

**Swedish EU Presidency Conference:
Environment, Climate Change and Security – Facing the Challenges**

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**Conflict and climate change
Notes for presentation
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- The conflict/security issue is at the heart of the challenge of climate change in three specific ways:
 - As a part of making the case for far-reaching measures of response to climate change, both mitigating carbon emissions and adapting to the consequences of climate change
 - As part of the process of shaping the policy response – again, both mitigation and adaptation
 - And because, perhaps paradoxically, within the conflict/security issues we can find grounds for optimism

- Two key words that I want to imprint into this discussion are
 - Multiplier
 - Interaction

- Making the case:

One consequence of climate change and, therefore, one reason for far-reaching measures to limit it, is the increased risk of violent conflict. It is important not to either simplify the link or exaggerate the effect. The argument is that the natural consequences of climate change will interact with other features of the social, economic and political landscape. The result will be to multiply the stress on some developing countries, and therefore increase the risk of conflict.

 - Climate change will interact with features such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, weak institutions, poor governance, aftermath of violent conflict, social divisions in the country (ethnic, city/country, class, regional)
 - – i.e., with all the factors that explain why underdevelopment is intractable
 - – and all the factors that create state fragility
 - As the resource base narrows because of the impact of climate change, problems multiply: conflicts get sharper, becoming harder to manage, requiring more resources when less are available. At the same time, increasing desperation in poor communities leads to extreme measures and creates a pool of recruits for armed militias who may have political agendas that are ostensibly unrelated to climate change.
 - If there is one aspect to single out, it is governance
 - Fluctuations in water supply may damage agriculture, reducing food security, generating livelihood insecurity, and it may also damage health: the nature of the response to these challenges will decide whether the outcome is migration, conflict or successful adaptation

- An increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events will generate pressures on communities and societies in both rural and urban settings; the nature of the response will again do much to decide the outcome
 - and in both cases a key part of the response is by government
 - so the nature of the state and of governance is crucial;
 - resentment if the government response is absent or deficient could be a direct contributor to conflict escalation
- Shaping the response:
Thinking about the security risks connected to climate change leads to seeing the importance of adaptation to climate change and to recognising the need to prioritise the challenge of peaceful adaptation in fragile states. This issue is rising up the international political agenda as this important conference shows. But just as international discussion of policy responses to climate change emphasise mitigation, so discussion of adaptation has tended to focus on the scale of the finance required. But the question of how is just as important as the question of how much.
 - The estimated costs of adaptation are huge. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) uses a range of estimates from \$49 billion to \$171 billion per year by 2030. But a study by two London institutes indicates that there are major gaps in those estimates; they estimate the likely cost of adaptation as being eventually in the range \$330-380 billion a year.
 - These colossal sums must be understood to represent a myriad of adaptation actions in a very wide range of settings. To put it differently
 - adaptation will be local or it will not happen at all.
 - For communities to adapt so they can survive climate change, they need to receive information whose source and content they trust, so that they know and understand what tasks they must undertake. Only with knowledge and understanding will there be the active participation that adaptation needs. Effort therefore needs to be put into building trust so local adaptation can happen.
 - Weak institutions and fragile states do not generate that trust. That is why they are an obstacle to adaptation. Governance must be improved as communities adapt. As communities participate, so governance will steadily get a little better.
- Grounds for optimism
And this is where the grounds for optimism lie. There are two angles from which we can see them:
 - First, in thinking about communities and societies that are divided by conflict issues, climate change is a threat that does not come from any of the conflict parties. It is a superordinate threat against which those divided by conflict can unite. And local adaptation is made up of tasks around which it is necessary and at the same time possible to cooperate.
 - Second, more broadly, the issue in fragile states and in other developing countries is that power is held by a narrow elite. Development entails a broadening of the basis of power – a broader social contract between elites and citizens rather than a coalition of interests between different elite factions. The core challenge of development is how to encourage elites to see the reason for

broadening the basis of power, to see the incentive. It is possible that the externally generated challenge of climate change could offer precisely such an incentive to permit and even encourage broader social participation in the national institutions of power.

- Two key conclusions:
 - Adaptation is not something that is happening or will happen *on top of* development, as a bolt-on. Just as security is at the core of the climate issue, so adaptation in developing countries means adapting development.
 - There will need to be international financial support for national enablement of local adaptation.