

ADVISORY LETTER

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY**

No. 14, January 2009

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## **Members of the Climate Change and Security Committee**

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# CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY

## Introduction

This report on climate change and security by the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) has been drafted for the Dutch Minister of Defence. On 10 July 2008 the Minister requested a report on 'the likely implications of climate change for the international security situation over the next twenty years' (see Annex I for the request for advice). The request for advice, which was made in the context of the defence policy review on the future of the armed forces<sup>1</sup>, complements the request for advice from the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation on the subject of 'climate, energy and poverty reduction' of 15 March 2008.

According to the plan for the defence policy review, this request for advice from the AIV is one of over 40 requests for studies or reports that the Ministry of Defence has made to more than 20 organisations or individuals.<sup>2</sup> The plan also states that future scenarios and armed forces profiles will be drawn up on the basis of all the studies and reports, eventually yielding a set of policy options that provide a starting point and a structure for political debate on the future of the armed forces.

In this connection, the Minister of Defence put two specific questions to the AIV:

1. What effect is climate change expected to have on the international security situation over the next two decades? To what extent will we have to deal with floods, droughts, new border disputes, geopolitical changes, shifting maritime transport routes, increased migration flows and restricted access to natural resources?
2. What implications will these changes have for the role played by the Dutch armed forces as they are called upon to respond to international humanitarian emergencies and conflict situations?

These two questions address only a fraction of the impact of climate change (the twenty-year limit in question 1 relates to the time horizon of the defence policy review, not to the impact of climate change). Like the Minister of Defence, the AIV therefore regards this advisory report on climate and security as complementary to the climate, energy and poverty reduction report which the Advisory Council adopted on 5 November 2008.<sup>3</sup>

The climate, energy and poverty reduction report underlines the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation), and examines at length measures that will need to be introduced to cope with the current and future adverse impacts of climate change (adaptation). The AIV observes in the report that these effects will manifest themselves to a disproportionate extent in developing countries, where poor population groups in particular will be exposed to risks, putting their human rights under pressure.

1 Minister of Defence, Letter to parliament on the interministerial Future Policy Survey, 'Houvast voor de krijgsmacht van 2020' ['A solid footing for the armed forces in 2020'], 29 February 2008.

2 Future Policy Survey Management Group, Future Policy Survey Project Plan, 11 July 2008.

3 AIV, *Climate, Energy and Poverty Reduction*, advisory report no. 62, The Hague, November 2008.

The report then considers the industrialised countries' responsibility to support vulnerable developing countries in their mitigation and adaptation efforts. It reviews and examines the available estimates of the costs associated with adaptation, how it is to be funded, and how donors can provide adaptation support. Finally, the report addresses the issue of access to energy for the many hundreds of millions of people who currently have virtually none, and the question as to whether support for the 'energy-poor' should focus exclusively on renewable energy for the sake of the future of the planet. In this context, the report also considers the potential of and problems associated with biomass in general, and biofuels in particular.

Since the present report builds on the principles and analyses in the report on climate change, energy and poverty reduction, it has been kept brief, and is being issued in the form of an advisory letter, which is not structured in numbered sections. Where necessary, reference is made to the climate change, energy and poverty reduction report. This advisory letter looks first at the fundamental uncertainties associated with climate change. The government's two questions concerning the implications of climate change for international security and for the Dutch armed forces are then addressed. The letter concludes with a list of the key conclusions.

This advisory letter was prepared by a combined AIV committee consisting of Rear Admiral R.M. Lutje Schipholt (retd.) (chair), Professor L.B.M. Mennes (vice-chair), Dr B.S.M. Berendsen, Dr P.P. Everts, Lieutenant General H.W.M. Satter (retd.), E.P. Wellenstein (honorary member) and Major General (Marine Corps) C. Homan (retd.) (external expert). Professor J.G. Siccama of the Ministry of Defence and P.J. de Vries and V.P.M.E. van Zeijst of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acted as civil service liaison officers. The executive secretary was J.M.D. van Leeuwe, assisted by Ms S.M.N. van Schoten (temporary member of the AIV Unit) and trainee Ms S. van Woerden. This advisory letter was adopted at the AIV meeting of 23 January 2009.

**Climate change will probably have a dramatic impact, but it is surrounded by fundamental uncertainties**

In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that the climate changes already observed were very likely to continue.<sup>4</sup> As a result, changes that have already been observed – higher average temperatures, sea-level rise, altered precipitation patterns and extreme weather events – will become more evident. Certain areas, including low-lying coastal areas, arid regions and areas that are dependent on melting ice and snow for their freshwater supply, will therefore become more vulnerable.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is not known how rapidly the earth will warm in the future, how quickly the polar icecaps will melt, or how much sea levels will rise. For example, the IPCC states in its 2007 report that the average global temperature increase between now and the end of the century is likely to be somewhere between 1.1 and 6.4°C (relative to 1990). The IPCC also gives a large range of possible values for sea-level rise in the 21st century.

4 Like the AIV report on *Climate, Energy and Poverty Reduction*, this advisory letter is based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2007 conclusions. IPCC, 'Fourth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report', 2007, p. 72. The AIV acknowledges in the climate change, energy and poverty reduction report that not everyone supports the IPCC's conclusions.

5 Particularly regions in Africa, the polar regions, small island states and megadeltas such as those in Asia and Africa.

