

Delivering Climate Security
Brussels 17 February 2010

Dear friends and colleagues,

First of all, I would like to underline that when we talk about NATO's engagement with the issue of climate security, we are speaking more about what we plan to do in the near future, rather than what we actually do. The issue is that, as we speak today, the North Atlantic Alliance has not devised a comprehensive policy of how to address this emerging threat. Apart from statements made by the current Secretary General, there is not much tangible to say, contrary to other International Organisations such as the UN, the EU or the OSCE. That of course means also that I shall speak on a personal basis. However, as I shall explain in a minute, we learn fast and can adapt even faster.

The second thing I want to share with you is the problematic around a security Alliance that was created in order to protect its members from external threat that no longer exists and how this fits with climate security. Why, on earth should NATO have to deal with this issue? Well, I wish this were not the case. The last thing that we need is to start thinking about new problems. However, if we don't think about them now, they will remember us in the near future. In 40 years, in 30, or in 10, I sincerely do not know. The only thing I know is that the future security environment will look completely different and regional actors, such as NATO, will have to adapt, whether they like it or not. It is not a question of choice, it is a question of necessity.

I said just a moment ago that, we haven't done much, but we can adapt fast. Why is this the case? Well, to begin with, because since the end of the cold war, we have been adapting all the way through precisely in order to face the new challenges that arose, in the 90s or even nowadays. NATO's structure and working methods, as they were in the 80s or even the 90s would have been unable to sustain a complex operation such as Afghanistan. Many of you may actually think that Afghanistan is not a such a big success story after all. The major problem that we face in Afghanistan is political, not lack of capabilities or appropriate mechanisms.

The same applies to the issue of climate security. The biggest challenge we are facing today within the Alliance is to convince all, and I mean all the Allies that we should be dealing with the issue now. Some of them have taken a strong lead on an individual basis. However, they may fear that by introducing NATO into the equation, they may dilute the efficiency of their efforts. Others may think that NATO is the inappropriate forum to discuss the issue. After all 21 NATO states are also EU members, while the totality of them are also members of the OSCE.

Then why NATO? Let's rephrase the question: Why not NATO as well? We do not seek the monopoly of knowledge or capabilities, far from it. If NATO is to be involved, it should be only if it can provide some added value to a very complicated issue. The Alliance does not have a humanitarian assistance policy, nor a development policy. It has only 28 members, it does not have the legitimacy of the UN. And most importantly, it does not seek to develop these capabilities.

NATO in addressing climate security will have to work in tandem with other international actors, be they International organisations or individual states. However, it has a series of instruments it can bring into the equation, some of them political, some of them military. I envisage a series of measures that we can take.

First of all, there is a need to raise awareness among the Allies. Such a debate has not taken place at a political level and I think it is more than due. However we should not stay there. The Alliance can also help in other ways, such as:

- draw some initial joint analysis of the likely consequences of climate change in several regions and their implications for Allies' security. NATO has the unique advantage compared to other actors that it has an integrated command structure, where military representatives of all 28 nations sit together and commonly draw military contingency scenarios

- act as a clearing house when it comes to capability procurement. NATO does not decide what kind of planes or tanks each state will produce or buy. That's a national decision. But, what it can do is provide guidance on what is likely to be more in need for future operations.

- training. The Alliance has a lot of expertise in that area and has the ability to help those state most in need to develop the necessary capabilities that will allow them to address future challenges on their own.

Rapid deployment. NATO has the advantage of being the best suited International Organisation to set up and especially sustain efficiently a multinational military force. On top of it, the creation of the NATO response Force, which can generate 60.000 troops in no time, has greatly enhanced NATO's ability to deploy fast and efficiently.

Preventive Diplomacy. Indeed, NATO does exercise this as well and has done so particularly in the Balkans. It has not received much publicity, but has been effective. I guess that in the future there will be an increased demand for this kind of operations.

- assist in the coordination of disaster relief operations. NATO does have a Euroatlantic Disaster response Coordination Centre, the EADRCC. It does exist and can be adapted in order to address challenges related to natural disasters.

Finally, strategic lift. We are currently holding a discussion about the creation of a NATO strategic lift capability, that will not belong to individual states. It is pointless to underline the importance that the rapid transportation of forces or equipment, or even basic necessities will have in the future security environment.

I think I have exhausted the subject. My point is however, simple, we are beginners, but we learn fast. On top of it we have the tools that will be needed. Together with other actors, we shall be able to face the security challenges that climate change is creating. However, in order to do that in the future, we need to adapt now.

Thank you very much.

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