

Statement of Outcomes

Climate Change Adaptation, Conflict and Cooperation: A Diplomatic Approach for Africa?

COP17 High-Level Panel Discussion,
Durban, South Africa, 6 December 2011



Summary

Internationally, scientific and policy debates on the potential security implications of climate change have recently gained great momentum. It is now clear that climate change poses one of the key challenges for global economic development and human well-being and may put peace and security at risk, as natural resources such as water, food, and energy become scarce. Alongside these scarcities, slower onset changes in weather, and extreme weather events such as floods and storms, are predicted to lead to an increase in migration movements. Africa is projected to experience some of the worst climate-related impacts and security threats.

On 6 December 2011, over 90 decision makers and experts attending the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) joined a panel discussion titled *Climate Change Adaptation, Conflict and Cooperation: A Diplomatic Approach for Africa?* in Durban, South Africa. The event was organised by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and OneWorld Sustainable Investments, supported by the British High Commission to South Africa, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The panel discussion highlighted the importance of emphasising cooperation and action at all levels – from local to interstate and including civil society, policy makers and scientists – to prevent and mitigate potential climate change-related conflicts. Addressing

the human security-related threats arising from climate change requires adaptation approaches that are multi-disciplinary and conflict-sensitive. In addition, national security issues should be addressed through engagement in diplomatic approaches and other consensus building measures for the continent. To these ends, increased engagements and more platforms are needed to ensure better articulation of the voice and authority of Africans in shaping the global discourse and interventions on climate change and security. At the same time, increased understanding of the linkages between climate change and everyday forms of security such as food, water and energy security needs to be deepened to facilitate targeted solutions as well as support informed debates on the issue. Finally, a critical element of conflict-sensitive adaptation will be to address the range of cross border issues (such as shared water basins, the movements of pastoralists across borders, and migration) that will require a shift in focus from national interest to global responsibility.

Background

During July 2011, for the first time in history, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), under the Presidency of the German government, adopted a Presidential Statement on climate change and its impact on international peace and security. This development is a reflection of increasing cognisance, at global policy levels, of the possible adverse effects of climate change on global economic development,

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human well-being and peace. The recent call by the African Union's Peace and Security Council for African actors to engage the continental body in a dialogue to stimulate responses and cooperation across the continent is further evidence of the increased awareness of linkages between climate change and security.

Despite being the continent most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and therefore more likely to experience climate-related conflicts, Africa has been relatively silent in the global climate and security political dialogue. While some engagements on the issue have taken place, such as the launch in 2010 of the *Africa, Climate Change, Environment and Security (ACCES)* initiative, there is still a lack of formally articulated positions at national, sub-regional and African Union levels. Articulating well-informed African positions will be critical in ensuring Africa does not lag behind in dialogue on climate diplomacy (the increased involvement of Ministries of Foreign Affairs in diplomatic engagement on issues of climate change) but also in ensuring that adaptation and mitigation measures strengthen local resilience.

On 6 December 2011, the *Climate Change Adaptation, Conflict and Cooperation: A Diplomatic Approach for Africa?* event sought to:

- i.) Highlight the security implications of climate change and the resulting need for adaptation measures to be conflict-sensitive;
- ii.) Consider Africa's position and voice in the evolving international climate and security policy agenda and framework; and
- iii.) Make recommendations for regional diplomatic cooperation on climate change and security.

Consolidating the African Voice, Enriching Global Debates

The South African Deputy Minister for International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, as event Chair, opened the debate by noting that climate change and its impacts do not conform to political boundaries. Therefore, responses should ideally have no political boundaries either. For this reason bilateral, regional and continental cooperation will be essential in order to address cross-border issues, manage resources in a conflict-sensitive manner and ensure that climate change adaptation projects do not cause conflicts. While being the continent least responsible for global climate change, Africa is typically acknowledged as the region most at risk to experience climate-related conflicts. This insecurity is a consequence of the continent's existing vulnerability

The event was informed and guided by two key documents:

1. A Policy & Practice Brief produced by ACCORD, titled *Climate Change and Conflict: Conflict-Sensitive Climate Change Adaptation for Africa* (available from www.accord.org.za). This brief, in turn, was informed by an expert seminar held by ACCORD in September 2011, which brought together leading thinkers and practitioners from across the globe to identify issues and recommendations for ensuring that adaptation to climate change is conflict-sensitive. Practitioners and scientists presented new research on the linkages between climate change and conflict in Africa, and analysed various tools, policies and approaches to prevent and mitigate conflicts arising from climate change and contribute to the development of conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation measures.