It expects the sea level to rise by between 18 and 59 centimetres (relative to 1990) by 2100, as a result of thermal expansion, the melting of glaciers and small icecaps, and the steady shrinking of the major icecaps on Greenland and Antarctica. Yet these margins, too, are surrounded by a great deal of uncertainty.<sup>6</sup>

The extent and pace of climate change depend on many factors, including international climate policy.<sup>7</sup> However, even if the best possible policy were developed and the rise in temperatures were curbed, adaptation to the impact of climate change would still be necessary, as its effects will continue to manifest themselves for many years to come.<sup>8</sup> The oceans and icecaps, for example, respond very slowly to changes in the atmosphere. Sea-level rise is therefore expected to continue for centuries, even if global temperatures do not continue to rise after 2100.<sup>9</sup>

Added to this is the fact that current global developments, or problems, are exacerbating climate change. They include population growth, urbanisation, rapid economic growth (particularly in emerging economies like China, India and Brazil) and the associated increase in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

All these uncertain factors mean that any predictions as to the impact of climate change are likely to be either speculative or prompted by wishful thinking. The IPCC projections mentioned above at any rate show that significant changes to our climate will be visible over a period considerably longer than the 20-year time horizon of the current defence policy review.

#### ***A proactive approach to fundamental uncertainties***

The question of how to deal with such fundamental uncertainties is also the crux of the recent report issued by the Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR), *Onzekere veiligheid: verantwoordelijkheden rond fysieke veiligheid* ['Uncertain Security: Responsibility for Physical Security'].<sup>10</sup> The WRR report considers a number of global threats, including climate change, which in all likelihood will arise over the next decade. The report deliberately does not focus on separate policy areas such as defence policy, since its discussion of physical security centres on generic problems that transcend

6 KNMI, 'Toelichting op het IPCC klimaatrapport' ['Guide to the IPCC report'], KNMI website accessed in December 2008. <<http://www.knmi.nl>>. The KNMI points out that its own estimates differ from those of the IPCC. Others have also produced different results. This only serves to illustrate the uncertainty that currently surrounds this issue.

7 AIV, *Climate, Energy and Poverty Reduction*, 2008.

8 Ibid.

9 KNMI, 'Toelichting op het IPCC klimaatrapport', op.cit.

10 WRR, *Onzekere veiligheid: verantwoordelijkheden rond fysieke veiligheid*, report no. 82 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008). For a similar, less thoroughly underpinned but more pragmatic approach: Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and Rand Europe, 'Omgaan met Onzekerheid in Beleid' ['Dealing with Uncertainty in Policy'], March 2007. See also Kees Homan, 'Klimaatverandering: voorspellen is moeilijk, vooral de toekomst' ['Climate change: prediction is difficult, especially when it comes to the future'], *Internationale Spectator* 62:5 (May 2008), pp. 257-8.

disciplinary boundaries.<sup>11</sup> The WRR therefore consistently refers to 'government' in a general sense. This only serves to underline what we touched upon in the introduction to this advisory letter: that the impact of climate change on the armed forces will represent only one aspect of a complex situation.

The WRR proposes a new approach to risk in addressing these global threats. This would mean that society would face not so much definable risks as the fundamental uncertainties described in the report. The WRR concludes that we must take a proactive approach to these uncertainties. This would mean extending the responsibilities inherent in the precautionary principle. For example, the government should introduce legislation and institutional mechanisms that encourage both the government itself and private parties to take specific precautions against the acknowledged threats. The AIV awaits with interest the outcome of the political debate on the WRR report.<sup>12</sup>

### **Climate change and the international security situation (question 1)**

Climate change could also impact on the international security situation. Various international organisations are already considering this possibility. In April 2007, for example, the UN Security Council met to discuss energy, security and climate change. Dutch development minister Bert Koenders remarked in a speech to this meeting, 'Climate change requires us to reassess security risks, so that we can take adequate preventive and corrective measures'.<sup>13</sup> NATO is also concerned about the matter. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has for example stated that the implications of climate change for global security are an important issue for the alliance.<sup>14</sup>

11 WRR, op.cit. p. 14. In the Prime Minister's request for advice to the WRR that was the occasion for the report, the government asks the Advisory Council to focus on issues of *physical security*. The government mentions as examples the environment and flood protection (request for advice on physical security, letter from the Prime Minister, 16 December 2004). Other government departments are also considering the implications of climate change, including the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (V&W), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ) and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). The interior ministry, for example, is looking into the implications of climate change for *national security*, as part of its National Security Work Programme 2007/2008, 20 April 2007.

12 At the time of writing, the government had not yet issued its response to the WRR report.

13 Bert Koenders, Minister for Development Cooperation, 'Statement in the open debate of the UN Security Council on Energy, Security and Climate Change', New York, 18 April 2007.

14 NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, speech on 'NATO: The next decade', at the Security and Defence Agenda, 3 June 2008.

