

**Security Address
Madrid, 15 February 2011**

**Address by Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,
to the Congress of Deputies of Spain at the Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa
Nacional in Madrid**

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Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

Congratulations for the publication of the excellent Strategy Paper.

It gives me great pleasure to address you on this important topic, as the link between security concerns and climate change has gained importance over the past few years.

We all agree that all nations need stability to flourish

In its context, it is alarming to admit that if the community of nations is unable to fully stabilize climate change, it will threaten where we can live, where and how we grow food and where we can find water. In other words, it will threaten the basic foundation - the very stability on which humanity has built its existence.

Let us look at some factors:

1. Reduced water supply and growing demand will in some places lead to increasing competition among different sectors of society, different communities and different countries. Already, one-third of all people in Africa live in drought-prone regions. The IPCC estimates that by 2050, up to 600 million Africans will be at risk of water stress.
2. On a global level, increasingly unpredictable weather patterns will lead to falling agricultural production and higher food prices, leading to food insecurity. In Africa, crop yields could decline by as much as 50% by 2020. Recent experiences around the world clearly show how such situations can cause political instability and undermine the performance of already fragile states.

3. Changes in sea-level, more frequent and more severe natural disasters and water shortages have the potential to cause large-scale, destabilizing population movements. Migration, especially within a country, is not inherently problematic and is quite common in Africa. But what we have seen historically in terms of international migration will be tiny compared to the migration brought about by the magnitude of future pressures on vulnerable populations.

All these factors taken together mean that climate change, especially if left unabated, threatens to increase poverty and overwhelm the capacity of governments to meet the basic needs of their people, which could well contribute to the emergence, spread and longevity of conflict.

As you certainly know better than me, these are the reasons why militaries around the world are planning for climate change, adjusting their budgets, their strategies and their priorities.

This is understandable, but the very scale of the security problem in a world that begins to panic over the advanced impacts of climate change could overwhelm any single country's ability to defend against it, let alone pay the cost to do so.

There are two keys that need to be turned to maintain the type of stability that will help nations flourish: the one is adaptation and the other is mitigation

Adapting to the impacts of climate change is a must. Many adaptation options exist that can help people cope in a changed world, and ultimately contribute to preventing conflict.

But mitigation - the reduction of greenhouse gases - is critical to limit the severity of climate change and its potential to cause conflict in the long-term. The more greenhouse gases are reduced, the more climate change impacts will be limited in the long-term, and the less climate change will contribute to conflict.

The recent UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun put in place a solid framework for the adaptation and mitigation keys to be turned and for them to be turned on an increasing scale going forward.

In terms of adaptation, the conference established the Cancun Adaptation Framework, which will strengthen action on adaptation in developing countries through international cooperation.

The conference also established an Adaptation Committee to promote the implementation of stronger action on adaptation through providing technical support and guidance to countries.

In terms of mitigation, governments recognised a 2C temperature limit, with a possibility of a 1.5C limit. Importantly, the conference officialised the mitigation targets of industrialised countries which had been put forward during 2010. Industrialised countries also committed to develop low-carbon development plans.

Additionally, 37 developing countries officialised their mitigation measures that aim to significantly change emission levels for 2020.

This was an encouraging breakthrough. However, for the mitigation key to unlock the door to a climate-safe world, more is needed.

This is primarily because the level of ambition currently on the table amounts to only 60% of what is needed to limit the temperature increase to the agreed 2 degrees Celsius. Furthermore, a 2 degree increase is in fact no guarantee for the survival of small island states or the limitation of water stress in Africa.

Similarly, no agreement was reached on the year in which global emissions need to peak. Science tells us what is needed: a global peaking in 2015 and a 50% reduction compared to 2000 levels by 2050.

Ladies and gentlemen, this should be a wake-up call to the world! For if we do not manage to constrain carbon to the recommended level, we will collectively lose the ability to turn the mitigation key and miss the opportunity to put the world on a pathway that does not hold a large potential for conflict.

It is critical that the Cancun Agreements are speedily built upon and that every opportunity is used by all sectors of economies to implement the agreements.

Cancun provided a clear policy direction towards global low-carbon economic growth, which primarily means low-carbon energy. Although they come from different directions, this is where the international response to climate change and national defence policies mesh together, because the world desperately needs a new model of human development that is sustainable and stable - a model that breeds peace, not war.

Global, low-carbon growth is the only realistic and achievable model that we now have on the table. Growth because the developing world needs it. Low-carbon because the whole world needs it.

Governments, the military and business all have a common and urgent cause in bringing forward quickly the very real and broad-based political, economic and social benefits that climate change solutions offer.

For nations to flourish and for the keys to be turned effectively, now is the moment to decide where best to put time, money and resources

Decisions on future defence spending are intricately linked to decisions on immediate climate investment through the different future risk assessments.

What will be better?

- To continue to support a traditional global military budget that has risen 50 percent in real terms from 2000 to 2009 and continues to increase? ¹

¹ (Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute - SIPRI)

- Or to increase a preventive military budget investing into adaptation and low-carbon growth and avoid the climate chaos that would demand a defence response that makes even today's spending burden look light?

Even under current trends, the rate of defence spending growth could account for a major part of the money needed to cut global emissions and to help the vulnerable, often in the most unstable areas of the world, to protect their societies from crumbling under climate pressures.

I am encouraged that defence establishments worldwide - from the United States to China, from Europe to India - are now very much awake both to the strategic implications of climate change for future military readiness and to the crippling cost to themselves of continued reliance on fossil fuels.

The Pentagon estimates that it costs at least \$400 to put one gallon of fuel into combat vehicles and aircraft in Afghanistan. Protecting fuel routes from attack is also one of the major causes of US casualties there.

But I would ask defence chiefs everywhere to take the next step and press directly for investment in low-carbon technology, both at home and abroad, and to press for investments in adaptation, especially in developing countries.

The defence industry has had an important historical role in developing technologies. This is an opportunity for the military industry to become the cutting edge of clean technologies that are urgently needed.

This is not only the wiser response to the climate threat but also the best option they have to avoid the worst future scenarios of global instability.

Por mucho que la paz cueste nunca es cara (Literally: As much as peace may cost, it is never too expensive)

As mentioned before, no nation can flourish if its citizens are faced with climate change impacts and increasing prospects for conflict. The voice of the defence establishment is one of the strongest voices of persuasion at national level.

So I urge you to invest in a way that can lead us all towards a peace based on cooperation rather than conflict, a peace based on the growth needed and not on wasteful consumption, a peace based on our natural interdependence, not artificial isolation.

Thank you
