

**The Impact of Climate Change in the Mediterranean  
Designing Adaptation and Implementation Strategies**

Athens, 24-25 February 2011

CONFERENCE NOTE

Climate change is a particularly complex phenomenon and it affects many aspects of international politics, economics, migration, human rights, development, trade, health and environmental systems and can act as a stressor making situations of instability, conflict, and humanitarian crises more likely and severe. However, it is important to note exactly how climate change will influence security as there is still uncertainty about the exact magnitude, rate and geographical impact of climate change. According to an EU paper, “climate change is best viewed as a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability. The core challenge is that climate change threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and conflict prone. It is important to recognise that the risks are not just of a humanitarian nature; they also include political and security risks that directly affect European interests.”<sup>1</sup>

The Mediterranean basin exerts a profound impact on the economic, cultural and political challenges facing the world today as a meeting point between three continents -Europe, Asia and Africa. Its role concerning environmental protection and climate change is equally important. Focusing on this aspect of the Mediterranean and particularly on the designation of adaptation and implementation strategies, the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) organized a two-day conference in Athens on 24 and 25 February 2011 within the framework of the project “Early Warning: from Analysis to Action”, which is funded by the European Union and coordinated by International Alert. The event gave the opportunity to leading scholars and experts in the field to make individual presentations and exchange views on various issues ranging from potential consequences of climate change to possible mitigation and adaptation remedies proposed by various organizations and the international community.

Mr. Spyros Kouvelis (Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Greece) was the keynote speaker of the conference which consisted of six tracks. In the first session, after Dr. Thanos Dokos (Director General, ELIAMEP) made the welcome remarks, Prof. Christos Zerefos (President, International Ozone Commission), Prof. Andrey Shmakin (Head of Laboratory, Russian Academy of Sciences), Mr. Gemenne François (Research Fellow and Junior Lecturer IDDRI, Sciences – Po) and Dr. Konstantinos Katsibardis (Coordinator, Climate Change & Law Unit, EKEPEK, Panteion University) attempted to outline international efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In the second one, Dr. Zefi Dimadama (Director General, International Center for Black Sea Studies), Prof. Alpert Pinhas (Tel-Aviv University), Ms Nathalie Rousset (Programme Officer, Plan Bleu), Ms. Janani Vivekananda (Senior Adviser on Climate Change and Conflict, International Alert) and Mr. Sergio Castellari (Senior

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<sup>1</sup> *Climate Change and International Security*, Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council (S113/08), 14 March 2008, p. 2.

Scientist, Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Climate Change) elaborated on various scenarios of the impact of climate change on the Mediterranean. In the third panel, Prof. Dimitris Lalas (Special Advisor, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Greece), Mr. Theodoulos Mesimeris (Head of Climate Change Unit, Environment Department, Ministry of Agriculture, National Resources and Environment), Ms. Hande Sari Asp (First Secretary, Department of Environment, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Dr. Theodoros Tsakiris (Research Coordinator, Institute of Energy for South East Europe) concentrated on national mitigation and adaptation strategies in the region.

In the fourth session, Mr. Dimitris Karavellas (Director General, WWF Hellas), Ms. Annie Mitropoulou (Director General, Mesogeios SOS), Mr. Takis Grigoriou (Climate Change and Energy Coordinator, Greenpeace) and Ms. Athina Veneti (President, INARE) sketched out the role of civil society and Non-Governmental Organisations. In the fifth panel, Dr. Constantine Papadopoulos (Secretary-General for International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Harry Coccossis (Expert, Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development United Nations), Mr. Raul Daussa (Environmental Programme Officer, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and Mr. Michalis Scoullou (Chairman, Organisation Global Water Partnership Mediterranean) focused on the assistance provided by the international community and especially the European Union to countries of the basin. Finally, in the sixth session, Dr. Rafiq Husseini (Deputy Secretary General, UfM), Mr. Dennis Taenzler (Head of Department of Climate and Energy, Adelphi Research, Germany) and Mr. Yannis Palaiokrassas (Vice President, Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage, former EU Commissioner, Lillian Voudouri Foundation) recommended policies based on short, medium and long term regional strategy.

Amid optimistic and pessimistic views for the future, most participants agreed on the danger of climate and precipitation change for environmental safety, human security and health conditions. In this respect, the Mediterranean was portrayed as a region which is different from other ones in Europe. This difference was attributed to the observation of extreme changes such as rainfalls, temperatures and wildfires. The speakers stressed the need for reducing gas emissions and adapting to temperature increases. They also suggested that more attention has to be paid towards the development of renewable energy installation and an ecosystem-based approach at the national and regional level.

However, although participants acknowledged the importance of actions taken by the international community so far, they criticized the lack of coordinated policy and solidarity as well as of a specific timeframe. As far as the European Union is concerned the adaptation of measures to non EU countries of the UfM was regarded as a challenge. Further to this, the potential creation of a 'Green Climate Fund' after Copenhagen was considered as problematic not as a policy priority itself but regarding important issues which remain unresolved. These include the portion of financial contribution by various members and the way money will finally be distributed. This said the following section will attempt to summarize the main points made and conclusions reached on the basis of various themes discussed in the two-day conference.

