

CLIMATE SECURITY DIALOGUE BRIEF



CLIMATE SECURITY DIALOGUE SERIES

CLIMATE CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA

BERLIN, FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE, 30 SEPTEMBER 2011

Summary

Latin American countries face a number of challenges presented by climate change. Few institutions are ready to cope with its impact, though the region is critical for global food security.

On 30 September 2011, experts from Latin America and Germany gathered to discuss climate change's security implications for the region. The Dialogue was organised by the German Federal Foreign Office in cooperation with adelphi, the KlimaCampus Research Group "Climate Change and Security" (CLISEC) at the University of Hamburg, and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH).

The Dialogue highlighted several methods of coping with climate change challenges, such as regional cooperation, and included a particular focus on better coordination of existing initiatives.

Background

At the international level, the debate on the security implications of climate change has gained significant momentum in recent years. Today, climate change poses one of the key challenges for global economic development and human well-being, and may put international peace and security at risk.

Latin America is one of the richest regions for natural resources and biodiversity, as the Amazon basin fulfills a key role as the Earth's "green lung". The continent has seen strong growth in population size and in the economy, as well as global recognition: Three of the G20 countries – Argentina, Brazil and Mexico – are in Latin America and have become global players in their own right. With its rich endowment in natural resources, it may also become a key region for combating global food insecurity.

Still, development challenges remain for the region. Economic growth has been based on the rapidly increasing global demand for Latin American resources, consequently degrading the environment. Also, though internal armed conflict has waned over the past decades, the region remains plagued by violent and transnational crime as well as social exclusion and increasing income inequality.

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Against this background, the Climate Security Dialogue Series on 30 September 2011 focused on »Climate Change in Latin America: Addressing Food and Water Security Risks«. The Dialogue sought to find answers to the following key questions:

- What are key risks for **peace and stability** which emanate from climate change impacts?
- What cooperative arrangements to **defuse potential conflict constellations** need to be strengthened or created?
- How could Germany and other EU governments contribute to **mitigate risks**?



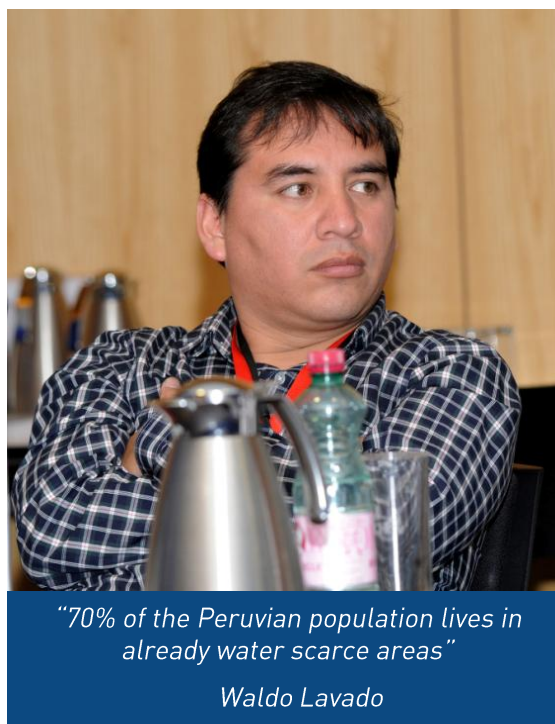
Diverging Developments

The challenges of climate change for Latin America range from intensified hot and dry seasons, to changes in the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and sea-level rise. The challenges thereby strongly vary between countries, with the Andean region particularly affected due to glacier melt and rainfall variability.

Latin America has prospered in recent years with sustained economic growth. However, this process has been accompanied by strong and increasing inequalities between different social groups. The situation is aggravated by the development of industries, such as mining, in environmentally sensitive areas which may create land- and water-use conflicts between different sectors.

Social fragmentation aggravates the vulnerability the region already faces with regard to climate change:

- Institutions can cope with climate changes only to a limited degree, but are built on the premise of a stable climate. Regional integration for coping with the eco-regional impacts of climate change is not yet fully developed.
- Populations heavily rely on the regions' natural resources and, furthermore, are concentrated in areas which will be particularly affected by climate change, such as coastal areas and cities like Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Lima and Santiago de Chile.



