

Forces for Sustainability

First Peace and Sustainability Session, held on March 14th and 15th 2007, in the Peace Palace, The Hague – a brief summary.



Introduction

On March 14th and 15th 2007, the first Peace and Sustainability Session was held in the Peace Palace in The Hague. The theme for this first session was Forces for Sustainability. The session was organised by the Institute for Environmental Security (IES), IUCN, its Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter also was the financial sponsor of the meeting.

Main objective was to see how the military, the private sector and local communities as important actors and stakeholders in ecologically vulnerable conflict areas could indeed be turned into true forces for sustainability.

The session brought together experts from various backgrounds: private sector, academia, security sector, relief organizations, natural resource management and government to discuss questions relating to this objective. The two day session addressed a range of environmental topics in the various stages of armed conflicts: prediction, prevention, management, and transition to civil rule.

Below, a summary is given of all the speakers and their pleas.

Day 1 – Wednesday March 14th, 2007

Introductory sessions

Ecosystem protection to ensure security

After a word of welcome by Wouter Veening, director of the IES, Ton Boon von Ochssée started off the conference as the first speaker. Being the Ambassador for Sustainable Development of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he underpinned the importance of this conference and supported the idea to make it the first of a series of sessions. Dutch policy, he stated, is designed to protect ecosystems in order to ensure security and stability. In many situations these are threatened by illegal mining and logging activities; therefore, Boon von Ochssée welcomed the attention of the meeting to these issues.

Need for change

This kind of policy was warmly welcomed by the second speaker in line, José Gabriel Lopez. The IUCN Director of Global Strategies addressed the necessity for global action towards conflicts over resources. Resources, poor countries and conflicts seem to attract each other, he recognized. Despite the regulations for trade in diamonds, too little has been done about this. Lopez declared that pro-active leadership is needed on a global level to bring about structural changes.

Role of local people

Ending the first round of introductory speeches, Taghi Farvar embarked on a modest lesson on the history of nature conservation. The first awareness for nature conservation was raised by Western, 'white' hunters for whom the necessity of a healthy wildlife mainly lied in the sustenance of their hunting activities. Farvar, chairman of the CEESP, denounced the fact that the local people are not consulted enough in contemporary conservation. Although they depend most on their environment – more than western people – it is the latter who take the initiative in the design of policies, thereby often disregarding the local population.

Setting the context

Underlying economic drivers

From a structural, macro-scale point of view, the Mexican economist Alejandro Nadal spoke about the economic side of conflicts over resources. In general, Nadal pleaded for structural measures to help those countries affected by the so-called Resource Curse. One of these measures would be a redefinition of the role of the state: the efficiency of markets is, according to the Mexican, a dangerous myth. Furthermore, international trade should be reorganized, multinational corporations should be supervised and held accountable and there should be a change in discourse from that of economy to one of solidarity and ethics.

Manual for environmental security

Keynote speaker from the security sector was General (ret) Chris King, Dean of Academics of the US Army's Command and General Staff College. He spoke about how to create a model to provide environmental security. The model he designed is similar to that of defence strategic analysis: by defining the preferred outcome and appoint measurable facts, one could decide on the courses of action. In the case of environmental security, which is the goal, variables such as water or clean air and especially the rate of change in these variables are the measurable facts. Environmental sustainability, laid down in instruments of power, is the course of action.

Case of Lebanese oil spill

Following this introduction on predicting and preventing conflicts resulting from environmental insecurity an example of environmental damage resulting from armed conflict was given: the oil spill in Lebanon, 2006. Richard Steiner, expert on oil spills and a member of the CEESP, described into detail the effects of the oil spill from the Jiyeh power plant. The site was bombed for two consecutive days by the Israeli army during the 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, which had great impact on marine biodiversity as well as on the economic situation, like in tourism, fisheries and health care sectors.

After Steiner international law expert Erik Koppe discussed the legal aspects. Before a case can be made, it has to be ascertained whether the power plant was a legitimate military objective or not and, if it was, whether the damage to the environment could have been prevented or minimised.

Countries in the transition phase

In the afternoon of the first day, the focus of the conference turned towards countries in the transition phase from conflict to peace.

Good governance takes time

A first case study came from the Dutch Navy captain Niels Woudstra and considered the Democratic Republic of Congo. Militias in this failed state control the resources, not the irregularly paid army. The solution to this problem should be searched in, among others, the reform of the security sector and cooperation with the local people. But most of all, patience is important: it might take a couple of generations.

Civil Military Cooperation

Reserve major in the Dutch Armed Forces Thijs Kuipers elaborated on the possibilities for NGOs and armed forces to cooperate. This Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC, see also the afternoon of Day 2) could especially be of use when areas are not yet safe enough for NGOs to operate in. Simultaneously, army officers with more civilian expertise were needed as it appeared in the Balkan region (1990s) that military expertise was only part of the answer. Therefore, reservists with certain knowledge – e.g. in education or infrastructure – are active in post conflict situations nowadays.

Reintegration

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) is another necessity for post conflict societies, according to Jelte van Wieren, who represented the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DDR cannot bring peace, but it can reduce the number of armed troops in a country and is therefore an important program. In Africa, a large program is in process at the moment. Under the name of the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), seven African countries are involved in a large disarmament program. Van Wieren also mentioned that if you do not take the environment into account in a post-conflict situation, you are bound to have new conflicts.

