

**Speech
of Ambassador Viktor Elbling, Germany
on the occasion of the Conference on Climate Change and Security
(Stockholm, 15 October 2009)**

**"Climate Change, Conflict Prevention and Global Governance - The
Need for Preventive Foreign Policy and the Role of Foreign
Ministries"**

Anrede,

We have already heard a lot about Climate Change and its challenges: increasing number of extreme weather events, raising sea levels, droughts, floods, hunger and migration.

We have also heard how to address these challenges in some regional or sectoral perspectives: Africa, Bangladesh, the Netherlands have been mentioned. Mrs. Grobicki informed us eloquently about the possibilities to build up water security.

I will now address another challenge – the challenge to bring all these ideas together in a Foreign Policy context. I would like to focus on two questions:

- Are the Foreign Ministries best suited to deal with the consequences of climate change and following insecurities?**

- Which policy elements should be included in our strategy to counter threats coming from climate change?**

First, let me start by stating: The prime task of Foreign Ministries is to contribute to peace and security. Therefore, Foreign Ministries must foresee the risks of climate change and anticipate their threats to international peace and security. Famines, droughts, diseases are threats to international peace and security. They undermine stability in the national and regional context.

In the past decades, new actors have entered the scene of international cooperation, for example Ministries of economic cooperation, Ministries of environment. In recent years some countries established Ministries for Energy.

So, foreign relations today are, more than ever, a complex, multi-actor and sometimes fragmented body. This also happens in the field of Climate Change policies. Because of the importance of the issues at stake, we see a need to puzzle the picture together in a coherent way with a problem-solving

orientation. We see this is as one genuine role of Foreign Ministries.

Why do I stress this? Because no other institution has such an oversight over the complex relations between states. Others traditionally address parts of the matter. Ministries for economic cooperation can contribute to specific poverty reduction and adaptation measures to fight climate change.

Ministries of defence – and allow me to say this in a conference organized by the Swedish ministry of defence – analyse security risks from their perspective.

This more specific, compartmental approach was the right one as long as we were not dealing with a global threat of this magnitude. And an impact that is already felt today, but will develop to extremes in the years and decades to come.

Also the thrust of the policies we envisage as a reaction to impending climate change have changed. We are starting to realize that we are not speaking of minor adjustments in our way of life, when we speak of mitigation and adaptation.

We speak of policies that will bring about huge structural changes in industrialized and developing countries. These changes will have a bearing on

economic and financial systems, trade, development, health, population.

It does not surprise me that for many countries the question of how to address climate change is one of huge strategic importance for their future political positioning, regionally and globally.

So, when we handle these questions, we have to do it in a global and comprehensive way. It is the task of the Foreign Ministries to mainstream climate protection policy into all different fields of foreign relations.

So what does this mean in concrete terms ? Since 2007 there is a growing awareness that the global challenge of climate change will have serious security implications.

The UN Security Council held a debate on Climate change and its possible security implications. The German Presidency launched an initiative to discuss the security implications of climate change within the EU. The European Council endorsed in March 2008 the analysis and the recommendations of the High Representative and the Commission.

Since then, a series of studies of the security implications at regional level, the integration of these studies into the early warning mechanisms

and intensified dialogue with third countries and organisations have been undertaken.

The Swedish Presidency, the Commission and the Council Secretariate are now preparing recommendations to be adopted at the Council on General Affairs on 7/8 December this year, just at the beginning of the Kopenhagen conference.

From the point of view of a representative of the German Federal Foreign Office, there are some obvious elements which should be included:

First, we have to acknowledge that climate change is a real threat to international peace and security. Let me be clear: We should not artificially exaggerate the impact of these threats and create self-fulfilling prophecies. I am convinced that we can handle these threats if we act wisely and fast.

We have to take bold action on climate change mitigation in order to limit global warming to a maximum of 2 degrees. Foreign Ministries must use the full force of our diplomatic efforts and mobilise the resources of our collective diplomatic networks to persuade the key participants in the climate negotiations to come forward with ambitious commitments.

Second, when we continue the dialogue with

developing countries, especially in the hot spot areas, we must provide a stronger support to climate change adaptation. We have to assist countries most in need to build up the necessary infrastructure to cope with unavoidable climate change. The EU development policy must undergo a climate screening process. This should be our main policy in the field of conflict prevention.

Third, we have to anticipate and prepare for a number of largely unprecedented challenges multiplied or amplified by climate change, as mentioned by previous speakers. Let me focus on the following ones:

- Environment Migration, i.e. many people displaced from their traditional land. International law has to cope with this entirely new situation (loss of state, huge numbers, no chance to go back).

- One important aspect of this is the prospect of submerged island nations. This will raise important legal issues concerning national sovereignty, claims over marine resources, and the rights and the relocation of citizens of such territories. There will be, most probably, stateless citizens. Legal and political arrangements will be necessary for the protection of affected people.

- The prospect of a drastic reduction of drinking water availability to hundreds of millions of the world's people. How will this affect food production? What support can the European Union provide to prepare for these developments which are expected to take place within a few decades?

- There is the prospect of far-reaching geographical developments because of climate change. We might face for example intensified competition over newly accessible Arctic natural resources and trade routes. Can we really rely on existing institutional frameworks ? Do we need new cooperative arrangements?

These are only some of the challenges we will have to cope with in the future. The Report of the UN-Secretary General on "Climate change and its possible security implications", which was published a few days ago, rightly states that climate change is a global challenge which can only be tackled at a global level.

This leads me to the fourth point: Governance. The EU has announced in its contribution preceding the UN-Secretary's report that it is strongly in favour of strengthening the relevant UN bodies and has made some concrete proposals how to mainstream climate change within the realm of UN activities:

sharing analysis, strengthening relevant observation networks, managing disasters, developing guidelines for disaster prevention and management to be used in developing countries, strengthening regional organisations.

This has to be spelled out in further detail in the weeks to come. The security aspects of climate change must be addressed through a global partnership between developed and developing countries. All human societies will be affected, albeit to a varying degree and in different ways, and the more vulnerable ones will need our solidarity and assistance.

Our response to the security challenges posed by climate change must draw on the full range of policy tools and diplomatic efforts, including environmental enhancement, development and humanitarian assistance, trade crisis management as well as security policy.

I would like to end my statement by saying that we have an enormous task in front of us. And to spell this out very clearly: I see crisis prevention as being the classical task of civilian, non-military action. I see some political danger in offering military solutions to climate change problems. This

**could give the wrong message to the partners that
need our assistance and our cooperation.**

Thank you for your attention.