### **Threat multiplier**

The issue is also on the EU's agenda. On 14 March 2008, for example, the European Council welcomed the report 'Climate Change and International Security'.<sup>15</sup> This report, drawn up by the European Commission and High Representative Javier Solana, states that climate change is in fact:

'a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability. The core challenge is that climate change threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and conflict prone. It is important to recognise that the threats are not just of a humanitarian nature; they also include political and security risks that directly affect European interests.'<sup>16</sup>

The AIV concurs with the analysis that climate change is a threat multiplier for existing security risks. After all, 'Most wars have multiple layers of causality: personalities, hatreds, mistakes'.<sup>17</sup> Social, political, geographical and economic factors all play a role. It is by no means certain that a direct causal link can be established between environmental degradation and armed conflict. None has emerged in any research conducted to date.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conflicts and their causes**

The EU report of March 2008, like the WRR report referred to above, rightly concludes that a wide range of multilateral instruments will be needed to respond to the impact of climate change on international security. The military instrument is just one of them. The EU report goes on to give what the Dutch government has referred to as a 'sobering' overview of conflicts and causes of conflicts that might be exacerbated by climate change in various regions of the world:<sup>19</sup>

- conflicts over resources: increased flooding, drought and changing precipitation patterns may have an impact on agricultural production, food stocks and water supplies;
- economic damage and danger to coastal cities and critical infrastructure; sea-level rise and the growing number of natural disasters pose a serious threat to coastal regions, where some 20% of the world's population now lives;

15 Secretary-General/High Representative Solana and the European Commission, 'Climate Change and International Security', S113/08, 14 March 2008. See also the Letter to parliament on the meeting of the European Council in Brussels of 13-14 March 2008, 17 March 2008.

16 S113/08, 14 March 2008, p. 2.

17 Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done about it*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 18.

18 Henrik Urdal, 'People versus Malthus: population pressure, environmental degradation and armed conflict revisited', *Journal of Peace Research* 42: 4 (2005), pp. 417-34; Valerie Percival and Thomas Homer-Dixon, 'Environmental scarcity and violent conflict: the case of Rwanda', *Journal of Environment and Development*, 5:3 (1996), pp. 270-91; Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, 'Environmental scarcity and violent conflict: evidence from cases', *International Security* 19: 1 (1994), pp. 5-40.

19 See the report of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 10-11 March 2008, 12 March 2008.

- loss of territory and border disputes: changes to coastlines and flooding may lead to a loss of territory and even the disappearance of small island states;<sup>20</sup>
- environmentally-induced migration: countries that are highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change might see growing migration both within and across their borders. This type of migration can lead to more conflict in transit and destination areas;<sup>21</sup>
- situations of fragility and radicalisation: climate change could increase instability within countries;
- tensions over energy supply: tension concerning access to and control of energy stocks could increase since a large proportion of the world's energy reserves are located in regions that are vulnerable to climate change or are unstable. If hitherto inaccessible regions are opened up as a result of climate change, the battle for resources will intensify;
- pressure on international governance; tensions might increase in multilateral forums between the countries that are most responsible for climate change and those most affected by it.

For a more detailed account of the potential threats, the AIV refers to Annexe II to this advisory letter, which includes the relevant part of the EU report. The AIV would also point out that the EU report is based on a range of other studies.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Arctic**

As the above summary suggests, climate change might even lead to the emergence of an entirely new geopolitical situation. This could generate disputes over trade routes, maritime zones and resources that were previously inaccessible. The most striking example is the situation in the Arctic region, where the sea ice is rapidly disappearing and the icecaps are melting. This is opening up hitherto non-existent shipping routes. It is also beginning to open up the prospect of exploiting the oil and gas reserves in the region, something that until recently was considered completely impossible.<sup>23</sup>

20 Cleo Paskal, 'How climate change is pushing the boundaries of security and foreign policy', Chatham House, Briefing Paper 07/01, June 2007, p. 3.

21 The following literature also examines this risk: Richard Black, 'Environmental refugees: myth or reality?', UNHCR Working Paper No. 34, (March 2001; Stephen Castles), 'Environmental change and forced migration: making sense of the debate', UNHCR Working Paper No. 70, October 2002; Christian Aid, 'Human tide: the real migration crisis', May 2007; Oli Brown, 'Climate change and forced migration: observations, projections and implications', Human Development Report Official Occasional Paper, 2008; Norman Meyers, 'Environmental refugees: an emergent security issue', 13th Economic Forum, Prague, May 2005, pp. 23-7.

22 For example, a study by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU), *World in Transition: Climate Change as a Security Risk* (London: Earthscan, 2007); and the report by the CNA Military Advisory Board, 'National Security and the Threat of Climate Change', 2007. Other studies and/or papers that summarise climate-related threats include: Peter Haldén, *The Geopolitics of Climate Change: Challenges to the International System* (Stockholm: FOI, 2007); Kees Homan, 'Klimaatverandering als veiligheidsprobleem' ['Climate change as a security problem'], *Atlantisch Perspectief* 32:1 (2008), pp. 12-7.

23 See, *inter alia*: Sacha Kester, 'Race om noordelijke bodemschatten' ['Race for Arctic mineral resources'], *De Volkskrant*, 4 August 2007; Pavel Beav, 'Russia's race for the Arctic and the new geopolitics of the North Pole', Jamestown Foundation Occasional Paper, October 2007; and Gerald Traufetter, 'De strijd om de Noordpool' ['The race for the North Pole'], *HP/De Tijd*, 25 September 2008.

