



CLIMATE CHANGE, CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Summary

The countries of the Southern Africa will be among the most severely affected by climate change. Rising temperatures and sea levels as well as declining precipitation will challenge food, water and energy security in the Southern African countries.

On September 23rd, 30 experts from Southern Africa, the African Union, Germany and UK gathered to discuss the security implications of climate change for the region. The Dialogue was organized by OneWorld, adelphi and the Institute for Security Studies, supported by the German Federal Foreign Office.

The Dialogue highlighted the importance of transferring insights from local sustainable resource management and regional cooperation to cope with the enormous climate change challenges ahead. However, it became evident, that climate change issues still need to be better integrated into regional cooperation approaches and conflict potential analysis within the African Union (AU) and Regional economic Communities. As a follow up a briefing by these organizations with foreign policy makers and think tank representative facilitated by the Peace and Security Council of the AU can help to pave the way for improved early warning and early action capacities at different level in Africa.

Background

On the international level, the debate on security implications of climate change has gained great momentum over the past years. The adoption of the Presidential Statement by the Security Council during its debate on climate change and security at the 20th of July 2011 is the most recent and a powerful example in this regard. Today, there is little doubt that climate change poses one of the key challenges for global economic development and human well-being and may put peace and security at risk. At a continental level, the African Union Commission has recently started discourse on this topic, with a view to stimulating response and regional cooperation across Africa.

Among the key risks identified are scarcity of natural resources such as water, food, and energy. Due to these scarcities and as a result of extreme weather events such as floods and storms, also increasing migration movements are expected. The countries of Southern Africa will be among the most severely affected by climate change. Rising temperatures as well as changing precipitation patterns will challenge food and water security in the entire region, sea level rise is likely to affect coastal stability significantly.

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At the same time, climate change policies offer potential pathways for regional cooperation and benefit sharing and can create new chances for economic and social development, e.g. through the implementation of sustainable solutions in the energy sector or, more generally, joint strategies for a low carbon economy.

Against this backdrop, the Regional Dialogue on 23rd September 2011 aimed at finding answers especially to the following questions:

- What can be done to mitigate the likelihood or extent of these conflicts? What are appropriate governance models and/or response mechanisms?
- How can conflict constellations be transformed into opportunities for regional cooperation and benefit sharing, e.g. in the realm of water, food, and energy?
- What are the key entry points for integrating climate change into the continental and regional security infrastructure



Interlinked Security Challenges

German **Ambassador Designate Horst Freitag** opened the workshop by outlining challenges that have the potential to drive violent conflict – including growing population, increasing demand for food and other resources, water scarcity. Climate change – especially in an interconnected world such as ours – will act as a threat multiplier, including on global food distribution. Although Mr. Freitag recognised that we are only beginning to manage these challenges, he recalled the

efforts driven by the German Presidency to bring the topic of climate change on the agenda of the UN Security Council this July. Taking such a long-term, comprehensive view is an essential start, but we still have to act at regional and local levels.

“On a positive note, water also carries a peace potential, if we put the right mechanisms into place”

Following this introductory statement the first session put a focus on the global and regional perspectives on climate change, conflict and cooperation. **Dennis Taenzler**, head of climate and energy policies at adelphi, started with outlining the ways in which climate change has been entering the foreign and security policy agenda, pointing out that similar conclusions have been reached by various assessments around the world regarding security related impacts of climate change. He outlined how climate change in together with additional global trends such as population growth, economic growth, increasing resource demands, and urbanisation may affect territorial integrity and the fragility that comes from changing resource distribution especially under poor management. Mr Taenzler closed by highlighting the importance of moving the discussion of climate change as a threat multiplier forward to focusing on threat minimisers such as improved early warning systems, adaptation, mitigation and capacity building.

Building upon the previous presentation, **Belynda Petrie**, CEO of OneWorld, focused on a regional perspective, looking at how climate change poses a stability and security threat in southern Africa, and what the response options might be. In reminding that high rates of radical and sudden change – current and forecasted – often surpass our capacities to respond.

“We are living in an age of consequences... and climate change is slowing development in Southern Africa”

Ms Petrie stressed that in addition to mass migration, food insecurity is one of the most significant issues in southern Africa and that water scarcity is a risk multiplier, especially in

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its connection to food insecurity. Especially when we look at the water-agriculture-climate change nexus, impacts from climate change has the potential to threaten the very survival of southern Africa, and thus also fuel conflicts. However, history has shown that water has more often led to cooperation than to conflict, which gives hope for other response options.