2. A Policy Brief produced by OneWorld Sustainable Investments titled *A diplomatic approach for Africa?* (available from www.oneworldgroup.co.za). The brief argued that a well thought-through regional position on climate diplomacy and regional cooperation, underpinned by robust evidence, will assist Africa in achieving a voice in international policy. At the same time, it will serve to guide the continent through its own, much needed, responses to the security-related impacts of climate change. In the lead up to this event, OneWorld had also organised and participated in a Southern Africa regional dialogue on climate change and security as well as a briefing session in New York in preparation for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) event on *Maintenance of international peace and security: the impact of climate change*. An analysis of the documents submitted to the UNSC event is available from the OneWorld website.

to the stresses caused by climate change, its economic reliance on climate dependent sectors, and its history of conflict, poverty and governance challenges. For the African continent, it is also important to have one voice within the multilateral process, and to build on the experiences of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN). Following on the opening remarks by the event Chair, the first speaker highlighted the lessons, importance and process of the African Group of Negotiators in speaking with one voice. Mr Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators, highlighted that the AGN was the only group involved in the UNFCCC negotiations that has a single voice on negotiation agendas. He pointed out that the continent, however, has been relatively silent in the global climate and security debate and that this engagement must take place. Mr Mpanu Mpanu also noted that climate negotiations are not like any other negotiations and

that there are some issues that cannot be compromised on if Africans are to be protected: “We can negotiate with each other, but we cannot negotiate with Mother Earth”.

Special Representative for Climate Change at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ambassador John Ashton, expanded on this message, noting “climate change is a systemic risk with a deadline and without the option of a bailout”. Given the susceptibility of the African continent to climate change impacts any “global conversation on climate change without the African voice is inherently impoverished”. The experiences of African people living on the ‘stress line’ and in a direct relationship to climate change means articulating such experiences can enrich the debates on climate change and security. He alluded to the relationship between the four pillars of security: water, food, energy and human security, highlighting that these are inseparable. The challenge is that climate-related insecurity is already evident, indicating that it is impossible to see how the four security pillars can possibly be stabilised in the context of the 4°C global temperature increase now anticipated. Ambassador Ashton argued that in order to sustain growth while addressing insecurity, it was critical to build resilience. However, approaches and thinking that mean business as usual, will not build the prosperity, and ultimately resilience, required to

adapt to the challenges of climate change. Africa can play a role in sharing the continent’s experiences in building resilience.

Importantly, Ambassador Ashton discussed regional and global relationships, and related interdependencies. He pointed out the significance of changes in the scale of migration patterns expected as a result of climate change, highlighting that this is one of several reasons for managing the growing dependencies across the globe through regional and global cooperation. His recommended action, mirroring the views of other panelists, is to shift the paradigm from national interest to global responsibility.

Tackling Human Security Challenges, Emphasising Cooperation

The first panelist, Mr Vasu Gounden, the Founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), emphasised the importance of the African continent to amplify its voice on the issues of climate change and security, while at the same time exploring conflict mitigation measures through balancing national interests with global responsibility. A pursuit of national interests in a changing climate, where resource scarcities are likely to increase, will heighten the probability of conflicts. As well as exercising global responsibility in a changing climate, Mr Gounden



Mr Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD, Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim (DIRCO) and Ms Belynda Petrie, CEO of OneWorld, during the High-Level Panel Discussion

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highlighted the need for conflict-sensitive adaptation in building resilience. At the regional and cross-border levels, the need for diplomatic efforts in dealing with climate-related conflicts should happen in parallel with other efforts, and should tap into the multiplicity of interests that exist at this level. A final but critical aspect, that requires cooperation at all levels, will be the need to better understand the impacts of climate change, and the linkages between climate change and

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Mr Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, Chair of the African Group of Negotiators addressing the audience

conflict.

Building on the views of the previous panelist, Mr Alexander Müller, Assistant Director General – Natural Resources Management and Environment Department of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, highlighted why, from a food security perspective, it is important to emphasise cooperation in dealing with issues of climate change and security. Mr Müller underlined three ways by which climate change will likely exacerbate vulnerabilities. The first is projected demographic change in Africa, to a population of 2.5 billion, noting that “even without climate changes this presents an ambitious task to achieve development”. The second aspect relates to unequal distribution of food, and income inequalities. From a geographical perspective, “Africa will pay the highest price of climate change”. The food security effects of climate change are partly a result of the poor distribution of food, as opposed to low productivity. Finally, he pointed to the issue of global water scarcity. Parts of the African continent experience different water scarcities, with North Africa mainly experiencing physical scarcity and Sub-Saharan Africa facing economic scarcity. That said, given the high number of transboundary river basins on the continent, and positive outcomes from past cooperation efforts, there increasingly are prospects for cooperation in the water sector.

Mr Alex Simalabwi, Senior Network Officer and

Climate Change Focal Point at the Global Water Partnership (GWP), argued that while climate change is a security issue, the attention focused on the issue should be used as a potential for cooperation. For the African continent, river basins play a critical role. At a sub-regional level of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as SADC, ECOWAS and COMESA, promotion of cooperation is critical to safeguard investments. Even at a basic human security level, climate change is as much about a woman carrying a child and crossing a border in search of a new livelihood. Climate change intervention should be about ensuring that this woman and the security of her livelihood are protected.