Role of military forces in nature conservation

Mangal Man Shakya, director of the Wildlife Watch Group, showed an application of reintegration: Maoist rebels in Nepal are turned into conservationists. As they are familiar to army tactics and have adequate local knowledge, they are useful to resist poachers. A likewise idea was carried out by Alastair Ross, who retired recently from the British army and is now working on his PhD-thesis on the role of Private Military Companies (PMCs). This role can be important in situations where it is unsafe for NGOs or UN relief organisations to work. Also, private military companies could train armed rangers, f.e. in developing techniques to catch poachers. However, the application of PMCs is hindered by the negative associations people have with 'mercenaries'. A code of conduct under UN oversight would therefore be a good idea.

Diner speech by Jamie Shea

During the conference dinner Jamie Shea, director Policy and Planning at NATO, stressed the need for a good balance between the deployment of military force and civilian reconstruction efforts. Security and development are interconnected, and equally important, as examples from Afghanistan illustrated.

Military operations are increasingly about changing mindsets, according to Shea. Hence, NATO currently invests in a so-called comprehensive approach. In addition to synchronizing military and development, cooperation with other international organizations and institutions and joint planning, this approach includes carrying out media operations, in order to win the hearts and minds of the people. The need for a comprehensive approach should also be recognized by other partners, such as the UN, the EU, national governments and NGOs. Mr Shea specifically asked the Institute for Environmental Security and all participants of the conference to prompt the NATO (and other military actors) about how the military could be a useful adjunct to efforts in this realm.

Day 2 – Thursday March 15th, 2007

Stakeholders

Mining in conflict areas

Clive Wicks, CEESP member and co-chair of SEAPRISE (the Working Group on Social and Environmental Accountability of the Private Sector), discussed the problems that are attached to mining activities. The activity of mining highly degrades the landscape and environment, while opponents of the companies face the threat of getting killed. According to Wicks, the World Bank should help to enforce the laws that do exist but are not applied. The empowerment of stakeholders was the topic of the talk by Sandra Kloff, the other co-chair of the SEAPRISE. She specified the fact that stakeholders often do not know about the character of certain projects. As soon as they learn about the possibly negative consequences, it is too late to intervene. SEAPRISE intends to help these groups by organising workshops to raise awareness.

Mining the forests - the case of Papua

Leo Imbiri and Agus Sumule spoke about their views on sustainable forest management in Papua, pleading for a much greater role of local communities there-in. With regard to the licensing of logging concession in Papua, the authority should be with the Papua Provincial authorities and not with the Ministry of Forestry in Jakarta, they stressed. They appealed to the international community to pressure the Indonesian government to limit the role of the security forces in the economic exploitation of the forest resources, which deprives the indigenous communities from their natural resources.

Officially, almost the whole of Papua is now regulated by customary law communities. However, customary rights are being overridden in the allocation of land for commercial concessions, conservation areas as well as for conversion for agriculture or biofuels. Therefore the Special Provincial Law on 'Sustainable Forest Management with Papua Customary Law Communities', that recognizes customary peoples as long-term forest managers, needs to be implemented soon.

Accountability

Richard Steiner finished the morning sessions by discussing the financial accountability of development cooperation and the private sector. Obviously, the state has a large share in this accountability. However, the size of the US development budget, compared to that of the Ministry of Defense, is in that sense not very hopeful. Partly therefore, financial help should

come from the private sector as well. The proposal is that they should put 1% of their profits in a fund to help restore damage to the environment and create environmental security. After the coffee break, in which Mr Wicks and Mr Steiner showed a documentary they made about oil spills in the Niger delta, break out groups offered participants the opportunity to share their views with, or raise questions to the morning speakers.

Private sector support in transition phase

The last sessions of this conference dealt with the cooperation between civilians and the military. The first speaker, Dick Scherjon from the Dutch Rabobank, addressed the role of the banking sector in the rebuilding of a country after a conflict. Scherjon, both a civilian and a reserve colonel in the Royal Dutch Army, argued that the civilians should be the main actors in economic recovery, if needed backed by reservists. In the past, local capacity building (by means of management courses), lead to positive experiences.

Taghi Farvar, replacing the announced speaker Ehsan Turabaz, mentioned the fact that in the past the ecology of Afghanistan was commonly owned and that the privatisation under pressure from the World Bank is causing many conflicts.

Civil Military Cooperation?

Representing the Dutch organization HealthNet TPO, Willem van de Put acted as the last speaker at this conference. Coming straight from Afghanistan, Van de Put stated that the success of Civil Military Cooperation depends on the context. In Afghanistan, employees of NGOs are, in his opinion, safer in the absence of troops. Perhaps, Van de Put argued, the application of CIMIC in Congo is a better idea.

Conclusions

The conference ended with different working groups which came up with conclusions and recommendations for the different stakeholders of sustaining or accomplishing environmental security. Major conclusions were:

- There is an urgent need for this type of international dialogue and mutual learning between a variety of environment and security actors that normally do not interact.
- There is a need to redefine security, to be more understood in terms of a variety of components, including i.a. environment and sustainability and generate a new body of knowledge on the issue.
- A next session should focus on one specific issue of environment and security or on one of the conflict phases (prediction, prevention, etc.) and should aim for specific impact towards positive and systemic change.