According to a recent report, the Arctic region has a quarter of the world's unproven oil and gas reserves.<sup>24</sup> In a period of growing Russian assertiveness and increasingly scarce energy, tensions could arise between the five coastal states around the Arctic Ocean – Russia, Norway, Denmark (on behalf of Greenland), Canada and the United States – over access to these resources.<sup>25</sup>

The Secretary-General of NATO recently warned of possible tensions in the Arctic, and announced a 'military presence': 'I would be the last one to expect military conflict [in the Arctic] but there will be a military presence.'<sup>26</sup> It is however essential that these tensions do not escalate into crisis situations. In this connection, the AIV would refer to the Illulissat Declaration of May 2008, in which representatives of the five coastal states clearly reaffirmed their obligations under international law (concerning the delineation of the continental shelf and navigation rights), and committed themselves to 'orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims'.<sup>27</sup> Vigilance will be needed to ensure they comply with these obligations, for the sake of peaceful development in this region, and this process should therefore be anchored in a permanent and effective diplomatic and strategic framework.

#### ***Strengthening analysis and early warning capacity***

Given the implications of climate change for international security, it comes as no surprise that the recent report of December 2008 on the European Security Strategy devotes a separate section to this subject.<sup>28</sup> The strategy refers to the above analysis in the EU report of March 2008 that climate change is a threat multiplier: 'Natural disasters, environmental degradation and competition for resources exacerbate conflict, especially in situations of poverty and population growth, with humanitarian, health, political and security consequences, including greater migration.'<sup>29</sup> The new EU report also states that climate change could potentially lead to disputes over trade routes, maritime zones and resources that were hitherto inaccessible.

The EU then points out that, though it has stepped up its conflict prevention and crisis management efforts, its analysis and early warning capacity also needs strengthening: 'We ... need to improve analysis and early warning capabilities. The EU cannot do this

24 According to research by the US Geological Survey (USGS); see also: 'Er ligt voor 90 miljard vaten aan olie onder de Noordpool' ['90 billion barrels of oil under North Pole'], *Het Financieele Dagblad*, 24 July 2008.

25 See Jaap de Wilde, 'Van wie is de Noordpool?' ['Who owns the North Pole?'], *Atlantisch Perspectief* 32:5 (2008); Pavel Beav, op.cit.; Gerald Traufetter, op.cit.

26 Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, quoted in: 'Arctic's thaw brings security risks for NATO', *International Herald Tribune*, 29 January 2009.

27 See: <<http://www.ipy.gov/DesktopModules/Articles/ArticleDetails.aspx?ItemID=718>>.

28 'Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: providing security in a changing world', S407/08, 11 December 2008. This does not supersede, but in fact reinforces the European Security Strategy of 2003, according to the report itself. The Security Strategy mentioned the implications of climate change for security, for example.

29 Ibid, p. 5.

alone. We must step up our work with countries most at risk by strengthening their capacity to cope. International cooperation, with the UN and regional organisations, will be essential.<sup>30</sup> The EU does at any rate have the European Global Monitoring for Environment and Security Initiative (GMES) at its disposal for this purpose. Using data from satellites and terrestrial monitoring stations, GMES generates autonomous environmental, climate change and security information for the EU, as Vice-President of the European Commission Günter Verheugen explained when the initiative was launched on 16 September 2008.<sup>31</sup>

Following on from this discussion of early warning, the AIV would advise the Ministry of Defence's Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) to devote more systematic attention to the security issues associated with climate and environmental change, viewed in association with factors like governance, demographic shifts and regional conflicts. The MIVD should collaborate with the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) on these matters, as it does on other transnational threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In closing this section on the implications of climate change for the international security situation, the AIV would note that scarce resources and climate change could also lead to more cooperation. The Illulissat Declaration of May 2008 referred to above is a good example. Researchers at Oregon State University in the United States also say they have found evidence that the 263 rivers in the world that cross national boundaries generate more cooperation than conflict.<sup>32</sup> The Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan is still in force despite all the wars and tensions between the two countries. Nor is an interstate war over water likely in Africa.<sup>33</sup> There, too, the more countries a river passes through, the better the regional cooperation. We should however qualify this by saying that in certain areas where central government has little or no authority, as in western Sudan, dwindling water supplies to pastureland are fostering local unrest.

#### **Implications of climate change for the role of the Dutch armed forces (question 2)**

Given the fundamental uncertainties associated with climate change, its impact on the armed forces and the fact that climate change is a threat multiplier rather than a conflict in itself, it is not possible at this juncture for the AIV to specify the implications of climate change for the role of the Dutch armed forces over the next twenty years. The AIV has also considered drawing up scenarios exploring where and how the threats in question might develop, as an aid to future policy development. However, it believes that, with the knowledge currently available, and in view of the nature and breadth of the fundamental uncertainties, not least concerning the geographical spread of the impact, it is clearly in no position to properly underpin any such scenarios. The AIV would however point out that the EU report cited above also examines a number of geographical areas (Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, Latin America, the

30 Ibid, p. 6.

31 European Space Agency (ESA) press release, 16 September 2008: see <<http://www.esa.int>>.

32 See for example: 'Streams of blood, or streams of peace', *The Economist*, 1 May 2008; see also: Jerome Delli Priscoli and Aaron T. Wolf, *Managing and Transforming Water Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

33 'Streams of blood', *The Economist*, op.cit.

Caribbean and the Arctic) as examples of how climate change could increase tensions in certain regions. These examples are also listed in Annexe II.