### **Specific observations**

- Mediterranean is one of climate change hot spots
- Mediterranean is different from most of Europe and other regions in terms of on-going climate change. However, inequalities between Southern Europe and North Africa do exist. Southern and eastern Mediterranean countries are even more vulnerable than European Mediterranean countries
- Climate change impact remains uncertain
- The Mediterranean countries must abandon their present indifference to environmental factors and move to the vanguard of the international effort to restrict climate change
- The EU parameter: Internally the Union has to attempt to build solidarity. Externally, to promote co-operation with Mediterranean partner countries
- Green technologies and industries are the answer not only to climate change but also to the present economic and social crisis.
- Environmental conditions are not leading to conflict
- Demand for energy and electricity is increasing
- Role of civil society is important in observing, providing feedback and engaging in civil diplomacy.

### **Threats**

- The signs for ozone recovery in the Northern Hemisphere and evidence that we have passed maximum UVB exposure levels have strengthened the success of the Montreal Protocol. However, global warming could have a greater impact on future skin cancer incidence than ozone depletion since sun exposure of northern Europeans likely to increase due to sun-seeking holidays and sunny summers at home
- Changes in Rivers' Stream flows, Sea level rise, Green house gases concentration
- Oil pollution from wasteful use or disposal on land and accidental discharge from ships, low safety standards of nuclear energy power plants, frozen conflicts and hostilities, non-reliance on renewable energy sources (in the Black Sea)
- Illegal logging and fires, uncontrolled urban sprawl and industrial sites set high pressure on the coastlines, transport, infrastructures and tourism contribute to erosion and damage of ecosystems (in the Black Sea)

- Untreated sewage, intensive agriculture caused over-fertilisation of the sea and eutrophication, introduction of alien species, over-fishing, inadequate management of solid waste (in the Black Sea)

### **Main reasons for scepticism**

- No long-term global targets (e.g. -50% in 2050): Specific objectives until 2030: Increase of energy & electricity efficiency by 25 & 30 % and reduction of CO2 emissions by 30 %
- No agreement on a 'peaking year' for global emissions - disagreement on criteria for climate equity (in the field of mitigation)
- No sectoral targets for aviation and maritime transport
- Inability and/or unwillingness of key actors to deliver: USA caught in internal deadlocks - EU unable to keep up with its climate leadership role, China & India barricaded behind traditional arguments
- Institutional structure of international climate policy is considered as an obstacle for the post-Kyoto climate architecture
- Social Impact of climate change (e.g. because of food shortage)

### **Possible Measures of Mitigation**

- Renewable energy installations development: wind energy, solar energy, and wave energy are most promising technologies for power generation
- Biofuels can be used for transport and other economy sectors
- Energy efficiency and conservation: More ecologically-friendly types of fuel, better energy saving, electric or hydrogen-fuelled cars.
- A 'climate coalition of the willing' (EU, other major emitters of the developing world, a number of US States)
- Development of a clear picture. Systems need to monitor emissions and their impacts (e.g. rise in sea levels). Enforcement of regulations through international cooperation among littoral states is of equal significance

### **Possible Measures of Adaptation**

- A detailed and workable package to strengthen international co-operation for proactive and reactive adaptation (in the form of a thematic Protocol to the UNFCCC, or a set of Decisions of the COP)

- Regional policies and mechanisms (e.g. a Euro-Med adaptation system), following the example / model of UNEP's regional seas programme
- An international mechanism to assess and respond to climate related disasters ('climate change security council')
- Improvement of the knowledge base with a view to better define and communicate opportunities and risks, and to identify options for action
- Creation of transparency and participation by means of a broadly based process of communication and dialogue, and support various stakeholders, e.g. by providing decision support and information on which to base decisions
- Support public awareness raising and information through widespread public relations work

### **UfM Role**

- Identification and promotion of concrete branded projects in environment and water and exploration of funding mechanisms
- Promotion of dynamic implementation of environment H2020 agenda and other major considerations including climate change
- Call for wide and meaningful stakeholder participation, including private sector and NGO participation, and enhance operational synergies
- Ensurement completion of strategic action planning for the Water sector and promotion substantive collaborations for projects' development.
- Preparation of studies on relevant environment and water issues and establishment of networks

### **The Black Sea Perspective**

- The EU should be seen as a strong ally, since it could co-operate with Black Sea countries in order to develop strategies for adoption of Environmental Governance
- International funding has be mobilized including international funding mechanisms (e.g. Kyoto mechanism)
- BSEC needs to be strengthened with a view to enhance co-operation among countries and better address the challenges of environmental governance and sustainability in the Black Sea
- Internal governance reforms, administrative and technical support (participatory processes and coordination) have to be achieved in accordance to environmental requirements are needed

- Public authorities, NGOs, civil society and other stakeholders should be empowered in order to support environmental reforms, towards 'greening' Black Sea