



**Adelphi Research  
Institute for Environmental Security  
The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment  
*Forum & Exhibition on Environment, Conflict and Cooperation***

The Hague, 7 March 2006

**Welcome and Introduction by  
Wouter J. Veening, Chairman / Director, Institute for Environmental Security**

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to this panel meeting and exhibition on environment and security.

Let me first say, Mr State Secretary, what a pleasure it is to be here in your house and to have been asked as Institute for Environmental Security to organize the panel of this afternoon.

It is even more a pleasure, because the occasion is the opening in the Netherlands of the exhibition "Environment, Conflict and Cooperation", an initiative by the German Foreign Ministry and realized by Adelphi Research and Consult and Weltformat in Berlin. I am sure you will be impressed by the communicative power of the exhibition.

We are very happy to have with us Alexander Carius, director of Adelphi and a leading thinker and adviser on the relations between environment and security. You will hear from him in the panel and afterwards he will introduce the exhibition and be available to accompany you to and through the exhibition.

Mr State Secretary, there has been a change in the programme. You were first scheduled to speak after the panel and to open the exhibition, but urgent matters require you to be elsewhere at that moment. Luckily you are available right now and allow me to make few general remarks before you have the floor.

The relations between environment and security are manifold and complex. Scarcity of fertile land, of grazing areas and of water may lead to - or at least contribute to - violent conflict, resulting from competition over remaining productive environments in the region itself, or through migration, elsewhere.

Conflicts also originate from the abundance of natural resources. The sale of timber to China props up the dictatorship in Burma and the corrupt military in Cambodia and Indonesia, diamonds have financed the very bloody and cruel conflicts in Sierra Leone and Angola and so have oil revenues in other countries. In Nigeria violent conflicts have arisen and are on-going between oil companies, the national government and local communities over the distribution of oil revenues.

As the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has documented so extensively and convincingly, we, mankind are degrading our environment and that of the other creatures with whom we have to share the planet. The capacity of ecosystems to produce the services on which the community of life depends is severely destroyed and with continuing growth of population, global warming and the associated droughts and extreme weather events, the environment increasingly becomes an international stress factor.

This poses enormous challenges to international diplomacy to prevent conflicts and to fully realize the potential for international cooperation inherent in, for example, shared water bodies, such as international river basins or transboundary lakes.

The situation in Darfur and neighbouring Chad clearly poses such challenges. While I do not dare to say how exactly land and water scarcity have contributed to the tragedy in Darfur, it is difficult to exclude them from the causal chain of events –there are, however those, who claim that, also in Darfur, it is all about oil, the black gold, but that the regime in Khartoum wants to portray it as the classical strife between pastoralists and farmers.

According to the Guardian and the excellent NGO Global Witness and English businessman was buying oil rights in Darfur, acting for two Chinese corporations. China of course, already has major oil interests in Southern Sudan.

Recently, the conflict in Darfur has also crossed over to Chad, after 200.000 refugees already fled to that country for safety. The President of Chad, Idriss Déby, now needs money to buy arms to fight these cross-border incursions, but he has gotten into a conflict with the World Bank, because he wants to use money from Chad's oil revenues which through an agreement with the Bank are put in a special fund earmarked for health, education and public works.

Last week, our friends from Both ENDS organized a good discussion in the press centre Nieuwspoord on this controversial construction which the World Bank imposed upon Chad in exchange for its support to develop the oil fields of Chad and to build the pipeline transporting the oil to the port in Cameroon. It will definitely be an issue with which also the new Executive Director of the Netherlands for the World Bank, Mr Herman Wijffels, will have to deal.

An environmental factor which has to be taken into account in the stability equation of Chad is the dramatic receding of the surface of Lake Chad, from 25.000 km<sup>2</sup> in 1963 to a current area of around 3.000 km<sup>2</sup>, with all consequences for irrigation and fisheries and increasing competition over these resources. While within the same order of magnitude and comparable to what has happened to the Aral Sea, different sources give different numbers for the changes in the surface.

There clearly is a need for continuous monitoring by satellites, which is a priority in the programme of our institute. A recent report by the West-Africa Regional Office of IUCN/ World Conservation Union attributes the retreat of the lake to a large extent to reduced rainfall, caused by climate change, and it describes conflicts on the Cameroon/Nigeria side of the lake.

An ambitious plan by the Lake Chad Basin Commission is to divert water from a tributary of the Congo, the Ubangi to the Chari River, which empties in Lake Chad. In order to protect and to restore the capacity of the fragile ecology for long-term sustainable development and to conserve what is left of the unique and severely threatened wildlife, the violence in Darfur and the associated areas in Chad of course has to be stopped and an orderly way to exploit and transport the oil reserves of the region has to be found, but how?

While there is much appreciation for the African Union forces in Darfur, there is consensus that they are too small in numbers and equipment to be fully effective. UN Envoy Jan Pronk, however, says that a UN/NATO-led peace force would be a "recipe for disaster", because it would trigger a jihad against them. So what can be done?

China, because of its oil interests, blocks further intervention by the Security Council. Is it possible to start a dialogue with China, which after all desperately needs the world market for its export without which it cannot finance its essential imports, to be a bit careful about the where and how it gets its oil? In this respect I would also like to refer to the agenda resulting from the conference "Energy for Development", organized by the Minister for Development Cooperation and the State Secretary in December 2004, to assist economies such China and India towards a more sustainable energy path, and the fact of course that this week is World Bank Energy Week

– I just saw quickly the text of Minister van Ardenne’s speech at the bank, titled “Energy through Synergy”, in which she explicitly refers to that agenda. Is there in the Wild-West of the scramble for oil indeed a role for an institution like the World Bank?

Finally, there is the International Criminal Court which considers prosecution of the major instigators of the genocide in Darfur. What will be the impact of such a prosecution on the actual conflict and will it prevent future tragedies?

With these questions, which I hope may be also taken up by the panel this afternoon, I conclude my introductory remarks and it is my great pleasure to now give the floor to the State Secretary.

**Wouter J. Veening**

Chairman/Director

Institute for Environmental Security

The Hague, The Netherlands

Internet: [www.envirosecurity.org](http://www.envirosecurity.org)