The AIV does believe that it is possible to distinguish two different situations which the armed forces might face as a result of climate change:

1. (more frequent) action in response to climate-related natural disasters;
2. action in crisis situations as at present, but with climate change as a threat multiplier.

### ***1 Action in response to climate-related natural disasters***

The AIV has highlighted this situation because the armed forces will probably be deployed more often in future in response to climate-related natural disasters. One of the core tasks of the Ministry of Defence is to '[support] the civil authorities in upholding the law, disaster relief and humanitarian aid', both nationally and internationally.<sup>34</sup> In recent years, for example, the armed forces have been involved in international humanitarian operations in New Orleans (US), Pakistan and Asia after the tsunami.

At national level, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations decided in 2006 to intensify civil-military cooperation (a process known by the acronym ICMS), making the Ministry of Defence a permanent security partner of the Ministry of the Interior. In this framework, the Ministry of Defence guarantees capacity for deployment in the Netherlands, under the operational command of the civil authorities.<sup>35</sup> These binding agreements have enhanced the government's response capacity while avoiding unnecessary duplication. It has been agreed that the Ministry of Defence will guarantee the availability of specialist capacity, making a total of 4600 members of the armed forces and equipment available to the civil authorities in the Netherlands within 48 hours.<sup>36</sup> A method of allocating the associated costs has also been agreed.

### ***Military assets suitable for supporting civil operations***

Ministry of Defence equipment is first and foremost intended for use in military operations. However, many of its assets are also suitable for supporting civil operations. More specifically, since the conversion to an expeditionary force, the Ministry of Defence has at its disposal transport equipment (transport aircraft, helicopters and amphibious vessels) that can be used in the first phase of humanitarian operations in response to natural disasters.

34 The Defence White Paper 2000 sets out the following three core tasks: 1) protecting the integrity of our own and Allied territories, including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba; 2) promoting the international legal order and stability; 3) supporting the civil authorities in upholding the law, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, both nationally and internationally. See <<http://www.defensie.nl>>.

35 For the catalogue of ICMS capacities and the costs table see: <<http://www.mindef.nl>>.

36 This does not include the National Reserve Corps (NATRES). The NATRES consists of five regional battalions, within which 3000 jobs are performed by active military reservists. The NATRES is part of the armed forces' regular support, whose deployment is decided on a case by case basis, over and above the capacity guaranteed under ICMS.

The use of military resources to provide assistance in international natural disasters and for humanitarian aid usually occurs at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in situations where there is no armed conflict or heightened security risk.<sup>37</sup> The Minister for Development Cooperation, for example, has the right to call on Dutch military air transport capacity. 'In the event of major humanitarian disasters this right will be exercised, whereby military transport aircraft may be used for international aid operations by, for example, the UN or the International Committee of the Red Cross. Deployment will occur on the basis of an international appeal for assistance from the country affected, taking into account the UN Oslo and MCDA Guidelines for civil-military cooperation on humanitarian aid.'<sup>38</sup>

### ***The armed forces can be deployed rapidly***

Under the Oslo Guidelines, military assets may in principle only be employed for emergency humanitarian aid in the absence of any available civilian alternative.<sup>39</sup> Military assets have the advantage that, when available, they can be deployed very rapidly. After a certain lapse of time, civilian personnel can take over the humanitarian tasks. Dutch military assets can be deployed on a bilateral basis in the initial stages of disaster response, when every minute counts. Nevertheless, here too, Dutch assets cannot be viewed in isolation. To date, the NATO Response Force (NRF), to which the Netherlands contributes military capacity, has for example been deployed twice, on both occasions after natural disasters (the Pakistan earthquake and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans). The EU also has such rapid response units (battlegroups, or BGs), to which the Netherlands makes a military contribution. The NRF and the EU BGs are likely to be deployed more often in future in response to natural disasters, which is indeed one of their official tasks.

The Ministry of Defence thus guarantees to make resources for humanitarian relief available at both national and international level. Many of its existing resources are eminently suited to this purpose.

## ***2 Action in crises where climate change acts as a threat multiplier***

Another core task of the armed forces is to protect and promote the international legal order and stability.<sup>40</sup> To carry out this mission, the armed forces have been transformed since the 1990s into an expeditionary force. For this purpose, a guaranteed military capacity is kept in readiness (the 'level of ambition'), and regularly deployed in failing and fragile states, as in the current operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chad and

37 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Defence, (Terms of Reference for decision-making on the deployment of military units abroad ('Frame of Reference 2001')), 19 July 2001, see: <<http://www.mindef.nl>>.

38 Minister of Defence, Commitment on expenditure on lease contracts for strategic air transport and predicted transport needs made at the parliamentary committee meeting on 7 October 2008, 7 November 2008.

39 'Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief – Oslo Guidelines', May 1994, reviewed November 2006.

40 Minister of Defence, Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Secretary for Defence, Defence White Paper 2000, 29 November 1999.

Somalia.<sup>41</sup> It is not clear whether climate change is already acting as a threat multiplier or is likely to do so in these ongoing operations.

However, as the AIV concluded above following the EU, the armed forces could well face crisis situations that are exacerbated by climate change in future. In a previous report, the AIV recommended that the government be prepared if necessary to contribute to the military protection of international energy supply routes (by sea and pipeline).<sup>42</sup> Tensions over energy supplies are also included in the list above of potential climate-related sources of conflict.