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- The knowledge base for addressing climate change is still very limited. No serious studies exist on the linkages between climate and human systems. Without such knowledge, adequate mitigation or adaptation measures cannot be planned.
- In several areas, and particularly areas along borders, governance and state capacities are too weak to control or mediate potential socio-environmental conflict.
- Resource competition between different sectors will be accentuated, as shared resources such as water for energy security and agriculture become scarcer.



"There are no serious studies examining the relationship between human and climate systems."

José Daniel Pabón Caicedo

Against this background, the development of new or intensification of pre-existing socio-environmental conflicts appears possible. In particular, the re-distribution of productive landscapes as well as changing access to livelihood resources may lead to migration and further environmental pressures. Border areas with weak governance structures could become socio-environmental hot spots and lead to militarization of conflicts, though large-scale violence appear at currently unlikely. Yet,

few studies on such linkages exist, requiring further and more detailed information.

Sustainable democratic processes, including increased participation, inclusiveness and consultation, could mitigate and act as effective threat minimizers. The opposite -- unilateral governmental action enforcing certain policies, including adaptation measures -- may further exacerbate the situation, leading to additional potential for conflict. Decentralised activities sensitive to local conditions and conflict potential need to be established to decrease vulnerability and increase resilience toward climatic changes.

Key Messages

Climate change will affect Latin America in multiple and heterogeneous ways. Few certainties exist, making adaptation difficult. Addressing climate change requires a multi-vector approach, one which increases adaptive capacity and is inclusive of institutions and political processes. This is highlighted by the dialogue's key messages:



"Only with more democracy can climate change be addressed"

Pablo Lumerman

- **Institutional Adaptation:** Domestic and regional institutions need to adapt to cope with a changing climate. An eco-regional rather than a national perspective is

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necessary to address complex linkages across borders.

- **Democracy, Cooperative Governance and Human Rights:** More consultation, participation and integration of social groups will be necessary to fully address climate impacts. This also includes strengthening public-private partnerships.
- **Conflict-Sensitive Action:** Activities aimed at remediating climate change, be it mitigation or adaptation, should be sensitive to potential conflict risks and local contexts.
- **Ownership:** There are no fixed solutions to the challenges of climate change. Latin America needs to develop its own approach tailored to the respective needs and challenges of the individual eco-regions.
- **Advocacy Platforms and Networks:** Addressing climate change will require different modes of governance, to overcome the tendency to work and think in silos. Instead, multi-sector approaches and platforms should be developed, to bring stakeholders and change agents together.
- **Policy Dialogue:** Problem-solving and decision-making are still strongly oriented along national boundaries. Particular eco-regions and transboundary areas call for intensified policy dialogue between countries, but also on a sub-national level to address the consequences of climate change.
- **Knowledge:** Improving the knowledge base will be key to address climate impacts, particularly the linkages between climate and human systems. This includes integrating local and expert knowledge, but also strengthening education systems.
- **Exchange:** The EU and its member states can support knowledge build-up by facilitating academic exchange programs and capacity building. Knowledge needs to be jointly developed by all stakeholders to increase its dissemination and legitimacy.

About the Dialogue Series

The Climate Security Dialogue Series provides a forum for discussing the impacts of shifting climate in times of political, economic, and demographic transformations. Linking political, practical, and scientific expertise, the Dialogues aim to identify necessary regional cooperation constellations and measures to minimise negative implications for development, livelihoods, and peace.

The Climate Security Dialogue Series was initiated by adelphi in Berlin, the KlimaCampus Research Group "Climate Change and Security" (CLISEC) at the University of Hamburg, and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy Hamburg (IFSH), in cooperation with and supported by the German Federal Foreign Office.

Past Dialogues addressed the Southern Mediterranean and Central Asia. The last dialogue in 2011 will address South Asia. Visit www.ecc-platform.org for more information.

Publisher:

adelphi

Caspar-Theyß-Straße 14a | 14193 Berlin | Germany

T: + 49 30 89 000 68-0

F: + 49 30 89 000 68-10

E: office@adelphi.de

I: www.adelphi.de

Editors: Paola Adiazola (adelphi), Achim Maas (adelphi) and Jürgen Scheffran (KlimaCampus)

Design: Gregor Grüttner

Photos: Tobias Kleinod, prophot kleinod

Berlin 2011

This project is supported by a grant from the Federal Foreign Office