain focused on core war fighting competencies.

Ms. Esther McClURE gave examples of a long history of effective contributions by the military in supporting civilian authorities when responding to environmental disaster, given their unique capabilities (e.g. expeditionary lift and communications). She also highlighted how DoD technology could be leveraged to further disaster-resilient development goals. The Army Corps of Engineers, for example, would currently be looking at a new way of managing water.

Captain PORTER argued that instead of asking the military to build capacities for responding to climate change disasters, politicians should address the unsustainable global economic growth system, which was based on consumption of fossil fuels and, hence, had become the cause of climate change. A global effort was needed that would have to start with sustainable growth and development. Confusing cause and effect would otherwise turn into "shooting behind the rabbit".

Dr. CHIU, in response, referred to the analogy, arguing that "the rabbit is often very complex". For the DoD it was a challenging task to strike a balance between reactive (traditional) and proactive (new) capabilities and operations that need to be properly and timely planned and executed. Thus, in a more complex, globalised and less predictable security environment "the rabbit needs to be shot with a shotgun" at times. Dr. Chiu also emphasised that assisting partners and allies in building capacities and facilitating deeper cooperation was a very important aspect of the responsibilities of the DoD in order to handle the increasing levels of complexity in security issues.

Human vs. Economic Security regarding Climate Change

Mr. MABEY remarked that there were considerable civilian capacities to be concentrated predominantly on urban areas with a focus to protect economically sensitive and vulnerable assets. In contrast, rural areas with a focus on agriculture are too often neglected and the threats to the lives of people in these regions are often sidelined due to the concentration on the protection of economic viability. On the other hand, from a security point of view a priority focus should be on strategically important areas, for example large arable land at the edge of floodplains or deserts and large glaciers on top of mountain ranges, that are on the edge of collapse when climate change hits. Though such areas are never densely populated, they are of immense importance for securing the livelihood of a region's population that was much larger than those of an urban area.

Resources as Source of Conflict

Mr. Adrian KENDRY, NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division (PASP), suggested that the discussions in a military organization should be focus on resource scarcity that could add to tensions, independent of the

cause being natural or man-made. The question really was what effective contribution NATO could make to reduce the security risks caused by water, food, energy or other resource scarcity.

Ms. GOODMAN referred to the controversial debate on water scarcity (especially whether it was a source of conflict or an opportunity for cooperation) and argued that there was a significant connection between water scarcity and cooperative agreements between states, in particular in transnational water basins.

Dr. CHIU referred to rare earths and stated that, as far as the DoD was concerned, this issue was not seen as a major driver for conflict, and that the spotlight was rather on increasing cooperation between producers and consumers of rare earths and other critically important metals and minerals.

Ms. GOODMAN added that factually there was no shortage of rare earth, if recycling would be consequently applied, and that therefore supply could meet demand.

Mr. MABEY and Captain PORTER made the case for a strong and reliable international trade system which helps to mitigate conflicts by creating economic incentives for free trade of rare earths and win-win situations for all stakeholders.

Future of NATO Operations in connection with Climate Change

Dr. CHIU recommended to better align the planning requirements for operations (predominantly short-term) and resource management (predominantly long-term) and link the analytical data in order to optimise the use of assets and expensive resources. This included bringing planning processes of Allies together.

Captain PORTER further added that here was the potential for burden sharing to include the capabilities and relative advantages of allies, given the wide array of emerging and existing security challenges with regards to climate change. However, this should not only focus on military assets but incorporate a wider range of other capabilities that Allies can use.

Mr. KENDRY viewed the strengthening of partnerships as a particular goal for the future of NATO. Particularly with regards to the nexus between climate change and security, NATO could put special emphasis on a deeper level of cooperation that creates win-win situations for all stakeholders.

Ms. Clare ROBERTS, NATO Operations Division (OPS), mentioned that the Public Health, Food and Water Group (PHFWG) had been the first NATO body to table the issue of climate change and its associated health issues (human, plant and animal) as a discussion item. The next challenge would be to identify how these factors may affect planning for NATO operations.

Mr. Philippe VAN EXEM, Defence Policy and Plans Division (DPP) mentioned that NATO's logistics community was currently looking at a comprehensive, long-term planning for NATO Bulk Fuel Facilities, which would take energy efficiency and environmental protection into account.

Conclusions

Dr. CHIU concluded by arguing in favour of NATO becoming a facilitator of inter-disciplinary thinking and cross-cutting discussions that could help to change the mind-set and to raise the visibility of climate change security risks across a broad range of civil and military personnel.

ESCD and PDD confirmed their role as a facilitator at NATO to sustain and enlarge the stakeholder network on climate security risks and agreed to continue with jointly organising regular briefings and discussions on related topics by inviting outside experts.