Taking up the discussion on water scarcity as a major threat multiplier in the region, **Dr Anthony Turton** of Touchstone Resources discussed ways in which dramatic water shortages and uneven distribution throughout the African continent may lead to cooperation. Countries that have managed to decouple economic growth from nature’s constraints will – due to climate changes and variability – once more depend on natural uncertainties. Some research results show that local temperatures throughout southern Africa may increase by a drastic 6-8°C. Due to such temperature increases, along with lower precipitation and higher evapotranspiration, dams may become increasingly saline and less useful as a strategic storage of water. States may thus need to cooperate by finding alternative storage solutions, such as used mine voids.

“New rationalities of water sharing are needed, based on sectoral efficiency instead of volumetric allocations”

From the nexus of challenges posed by the interrelations between water, food, energy, and climate change impacts, ingenious new solutions may be borne. Indeed, states may re-evaluate the way water is shared among countries, favouring rational uses of water based on sectoral efficiency instead of volumetric allocations.

Consequences for Africa’s Security

The second session focused on pathways for cooperation and security in the light of possible security relevant climate change impacts. In his opening remarks to the audience by **Dr Admore Kambudzi**, Secretary of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), pointed out that AU’s image of southern Africa as an emerging model for peace and security, as well as for economic growth is challenged by the research and analysis presented during the first session at the workshop, which highlighted significant future regional risks in the context of climate change. The challenge then is how to reconcile these differences. Second, it seems that many of the conclusions and assessments on climate change and security mentioned earlier have not yet reached the AU. Dr. Kambudzi stressed the need to resolve this gap in research finding reaching crucial organisations such as the AU.

“Communities have been continuously adapting to harsh situations and changes – what knowledge and practices can they share with others?”

Salomé Bronkhorst, senior researcher at African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), underlined the relevance of conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation in Africa. ACCORD, a conflict management organisation, works with regional organisations such as the AU, with civil society organisations, as well as regional economic institutes. She stressed the likely conflict potential due to the high reliance of Africa on natural resources. In response Ms Bronkhorst emphasised the need for multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral research and programmes to address the challenges. Climate-sensitive and conflict-sensitive approaches are needed in all fields, including development, peace, and environmental work. In this regard, already a rich body of experience exists that can be built on. Harnessing and learning from community-based, traditional and participatory approaches of natural resources management in order to prevent and resolve climate-related conflicts is

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crucial, since natural resources management is critical for securing climate resilient adaptation and livelihoods and reducing vulnerability.

Dr Isaaka Souare of the ISS then gave an overview of the African Peace and Security Architecture. He focused especially on the role of already existing early warning programmes, e.g. promoted by ECOWAS. Indicators used by those systems are normally grouped around structural causes of conflicts, e.g. political, socio-economic and environmental. Dr Souare described the benefits that may be gained from long-term structural studies undertaken by environmental degradation or climate change specialists, which could complement the daily and weekly situational reports provided from member states within early warning frameworks. When there is already pressure on natural resources – degradation, war, migration, and scarce and fragile infrastructure – conflicts may arise between local and migrating populations. These aspects should also be incorporated into early warning systems.



Dr Hesphina Rukato, Regional Expert and Founding-Director of the Centre for African Development Solutions (CADS) then gave some entry points into the regional security architecture. She prefaced her presentation by emphasising the fact that research findings need to be adapted in order to become relevant as policy recommendations. Also, aside from making sure that climate change is addressed in the peace and security architecture, we need to make sure which next implementation steps are needed; otherwise it is not clear what will happen on the ground. Dr Rukato responded to Dr Kambudzi's earlier challenge by noting that at the AU level, climate change is considered by the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) but that regular collaboration between this department and the Peace and Security

Council (PSC) is needed. She also stressed the question of leadership, which is limited in Africa at governmental level, especially given the scale of the current and potential impacts. To deal with the immense challenges of climate change, leadership has to be drawn, not only from government, but from all sectors of society, including civil society and prominent political leaders (such as ex-presidents) to champion the issue of climate change and security.

"A clearer articulation is needed on the links between climate change and conflict for the environmental community on one side and the peace and security communities on the other side"

Equally important is the transferring or sharing of lessons, at national levels, from countries that have progressed in addressing the issues of climate change and security to those still struggling to put these on the agenda.

