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### Climate Change and Conflict - New Report Weighs the Risks and Pin Points Likely Hotspots

**German Advisory Council on Global Change and UN Environment Programme Claim Combating Global Warming Contribution to Global Security**

**News Comes as UN Climate Panel Awarded Nobel Peace Prize.**

**Bali, 10 December 2007** - Combating climate change will be a central peace policy of the 21st century.

Unchecked it is likely to aggravate old and trigger new tensions in parts of the world that may spill over into violence, conflict and war a new report concludes.

Areas at increased risk of insecurity include northern and southern Africa alongside countries in the Sahel region and the Mediterranean

Other potential hot spots are central Asia; India, Pakistan and Bangladesh; China; parts of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico and Andean and Amazonian regions of Latin America.

The report, prepared by German and Swiss academics, urges governments meeting at the UN climate convention conference in Bali to adopt deep and decisive emission reductions alongside support for adaptation or 'climate proofing'.

Otherwise climate change, including more extreme weather events; impacts like the melting of glaciers; the drying out of big forest systems and rising numbers of climate refugees is likely to overwhelm the ability of many countries to govern and to cope.

Professor Hans Schellnhuber, a lead author of the report, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Visiting Professor at Oxford University, said: "Without resolute counteraction, climate change will overstretch many societies' adaptive capacities within coming decades. This could result in destabilization and violence jeopardizing national and international security to a new degree".

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director UN Environment Programme (UNEP), said: "There are multiple environmental challenges facing the world and the security of communities and countries. Climate change is perhaps the most high profile".

"However, if we can counter climate change and climate proof economies to buffer them against the climatic changes already underway, perhaps the world can unite around these other pressing challenges from reversing the decline of biodiversity and loss of marine resources up to designing a more intelligent, fairer and ultimately sustainable global trade regime".

The new report comes in the wake of rising concern over climate change and conflict. Earlier in the year the UN Security Council debated the issue and there have been warnings from retired and serving senior military in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Later today the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), jointly founded by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organisation, will co-win the Nobel Peace Prize-again reaffirming growing understanding

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World in Transition - Climate Change as a Security Risk

#### Further Resources

- [Climate Change as a Security Risk - Download the Report \(PDF\)](#)
- [Buy on line from Earthscan](#)
- [Selected High Resolution Graphics from the Report](#)
- [German Advisory Council on Global Change \(WBGU\)](#)
- [UNEP's Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch](#)
- [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#)
- [Official web site](#)
- [UNEP Executive Director congratulates Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Al Gore](#)
- [Statement by Achim Steiner in Response to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Al Gore Jointly Winning the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize](#)
- [Bali and Beyond: Towards a Low Carbon Society](#)
- [UN Climate Convention - 2 to 14 December 2007](#)
- [UNEP Resources on Climate Change](#)

between combating climate change and peace.

The new report, entitled *Climate Change as a Security Risk*, has been prepared by the German Advisory Council on Global Change drawing on the work of international experts and organizations including UNEP.

The report suggests four 'climate-induced conflict constellations'. These are degradation of freshwaters; decline in food production; increase in storm and flood disasters and environmentally-induced migration.

It also tries to define and explain what may constitute vulnerable states and societies. These are likely to be ones that are in political transition and have a low level of economic activity with often large population or high population densities.

Countries bordering a neighbour in which violent conflict is being waged or ones that have themselves experienced violent conflicts in the very recent past within their own borders will also be vulnerable to renewed conflict in a climatically constrained world.

### **Highlights from the Report-Regional Hotspots**

**North Africa:** The potential for political crisis and migratory pressure will intensify as a result of the interaction between increasing drought and water scarcity, high population growth, a drop in agricultural potential and poor political problem-solving capacities. The populous Nile Delta will bear risk from sea-level rise and salinization in agricultural areas.

**Sahel zone:** Climate change will cause additional environmental stress and social crises (e.g. drought, harvest failure, water scarcity) in a region already characterized by weak states (e.g. Somalia, Chad), civil wars (e.g. Sudan, Niger) and major refugee flows (Sudan: more than 690,000 people; Somalia: more than 390,000 people).

**Southern Africa:** Climate change could further weaken the economic potential of this region, whose countries already belong to the poorest in the world in most cases. It could also worsen the conditions for human security and overstretch the capacities of states in the region.

**Central Asia:** Above-average warming and glacial retreat will exacerbate the water, agricultural and distributional problems in a region which is already characterized by political and social tensions, civil war (Tajikistan) and conflicts over access to water and energy resources.

**India, Pakistan, Bangladesh:** The impacts of climate change will be especially severe in this region: glacial retreat in the Himalayas will jeopardize the water supply for millions of people, changes to the annual monsoon will affect agriculture, and sea-level rise and cyclones will threaten human settlements around the populous Bay of Bengal.

These dynamics will increase the social crisis potential in a region which is already characterized by cross-border conflicts (India/Pakistan), unstable governments (Bangladesh/Pakistan) and Islamism.

**China:** Climate change will intensify the existing environmental stress (e.g. air and water pollution, soil degradation) due to the increase in heat waves and droughts, which will worsen desertification and water scarcity in some parts of the country.

Sea-level rise and tropical cyclones will threaten the economically significant and populous east coast. The government's steering capacities could be overwhelmed by the rapid pace of modernization, environmental and social crises and the impacts of climate change.

**Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico:** Increased frequency of more intense hurricanes could overwhelm the economic and political problem-solving capacities in the region (especially in Central America).

**Andean region and Amazonia:** Faster glacial retreat in the Andes will worsen the region's water problems. The collapse of the Amazon rainforest, which cannot be ruled out, would radically alter South America's natural environment, with incalculable economic and social

consequences.

#### Notes to Editors

The report Climate Change as a Security Risk is available at [www.wbgu.de](http://www.wbgu.de) under flagship reports. It is also available at Earthscan [www.earthscan.co.uk](http://www.earthscan.co.uk) graphics for download are available at [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

UNEP's Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch is at <http://postconflict.unep.ch/>

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