***The armed forces have an extensive toolbox at their disposal***

The Ministry of Defence has an extensive toolbox that can be used flexibly in crisis operations. The correct tools can be chosen on a case by case basis, to suit any scenario.

As mentioned above, however, the Dutch armed forces do not operate in isolation. Not only are other ministries involved, the Netherlands also deploys its military units to perform this core task in an international frameworks such as the UN, EU or NATO.<sup>43</sup> For each operation, it is decided which organisation or international partnership should take command, and what mandate the Dutch units will have. In its earlier report *The Netherlands and European Development Policy*, the AIV considers the question of the most suitable forum for the international deployment of the Dutch military.<sup>44</sup>

41 Minister of Defence, *Wereldwijd Dienstbaar* ['Service Worldwide'], policy letter, 18 September 2007, which states that the 'ambition' for this core task is:

- to contribute to NATO. In this connection, the armed forces will also make an ongoing contribution of varying size to the NATO Response Force;
- to contribute to the European Union. In this connection, the armed forces will also periodically contribute to the Union's rapid response capability, the EU Battlegroups;
- to contribute to the United Nations Stand-By High Readiness Brigade;
- to participate for a maximum of one year in an operation in the upper range of the spectrum of force with an army brigade, two squadrons of fighter jets or a maritime taskforce;
- to simultaneously participate for an extended period in up to 'three operations' in the 'lower' range of the spectrum of force with battalion-sized taskforces or, in air and maritime operations, the equivalent (*inverted commas inserted by the AIV because the Ministry of Defence also expresses reservations about these terms; see Wereldwijd Dienstbaar*);
- to act as lead nation at brigade level in land-based operations and, together with other countries, at army corps level; to act as lead nation in maritime operations at taskforce level, and participate in air operations, contributing the equivalent of a brigade;
- to perform special operations, including evacuation and counterterrorism operations.

42 AIV and Dutch Energy Council (AER), *Energised Foreign Policy: Security of Energy Supply as a New Key Objective*, advisory report no. 46, The Hague, December 2005.

43 Frame of Reference 2001.

44 AIV, *The Netherlands and European Development Policy*, advisory report no. 60, The Hague, May 2008, pp. 42-53.

**Aside**

As an aside, the AIV would point out that the implications of climate change for the military must be reflected in its policies on training and equipment. Military training must for instance take account of the increased likelihood of deployment in response to climate-related natural disasters, both nationally and internationally. The Ministry of Defence has in fact gained considerable experience by supporting the civil authorities in over 100 such operations over the past 17 years.

Equipment policy must cater for the trend towards sustainability, as reflected in the Ministry's recent Sustainability White Paper 2009.<sup>45</sup> Sustainable use of energy reduces the environmental burden, operating costs and dependence on traditional fuels in expeditionary operations. Equipment policy must also take account of the extreme climatological conditions in which the armed forces often operate (e.g. in Afghanistan and Chad), a factor that climate change is exacerbating. In hot conditions, for example, more energy is needed for cooling, the hoist capacity of helicopters is reduced and the environment is generally dustier, which causes extra wear and tear on equipment.<sup>46</sup> Measures to enhance sustainability and to compensate for the extra burden on equipment will undoubtedly require extra investments. Such investments must not be overlooked in considering the future of the armed forces.

**In conclusion**

In future, the Dutch armed forces are likely to be deployed more frequently as a result of climate change, particularly in response to climate-related natural disasters. Climate change is a threat multiplier in crisis management operations. To illustrate this fact, this advisory letter lists conflicts and causes of conflict in various parts of the world that could be exacerbated by climate change. Climate change might even create an entirely new geopolitical reality, as is already happening in the Arctic. This letter also notes that climate change could also lead to more cooperation between states.

Referring back to the WRR report cited above, which advocates taking precautionary measures in the face of uncertainty, the AIV would note that the Ministry of Defence is already doing a great deal in this respect. It has guaranteed military capacity for deployment in international missions and to support national civil authorities in providing humanitarian emergency aid, both nationally and internationally. The armed forces have an extensive toolbox available for these tasks, tools that can be deployed flexibly, depending on the circumstances.

As we have said, whether this is enough in the context of the precautionary principle applied by the WRR depends in part on the future political debate on this matter, and on political decision-making on the future of the armed forces, of which the current defence policy review forms part. This advisory letter, issued at the request of the Ministry of Defence, is one of the many building blocks which the Ministry will use to construct future scenarios and define armed forces profiles, producing policy options for the political debate on the future of the armed forces.

45 State Secretary for Defence, *Defensie Duurzaamheidsnota 2009*, 25 November 2008.

46 Speech by Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, Chief of the Defence Staff, 'Climate change: politics versus economics', Chatham House, London, 25 June 2007.

Irrespective of the policy margins that will emerge from this process, the AIV does not currently have the objective information to allow it with reasonable certainty to quantify the implications for personnel and equipment, or to give a geographical specification, of the possible demands for extra military deployment as a result of climate change. Furthermore, the impact of climate change is never exclusively a defence issue. In situations where climate impacts on security, the deployment of the armed forces will be part of a much broader approach that will require close national and international cooperation.