Towards an integrated approach

Honourable James D. Thibedi, South African Member of Parliament and Chair of the Pan-African Parliament’s Portfolio Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, emphasised that regional cooperation is important as climate change will impact both at local levels but also across political boundaries. Climate change also affects and requires intervention by all sectors of society, and as such, dealing with climate-related security issues necessitates an integrated approach. For instance, climate change – a human rights issue – can result in the further marginalisation of the poor and vulnerable, creating conditions for conflicts. Rural women constitute one of the most vulnerable groups and their protection needs to be enhanced if they are to deal with the challenges of climate change. Climate change can also exacerbate existing conflicts, in particular where issues of land and natural resource tenure rights are not secure. To address these challenges and mitigate the



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Hon. JD Thibedi, Chair of the Pan-African Parliament, and Mr Alex Simalabwi, Chief Network Officer and Climate Change Focal Point of the Global Water Partnership



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Participants during the High-Level Panel Discussion

effects of climate change on security, both substantive and procedural rights need to be secured, in particular through increased funding, improved governance and strengthening of accountability systems.

Key challenges of concern for the Pan-African Parliament include displacement, natural disasters and migration. Moreover, climate change is also a human rights issue, and the sharing of transboundary resources will become more important in future as resources become scarce or their availability variable. This would require legislative flexibility – for instance legislation that will allow for the management of migration across borders as a response to climate change and resource scarcities.

The sharing of best practices and data is another important element. Climate change will affect localities in different ways and the ability of groups to adapt will vary across time and space. Hence there is a need for research that is people-centred and that takes account of the highly localised effects of climate change on communities and especially on women.

Finally, Ms Belynda Petrie, Chief Executive Officer of OneWorld Sustainable Investments, argued that the focus should not be on why a dialogue on the climate and security issue needs to take place, but rather on what actions are going to be needed to address the problem. From a climate change perspective, ongoing global debates on mitigation and adaptation are not

balanced between the two, with adaptation seen as an appendage to mitigation and not a development issue. Ms Petrie emphasised that economics and development are at the core of climate change and security. She reemphasised the importance of food security. For the African continent to deal with potential security implications of climate change, regional cooperation and international outreach are important. She ended by highlighting some recommendations for action on the African continent and beyond:

- Regional approaches and transboundary benefit sharing are important, while addressing issues of human rights and reviewing laws that govern transboundary resources.
- There is a need for developing continental positions on climate change diplomacy.
- An integrated approach and maximum effort is needed based on the premise that science is essential but not enough: science should inform policy and decision making, and politics drive the process.
- Threat-minimising approaches should be adopted through integrated adaptation strategies.
- Balance the clear need for one African voice in international dialogue while actively including the multiple voices at the continental level.
- Act on the basis that climate-related insecurity is a current rather than a future problem.

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Going forward

During the ensuing debate, a number of additional recommendations were made by the audience:

- There is a need for knowledge and data, in order to guide decision makers on where to allocate funding, to make the right policy decisions and develop appropriate practical interventions.
- There is also a need to use the everyday experiences of small farmers and local communities in strengthening the African voice in international debates.
- The role of indigenous and traditional knowledge is critical in the development of policies and interventions for climate change adaptation and conflict resolution.
- The importance of reconciling the fact that climate change is a local phenomenon, with human security implications, and diplomacy often guided by national interests.
- While the impact of climate change is localised, cooperation at higher levels is required. For instance, guidelines are needed on good governance related to land (such as customary rights and women's rights).

Speakers and Panelists

Chair

Mr Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, RSA

Speakers

Mr Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, Chair, African Group of Negotiators

Ambassador John Ashton, Special Representative for Climate Change, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Panelists

Mr Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director, ACCORD

Mr Alexander Müller, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

Mr Alex Simalabwi, Chief Network Officer and Climate Change Focal Point, Global Water Partnership

Honourable James D. Thibedi, South African Member of Parliament and Chair of the Pan-African Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Rural Economy, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

Ms Belynda Petrie, CEO, OneWorld Sustainable Investments

ACCORD is a non-governmental institution working throughout Africa over the last 20 years to bring creative African solutions to the challenges posed by conflict on the continent. ACCORD's primary aim is to influence political developments by bringing conflict resolution, dialogue and institutional development to the forefront as an alternative to armed violence and protracted conflict. ACCORD has two main departments: Interventions (Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding and Training Units) and Knowledge Production. This Statement of Outcomes was produced by the Knowledge Production Department (KPD). The role of KPD is to establish ACCORD as a positive and constructive learning organisation that enhances theory, policy and practice in the field of conflict management. The department's activities and outputs are aimed at promoting effective and sustainable peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Africa and beyond. All ACCORD publications, including research reports, *Conflict Trends* (now in its 14th year) and the *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* (now in its 13th year) can be downloaded at no charge from our website, www.accord.org.za

ONEWORLD was established in 2001 in response to increasing global demand for the development of natural capital by way of integrating financial, social and ecological returns. We seek practical, innovative solutions to the challenges that threaten the planet and do so across sectors to get the best from all worlds. OneWorld has undertaken numerous projects in the field of energy, finance and socioeconomic development, and has worked at a policy level on climate change and security issues for many years. They have undertaken climate change adaptation capacity building projects for individual southern African nations, advised on regional, national and provincial climate change adaptation plans in the region and have also conducted analyses on transboundary water issues, vulnerability and natural disasters.

This statement of outcomes was written by Salomé Bronkhorst (ACCORD) & Webster Whande (OneWorld).

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