

Environment and Security - More than an Abstract Threat to the Security Structure

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State Secretary Kortmann,
Special Representative Ashton,
Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

During the next two days you will talk about problems caused by mankind – environmental change and its effect on security structures. What must we do to ensure that development, foreign, environment and security policy takes account of all this?

The crises are becoming more complex, as are the connections, and sometimes we are inclined to say that it's all too complicated, and that we can't do anything to change things anyway. It's this kind of resignation that prevents us from tackling the issues, that Willy Brandt, who has just been quoted, pointed towards 27 years ago. He said that it was sometimes not the political will that was missing but rather the courage to take things in hand.

Global climate change due to human action is a global security risk. This is the way the latest German government report on sustainability strategy, the "sustainability vademecum", described the situation. The evidence is becoming more and more compelling. I can well remember that a few years ago there was even a vote in the US Congress on the issue, deciding that there wasn't enough evidence in favour of climate change and that therefore nothing could be done.

But since there is also no evidence that nothing will happen, and none that if we do nothing all will be well, we must very carefully weigh up the risks. I prefer to follow the example of the insurance firms, which have already built the risks into their policies.

You know the relevant reports, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report, or the Stern Review. It is becoming increasingly clear that the economic, social and political risks facing mankind threaten to take on dimensions highly comparable to the major conflicts of past centuries. Today the poorest of the poor in the Third World are the ones who feel the effects first and most keenly. For some countries – islands, littoral states – climate change threatens their very existence. Such issues quickly become issues of security. But even without these disaster scenarios or extreme consequences, climate

change will change our lives. Changes in rainfall patterns mean that something must be done to guarantee the continued supply of drinking water and arable land.

This in turn means a different food-production structure, and this is one of the basics of life itself. Extreme weather can make entire regions uninhabitable, or in any case not inhabitable under the same conditions as today. The result would be considerable migration movements. There will of course be countries which benefit from climate change. I've already heard of people intending to sell their holiday homes in Marbella and move to the Baltic coast in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. But I think the number of those profiting from climate change will be small by comparison with those who suffer. As a consequence, foreign and security issues arise. It's also a question of the availability of raw materials, fuels, new trade flows and transport routes. All these problems tell us that we are dealing with global issues, and for that reason we have no choice but to act globally, i.e. multilaterally.

Here I'm referring in particular to the creation of cooperative security. Our classic security thinking has of course long since departed from the old confrontational approach. As early as the end of the Cold War the idea of mutual security was instrumental in bringing about that end in a peaceful way. The principle of confidence-building played a major role in this. Ms Kortmann just spoke about "loopholes" which also represent a barrier to the achievement of joint aims. They are a barrier because there is still a suspicion that the industrialized countries want to prevent the newly-industrializing countries from reaching their standards. The Western countries have caused most of the CO₂ emissions due to fuel consumption, as well as of emissions of other greenhouse gases, and we cannot now prevent the NICs, which aspire to our living standards, from catching up. The developing countries would naturally suspect us of trying to keep them in their place. We in turn could suspect some countries of wanting to take a "free ride" and of happily using unilateral competitive advantages without adhering to or even adopting the standards others have to fulfil, therefore creating an advantage. This is why the principle of confidence-building is so important here – we cannot have détente, for example in the field of environment and development policy, without it. And this means transparency, reliability and being able to decide to take unilateral action if this appears necessary. For that reason the decision by the European Council to unilaterally reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020 is a confidence-building measure. Only if we make progress can we sit down at the table with all the others and discuss about whether that figure should perhaps be 30% or even larger. If we do that unilaterally we can expect that others do the same, and that we end up jointly achieving a better solution. The plans, the blueprints so to speak, for a better climate-protection architecture are on the table, but we saw from what happened to the Kyoto Protocol that we don't get very far if main partners aren't on board. The Protocol expires in 2012 and it is high time we began to form a new post-2012

climate-protection alliance in which absolutely everyone takes part. We are seeing that even countries that haven't participated are beginning to realize that something must be done. We shouldn't react to this in a schoolmasterly way, however – we can learn from them, too. We do have the impression that a technological approach like that of the US can also be successful, but we are also convinced that that isn't enough and that we can do more. We should pool our resources and perhaps jointly follow both routes in order to achieve a stronger climate regime. If we take security – Ms Kortmann mentioned the extended concept of security which is also the basis of Germany's foreign and security policy – it is clear that foreign, security, environment and development policy are interdependent and closely connected. The term sustainability sums it up nicely. Without peace there is no development; without peace there is environmental damage but no environment policy. If we need to protect ourselves against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction we have to use major resources which could really be used for other things, i.e. development and the environment. We speak of interlocking security, the concept on which NATO's security strategy is based. Therefore security policy is not just a matter of military capabilities but above all a question of whether we can tackle crises in political, cultural and socio-economic terms, if possible before they turn violent, and whether they can be recognized and resolved using civilian means at the earliest possible stage. If military means have to be used as a last resort, the cost is mostly higher, as it is in the health system. Diseases can be cured, but prevention is always cheaper. Europe's internal security strategy is still strongly oriented towards the protection of states or groups of states. Here, too, we will need to pay greater attention to the risks posed by climate change, long-term environmental changes and development deficits. Civil crisis prevention and early-warning mechanisms will become more important. In some regions we see countries losing their sovereignty, becoming failed states. We see that without sovereignty politics no longer happens, and when there is no more politics there is in turn no more environment policy or development. We must assume an increase in instability, but we cannot merely tolerate this, we must address these crises. If I use the example of climate change, this is just one among many, as we of course also have the problems of biodiversity, species extinction and many other similar issues. Let me however concentrate on climate change for now. We must first ask ourselves what the other side is, or in security-policy terms, where is the enemy?