The AIV would however advise the Ministry of Defence to ensure that the MIVD works with the AIVD – in so far as it is not already doing so – in permanently focusing more attention on the implications of climate change for national and international security, in the context of early warning.

Finally, the AIV would highlight the fact that the armed forces are first and foremost the State's instrument of force, intended for use in military operations. At the same time, however, the Ministry of Defence must leave sufficient scope for its capabilities to be made available to support the civil authorities as much as possible in upholding the law, disaster response and humanitarian relief operations. This is, after all, also a core task of the armed forces, which have many dual-use assets at their disposal and can be rapidly deployed. This underlines the multiple interests served by the process, already embarked upon, of creating a more expeditionary force.

**The request for advice**



Ministry of Defence

Directorate of  
General Policy Affairs

To Mr F. Korthals Altes  
Chairman of the Advisory Council on  
International Affairs  
Postbus 20061  
2500 EB Den Haag

Date 10 juli 2008  
Our reference HDAB2008018526  
Re Climate and security

Dear Mr Korthals Altes,

Following on from the request for advice on climate change, energy and poverty reduction sent by the Minister for Development Cooperation on 15 March, I would like to request an advisory report from the Advisory Council on International Affairs on the expected effects of climate change on the international security situation over the next 20 years. Climate change will come to play an important role as we look ahead to the future of the armed forces (see Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives 2007-2008, 31 243, no. 6).

Specifically, the government would like to hear the AIV's thoughts on the following questions:

*What effect is climate change expected to have on the international security situation over the next two decades? To what extent will we have to deal with floods, droughts, new border disputes, geopolitical changes, shifting maritime transport routes, increased migration flows and restricted access to natural resources?*

*What implications will these changes have for the role played by the Dutch armed forces as they are called upon to respond to international humanitarian emergencies and possible conflict situations?*

The government would appreciate receiving the report by January 2009, so that the AIV's conclusions can be taken into account in the current discussion of the future of the armed forces.

I am looking forward to receiving your advisory report.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

Eimert van Middelkoop  
Minister of Defence

**EU report on 'Climate Change and International Security' of 14 March 2008 (pp. 3-8)**

**II THREATS**

The effects of climate change are being felt now: temperatures are rising, icecaps and glaciers are melting and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense. The following section outlines some of the forms of conflicts driven by climate change which may occur in different regions of the world.

**i) Conflict over resources**

Reduction of arable land, widespread shortage of water, diminishing food and fish stocks, increased flooding and prolonged droughts are already happening in many parts of the world. Climate change will alter rainfall patterns and further reduce available freshwater by as much as 20 to 30% in certain regions. A drop in agricultural productivity will lead to, or worsen, food insecurity in least developed countries and an unsustainable increase in food prices across the board. Water shortage in particular has the potential to cause civil unrest and lead to significant economic losses, even in robust economies. The consequences will be even more intense in areas under strong demographic pressure. The overall effect is that climate change will fuel existing conflicts over depleting resources, especially where access to those resources is politicised.

**ii) Economic damage and risk to coastal cities and critical infrastructure**

It has been estimated that a business as usual scenario in dealing with climate change could cost the world economy up to 20% of global GNP per year, whereas the cost of effective concerted action can be limited to 1%. Coastal zones are the home of about one fifth of the world's population, a number set to rise in the years ahead. Mega-cities, with their supporting infrastructure, such as port facilities and oil refineries, are often located by the sea or in river deltas. Sea-level rise and the increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters pose a serious threat to these regions and their economic prospects. The east coasts of China and India as well as the Caribbean region and Central America would be particularly affected. An increase in disasters and humanitarian crises will lead to immense pressure on the resources of donor countries, including capacities for emergency relief operations.

**iii) Loss of territory and border disputes**

Scientists project major changes to the landmass during this century. Receding coastlines and submergence of large areas could result in loss of territory, including entire countries such as small island states. More disputes over land and maritime borders and other territorial rights are likely. There might be a need to revisit existing rules of international law, particularly the Law of the Sea, as regards the resolution of territorial and border disputes. A further dimension of competition for energy resources lies in potential conflict over resources in Polar regions which will become exploitable as a consequence of global warming. Desertification could trigger a vicious circle of degradation, migration and conflicts over territory and borders that threatens the political stability of countries and regions.

**iv) Environmentally-induced migration**

Those parts of the population that already suffer from poor health conditions, unemployment or social exclusion are rendered more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which could amplify or trigger migration within and between countries. The UN predicts that there will be millions of 'environmental' migrants by 2020 with climate change as one of the major drivers of this phenomenon. Some countries that are extremely vulnerable to climate change

are already calling for international recognition of such environmentally-induced migration. Such migration may increase conflicts in transit and destination areas. Europe must expect substantially increased migratory pressure.

#### **v) Situations of fragility and radicalisation**

Climate change may significantly increase instability in weak or failing states by overstretching the already limited capacity of governments to respond effectively to the challenges they face. The inability of a government to meet the needs of its population as a whole or to provide protection in the face of climate change-induced hardship could trigger frustration, lead to tensions between different ethnic and religious groups within countries and to political radicalisation. This could destabilise countries and even entire regions.

