

CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE

Security Implications of Climate Change in the OSCE region Howard Johnson Hotel, Bucharest, 5-6 October 2009

Opening remarks

Mr. Bogdan Aureescu,

Secretary of State for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Mr. Secretary-General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to warmly welcome you all, on behalf of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the conference on the *Security Implications of Climate Change in the OSCE Area*. *I would like to* thank all those who made possible this event: the Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE and the Office of the Economic and Environmental Coordinator of the OSCE.

We have all become increasingly aware of the dire consequences of climate change in terms of environment: the melting ice of the Arctic, desertification, flooded low-lands, extreme weather conditions and so on. Likewise, we are deeply concerned about the negative impact of environmental degradation and climate change on economic and social stability worldwide which may lead to unprecedented security challenges. Measures aimed at reducing the magnitude of their impacts will allow us to diminish the new climate change challenges. Addressing these international security threats and risks should be seen as part of our common preventive security policy, with a clear positive impact on the lives of future generations.

The international community, from UN to regional organizations, has drawn a warning signal with respect to the threatening potential of climate change from the security angle as well. Thus, the UN Security Council had its first debate on climate change and its implications for international security in 2007. In June 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution on the possible security implications of climate change and tasked the UN Secretary General to present a report on this issue. The OSCE Secretariat was asked to contribute to this report and did so. The European Council, in June 2007 acknowledged the impact of climate change on international security and invited the High Representative and the European Commission to present a joint report to the spring European Council in 2008 on the impact of climate change on international security.

All these studies have highlighted various possible risks and threats entailed by climate change: conflict over resources, economic damage and risk to coastal cities and critical infrastructure, loss of territory and border dispute, environmentally-induced migration, situations of fragility and radicalization, tension over energy supply, pressure on international governance. Other phenomena such as heightened internal and cross-border tensions, increased disease proliferation have also been indicated. A number of detailed recommendations are on the table. It is in our interest to implement them, working in close cooperation – representatives of governmental bodies, international and regional organizations, NGOs, think tanks and civil society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Enhanced commitments and actions should be taken nationally, regionally and globally to reduce green house emissions and better adapt to climate change. As a party to the Kyoto Protocol, Romania fully supports the adoption of a new global agreement, at the Copenhagen Conference, in December, providing an appropriate framework for burden sharing among the countries. At the recent Summit on climate change in New York we brought a clear message thereof, alongside the other EU partners. It is noteworthy that, last December, Romania has already assumed, as an EU member, the commitment to cut its emissions with 20% by 2020 and cover 20 % of its energy needs from renewable sources.

Furthermore, we welcomed the G8 leaders' commitment to the ambitious goal of slashing their emissions by 80% by mid-century and the fact that G20 Summit in Pittsburgh spelled out measures to be taken to curb effects of climate change. As we speak, the conference in Bangkok tries to reach tangible purposes in order to have a new global agreement in December, in Copenhagen. However, this agreement will be possible only if the developed and developing countries will follow the EU and will engage themselves in similar and proportional commitments respectively.

For a new global agreement to truly come into force, we will need not only political will, but a full realization of the complexity of climate change. I believe that the role of OSCE and other regional organizations is paramount in reaching this common understanding and mobilizing efforts to address this global phenomenon. That is why we have gathered here today: to analyze what the security implications of climate change are for the OSCE area and to see how we can contribute to it. These efforts will, undoubtedly, be part of the global effort, will underpin the UN activities and will facilitate synergies with the activities of other major actors, especially the EU.

Climate change is a global challenge that can be tackled at a global level. Our work here, in the OSCE, should be interlinked with congruent efforts by other regional fora – and obviously the UN.

Through this seminar, we can contribute to developing a dialogue on the security aspects of climate change.

An enhanced cooperation on early warning, prevention and response to the security threats posed by climate change will represent a valuable input. We should, therefore, take advantage of the existing OSCE mechanisms (in early warning, conflict prevention, management and resolution) and integrate a special focus on climate change issues.

Take, for instance, within the OSCE area, the Arctic and Central Asia are areas severely affected by climate change. Going beyond the Arctic and Central Asia, we need to analyze the effects of climate change in the entire OSCE region for several reasons.

First of all, because the OSCE is a regional security organization and it is part of our profile to analyze any security implications, according to the comprehensive concept of security. In other words, we have to scrutinize also the security implications of climate change. The implications for the human security of our citizens are paramount.

Secondly, because regardless of how unequal the effects of climate change might be, there are no winners in the long-run - the OSCE area will be affected by the spill-over effects of the climate change.

Thirdly, because no matter how small the domestic effects of climate change may seem at a global scale, they still pose sometimes serious problems at the national and regional levels. In Romania, for instance, extreme weather conditions resulted into massive flooding for the few past years, but also increasing desertification and drought. The governments were faced with the daunting challenge of investing for new housing and the human trauma and losses were incalculable. Additionally, we see increasing desertification of the South with loss of agricultural output, changing production patterns.

This debate is the best opportunity to highlight the interconnections between and among the three dimensions of OSCE: security dimension, economic and environmental dimension and human dimension. Whenever a serious environmental situation occurs, the economy is affected, and sometimes these environmental and economic problems affect the human rights and freedoms, which may lead to serious impact upon hard security.

That is why Romania has advocated and continues to highlight the need of taking into account and integrating all three dimensions of OSCE – both the hard security and the soft security, with the debate of improving the current security architecture in Europe.

For all the aforementioned reasons, I believe that the time has come to take a step further and internalize the possible implications of climate change on our security in the OSCE area and, eventually, to bring our contribution to curbing the effects of climate change.

I thank you very much and wish you a successful conference.