Here our enemy is nature itself, and if this is the case, nature is an enemy which can neither be fooled nor deterred. It is quite merciless, acting according to physical and chemical laws rather than to our will. If we only adapt gradually, we could cause further problems and excessive costs. This means our aim must be not to act against nature but in harmony with it, otherwise we will be waging war on ourselves. I'm certain that the present situation is unique

in the Earth's history, i.e. that its inhabitants, in other words humans, bring about changes in climate themselves. There have always been changes in climate, but never before due to human activity, and we all know that equilibrium systems such as those found in nature are highly delicate. We don't really know what the effects of our changes will be, but we do know that we have no control over the possible consequences. That's why we must first get our act together and learn to live in harmony with nature. This also means that we need shared security with all others. The idea of "spaceship Earth" is quite correct here. The second particular feature of the global climate issue is its long-term nature. The effects of climate change are highly delayed. What we do today may have consequences in 20, 40, 50, perhaps 100 years which we cannot predict. This makes it harder to find solutions. We therefore need the adequate involvement of all sides, those who cause the problems and those affected by them. We must take the necessary strategic measures now to avoid security-relevant upheavals on a global scale in the future. For example, the time-window for possibly-irreversible processes which occur if global temperature rises by over 2° or over 4 – compared to the pre-industrial period – will soon close. We don't know whether this will be in the next 20 or 30 years, but it will close, and therefore we cannot wait until all the others take action. We cannot run towards the cliff-edge like lemmings just because all the others do. Some must turn around before they get to the edge, and perhaps then all the others will do the same. Three weeks ago the EU heads of state and government took a decision I think was groundbreaking, by adopting a position now on an international climate regime beyond 2012. Here the EU also stands by the special responsibility of the industrialized countries who have been the first to grow through energy use and environmental damage. However, today 85% of global emissions already come from outside the EU and for that reason alone other partners – particularly the emerging economies such as China and India, as well as the partners across the Atlantic – must join us. Our task is therefore to persuade them, since no-one can be forced to follow our lead. This involves cultural change, mutual understanding, international cultural-affairs policy and economic cooperation. All these are measures which bring us closer together, build confidence and thus create the basis for agreement on joint action. We must agree on what the problem is and how and in what spirit it can be solved.

One reason for the climate issue, and thus the related security aspects, is that the secret of our success has been to combine the free market economy and technological innovation.

Globalization has meant that this model has now spread to the emerging economies and NICs. It has been copied and has led to an increase in prosperity in these countries. So we cannot aim to stop them catching up or to freeze the prosperity gap. We must repair defects in the model itself. These include the lack of a market value for such a vital, precious asset as the Earth's atmosphere. The air is still free. There is no cost for using it as a dump for greenhouse

gases. All this shows that the economist Sir Nicholas Stern was right to call this the greatest market failure of all time. This statement is expressed in a very mild way for politicians, since if the market fails, then the regulation of that market has also failed, as the job of society and thus of politics is either to let the market function or to regulate it. If the market doesn't set a price on global, public assets which prevents waste, then it is up to politics to do so. The solution is not to cut the market off from competition but to create a market in which, for example, emissions have a global price and where innovation leads to emission avoidance. I have the impression, from talks in both China and the US, that many partners are beginning to realize that future growth can only function if it is decoupled from increased energy use, that future prosperity will only be seen as legitimate if it is not clearly correlated to increased environmental damage. There are many ideas here, including a kind of global per-capita emission right. Let me warn here against symbol politics or populist discussion. What is important is serious discourse on equal terms, from which we, too, are willing to learn. It is a highly complicated challenge, but it is much more than an abstract threat. Security is a quite concrete matter, affecting our living conditions. Therefore environment, development and conflict-prevention policy belong together, and security policy is closely linked to all of them. You can see from the breadth of this conference the extent to which countries are inter-dependent. I hope there will be productive discussions, and I am keen to read the conclusions. We also hope that this event will supply impulses for a follow-up conference to be held in the Federal Foreign Office, where representatives of the EU Member States, the Commission, which as you know has announced new initiatives, the Council Secretariat and the European Parliament will have the opportunity to assess the conclusions and use them to make recommendations for further action in Europe. I wish the conference the best of success.

Thank you.