Future policy pathways

The third and final session started with some considerations on practical next steps from **Dr Kambudzi**. Emphasising the policy continuum linking the AU, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and national policies, he outlined the benefits of a technical meeting between the AU, the secretariats of the eight RECs, and some civil society and research organisations – to take place towards the end of 2011 or after March 2012. The second suggestion was related to political engagement, which could be best achieved by a briefing of the PSC about climate change and security, including early warning scenarios. Such an engagement would need to be supported by case studies and solid analytical research in order to add value to the work of the PSC. A final option may be to hold a brainstorming 'retreat' with the PSC on the topic of climate change and security. Given the low capacity of the PSC for own research, there is a significant need for research and civil society organisations to complement such

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a brainstorming retreat, which might take place in early 2012.

Dr Kambudzi reminded that the AU position has often been that of Africa as a victim of the climate change process, and a continent lacking the resources for adaptation and mitigation activities. However, it is important to recognise that “the blame game does not bring any solutions”, giving hope for alternative approaches during COP17 in Durban.



Dr Hinrich Thölken, Head of Division, Climate and Environmental Foreign Policy, Sustainable Economy, Federal Foreign Office stressed the importance of bringing up climate change to the UN Security Council and to regional forums like this in Pretoria. Apart from generating additional political energy, the timely consideration of expected climate change impacts within foreign and security policy communities can help to strengthen climate diplomacy efforts at various levels – in Durban at COP 17 and beyond. He also reminded that while climate change acts as a risk multiplier, the trend toward a globalised society and economy also acts as a vulnerability multiplier through the imbalance of resources. Giving the example of potentially severe shortages of biomass due to future demands from food, energy, products, etc. resources and prices will continue to be unequally distributed and disadvantageous. Dr Thölken highlighted once more the hopeful trend shown by cooperation around water resources – giving the example of a German funded project in Central Asia around water scarcity. In a similar way, existing collaborations on shared water resources should be strengthened to address future climate changes.

John Smith of the British High Commission came back to the fact that while southern Africa is doing well now in terms of

development and managing many challenging issues, additional stressors driven by global changes will affect areas that are doing well now. Early warning systems are necessary, however Africa’s role could be quite powerful within global negotiations, given the examples they can bring of what is happening currently in terms of climate change effects. He reiterated that example about regional cooperation around water highlight the positive potential for adaptation activities. Future scenarios can in fact help the UNFCCC global carbon emission reduction targets frame the issue in a positive manner, by highlighting the global solutions already developed to keep climate change in check.

Finally, **Dr Yacob Mulugetta** from the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), although unable to attend the workshop in person, sent a statement that focuses on the question of how to address the challenges in regions where governmental and legal institutions are weak. The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) is an integral part of the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme, which is a joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Although the work programme of the ACPC does not explicitly deal with the links between climate change and peace and security, much of the analytical work at the Centre speaks to the threat of climate change on human security.

Dr Mulugetta referred to the current crisis in the Horn that is a case in point where several years of erratic (and low) rainfall patterns are exacerbating an already precarious situation for people in the region. He outlined that the ACPC will continue to engage on the issue of climate change-human security nexus through its interaction with policy makers, researchers and practitioners who are focused on vulnerability reduction efforts. It will also continue to interact with the AUC and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) by providing them analytical support. He further stressed the need to pull together the evidence-base that links climate change with consequences on human security. This is crucial if climate change adaptation is to move up the political agenda.

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Programme

11.15 – 11.30 Opening

*by Dr. Horst Freitag, Ambassador
Designate of the Federal Republic of
Germany*

11.30 – 12.30 Session 1: Climate Change, Conflict and Cooperation: Global and Regional Perspectives

*Chair: Trusha Reddy, Institute for Security
Studies (ISS)*

Dennis Taenzler, adelphi

Belynda Petrie, OneWorld

Dr. Anthony Turton, Touchstone Resources

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch break

13.30 – 14.45 Session 2: Climate Change, Conflict and Cooperation: Pathways for Cooperation and Security

Chair: Dr. Webster Whande, OneWorld

*Salomé Bronkhorst, African Centre for the
Constructive Resolution of Disputes
(ACCORD)*

*Dr. Issaka Souare, Institute for Security
Studies (ISS)*

*Dr. Hespina Rukato, Centre for African
Development Solutions (CADS)*

14.45 – 15.15 Coffee break

15.15 – 17.00 Session 3: Discussion Review and Reflection on Outcomes

*Chair: Dr. Hespina Rukato, Centre for
African Development Solutions (CADS)*

*Dr. Admore Kambudzi, Secretary of the
Peace and Security Council of the African
Union*

*Dr. Hinrich Thölken, Head of Division,
Climate and Environmental Foreign Policy,
Sustainable Economy, Federal Foreign
Office*

John Smith, British High Commission

*Dr. Yacob Mulugetta, African Climate Policy
Centre (ACPC), United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa (delivered speech)*

17.00 End of Dialogue



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