#### **vi) Tension over energy supply**

One of the most significant potential conflicts over resources arises from intensified competition over access to, and control over, energy resources. That in itself is, and will continue to be, a cause of instability. However, because much of the world's hydrocarbon reserves are in regions vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and because many oil and gas producing states already face significant social, economic and demographic challenges, instability is likely to increase. This has the potential to feed back into greater energy insecurity and greater competition for resources. A possible wider use of nuclear energy for power generation might raise new concerns about proliferation, in the context of a non-proliferation regime that is already under pressure. As previously inaccessible regions open up due to the effects of climate change, the scramble for resources will intensify.

#### **vii) Pressure on international governance**

The multilateral system is at risk if the international community fails to address the threats outlined above. Climate change impacts will fuel the politics of resentment between those most responsible for climate change and those most affected by it. Impacts of climate mitigation policies (or policy failures) will thus drive political tension nationally and internationally. The potential rift not only divides North and South but there will also be a South-South dimension, particularly as the Chinese and Indian share of global emissions rises. The already burdened international security architecture will be put under increasing pressure.

### **III GEOGRAPHICAL EXAMPLES**

In many regions, climate change is fuelling one or more of the threats identified above. The following sections illustrate how climate change is multiplying existing pressures in various regions around the world. Since the EU's neighbours include some of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, e.g. North Africa and the Middle East, migratory pressure at the European Union's borders and political instability and conflicts could increase in the future. This could also have a significant impact on Europe's energy supply routes.

#### **1. Africa:**

Africa is one of the continents most vulnerable to climate change because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. In North Africa and the Sahel, increasing drought, water scarcity and land overuse will degrade soils and could lead to a loss of 75% of arable, rain-fed land. The Nile Delta could be at risk from both sea-level rise and salinisation in agricultural areas while 12 to 15% of arable land could be lost through sea-level rise in this century, with 5 million people affected by 2050. Already today, climate change is having a major impact on the conflict in and around Darfur. In the Horn of Africa reduced rainfall

and increasing temperatures will have a significant negative impact on a region highly vulnerable to conflict. In southern Africa, droughts are contributing to poor harvests, leading to food insecurity in several areas, with millions of people expected to face food shortages. Migration in this region, but also migration from other regions through northern Africa to reach Europe (transit migration) is likely to intensify. In Africa, and elsewhere, climate change is expected to have a negative effect on health, in particular due to the spread of vector-borne diseases further aggravating tensions.

## **2. Middle East:**

Water systems in the Middle East are already under intense stress. Roughly two-thirds of the Arab world depends on sources outside their borders for water. The Jordan and Yarmuk rivers are expected to see considerable reductions in their flows affecting Israel, the Palestinian territories and Jordan. Existing tensions over access to water are almost certain to intensify in this region leading to further political instability with detrimental implications for Europe's energy security and other interests. Water supply in Israel might fall by 60% over this century. Consequently, a significant drop in crop yields is projected for an area that is already largely arid or semi-arid. Significant decreases are expected to hit Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia and thus affect stability in a vitally strategic region for Europe.

## **3. South Asia:**

Sea-level rise may threaten the habitat of millions of people as 40% of Asia's population (almost 2 billion) lives within 60 km from the coastline. Water stress and loss of agricultural productivity will make it difficult for Asia to feed its growing population who will additionally be exposed to an increase of infectious diseases. Changes in the monsoon rains and decrease of melt water from the Himalayas will affect more than 1 billion people. Conflicts over remaining resources and unmanaged migration will lead to instability in a region that is an important economic partner of Europe with factors of production and distribution concentrated along vulnerable coastlines.

## **4. Central Asia:**

Central Asia is another region severely affected by climate change. An increasing shortage of water, which is both a key resource for agriculture and a strategic resource for electricity generation, is already noticeable. The glaciers in Tajikistan lost a third of their area in the second half of the 20th century alone, while Kyrgyzstan has lost over 1000 glaciers in the last four decades. There is thus considerable additional potential for conflict in a region whose strategic, political and economic developments as well as increasing trans-regional challenges impact directly or indirectly on EU interests.

## **5. Latin America and the Caribbean:**

In drier areas of Latin America climate change will lead to salinisation and desertification of agricultural land and to decreasing productivity of important crops and livestock. This will have adverse consequences for food security. Sea-level rise is projected to cause increased risk of flooding in low-lying areas. Increases in sea surface temperature due to climate change are projected to have adverse effects on coral reefs, and cause shifts in the location of fish stocks. Latin American and Caribbean countries are already subject to the detrimental effects, including many extreme events, associated with the El Niño cycle. Changes in rainfall patterns and the disappearance of glaciers are projected to significantly alter water availability for human consumption, agriculture and energy generation, for example in the Andes region. Countries in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico are already increasingly affected by major hurricanes. This will be further exacerbated by climate change and result in social and political tensions in a region with often weak governance structures.

**6. The Arctic:**

The rapid melting of the polar icecaps, in particular the Arctic, is opening up new waterways and international trade routes. In addition, the increased accessibility of the enormous hydrocarbon resources in the Arctic region is changing the geo-strategic dynamics of the region with potential consequences for international stability and European security interests. The resulting new strategic interests are illustrated by the recent planting of the Russian flag under the North Pole. There is an increasing need to address the growing debate over territorial claims and access to new trade routes by different countries which challenge Europe's ability to effectively secure its trade and resource interests in the region and may put pressure on its relations with key partners.

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