



Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)

Pan-european partnership for managing environment and security risks
through regional cooperation

TOWARDS THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE, BELGRADE 2007

Background paper on the need to recognize and reinforce the work on assessing and addressing environment and security risks in the Pan-European region, submitted by the ENSEC Partners through the Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials.

Background

It is widely recognized that availability of natural resources, environmental degradation and human security are interdependent. The international community and numerous researches have acknowledged the links between use of natural resources, environmental condition and possibility of violent conflict¹. Firstly, there are environmental scarcity conflicts that stem from competition over declining natural resources such as forests, fresh water, fisheries and fertile soils. Secondly, disputes over environmental risks, problems and hazards such as cross-border pollution or environmental accident with transboundary consequences can cause political tension and threaten peace. Thirdly, human security is vulnerable to natural disasters that have different consequences for human communities and their livelihoods depending on the community's coping capacity. Finally, also environmental wealth – non-renewable natural resources such as oil, diamonds, and various metals such as gold and timber - may play a key role in triggering, prolonging, and financing violent conflicts². On the other hand – as demonstrated by the recent efforts of the ENVSEC Partners - environmental deterioration can also be a common interest and potential source for cooperation between regions or nations that are inclined to conflict. The work of the ENVSEC Partners shows that a shared need to protect environment and develop management of natural resources can be employed to increase cooperation between groups that share for example a water basin or biodiversity rich mountainous area.

About the ENVSEC Initiative

It was the increased call for environmental issues to be tackled with in the security context that in the 2002 led to the development of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), then with the primary aim of increasing knowledge and improving understanding and management of environmental and security risks. The Initiative was established by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2003 and further strengthened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) in 2005. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) joint forces with the ENVSEC partners in 2004 as an associate member through its Science for Peace and Security Committee.

¹ For example: the 2003 UN Security Council Resolution provides UN peacekeepers in Liberia with a mandate to help manage their natural resources, which financed the Liberian war; the 2005 UN Security Council Resolution 1625 where the UN “reaffirmed its determination to take action against illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and high-value commodities in areas where it contributes to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict”; and the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit at the World Bank recognizes that natural resources can potentially contribute to destabilization and conflict.

² For example in Colombia, Angola, Sierra Leone, Burma, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

From its beginning, the ENVSEC Initiative has been firmly rooted in the Environment for Europe ministerial process (EfE). ENVSEC was publicly announced and politically endorsed in May 2003, at the same time by European Ministers of the Environment for Europe Conference in Kyiv and by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of OSCE countries at its Economic Forum in Prague. ENVSEC's rationale of defining, prioritising and addressing environment and security issues and 'hot-spots' based on their political significance as perceived by countries themselves has resonated well with the participatory idea of the EfE process altogether. Elements of ENVSEC work programme have been synchronised and matched with related EfE activities as well as events whenever possible.

Objectives and methods

The overall goal of the Initiative is to contribute to reduction of environment and security risks, and strengthened cooperation between and within countries that are vulnerable to environmental damage and competition over natural resources. The ENVSEC partners provide multistakeholder based analysis of environment and security risks and support a process whereby the identified risks are systematically addressed through strengthening policies, institutions and capacities. Supported by field presences of OSCE, UNDP, and REC, ENVSEC operates in 20 countries, from the Balkans to Central Asia, in close cooperation with national experts from various ministries and national agencies as well as NGOs and research institutes. The ENVSEC work is a two-stage process in which partner organizations conduct assessments of environment and security risks and then develop work programmes to address the identified concerns. The work programmes are built around four inter-related "pillars": 1) In-depth vulnerability assessment, early warning and monitoring; 2) Strengthening policies, institutions and awareness; 3) Capacity building. In areas where specific risks are present ENVSEC also implements its "fourth pillar" 'Clean-up and remediation' by mobilizing financial support and technical expertise.

Achievements to date and future plans

During the first three-year programming period from 2003 – 2006 participatory assessments of environment and security risks, lead by UNEP, have been carried out in four sub-regions – South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia and Eastern Europe (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine). The ENVSEC assessments have resulted in identification and agreement on environment and security "hotspots" as well as development of response activities varying from information exchange to political dialogue and pursuit of joint policies, and from development, negotiation and adoption of legal instruments to their implementation and actual technical assistance on the ground. The implementation of follow-up projects in the four regions will be continued during 2007 - 2009. Further assessments are planned for specific regions, such as the Eastern Caspian and Amu Darya water basins in Central Asia and the frozen conflict zones in the Southern Caucasus.

Looking towards the EfE 2007 conference in Belgrade, ENVSEC aspires to help countries share their comprehensive vision and understanding of the security side and political relevance of European environmental concerns and trends. On the practical side, ENVSEC cooperates with EfE assessments towards Belgrade-2007 lead by the EEA and OECD, providing findings, information, opinions and views. And on the most concrete level, ENVSEC will also help countries bring to Belgrade tangible results of addressed and solved problems in the environment-security domain, as well as their individual experience of how this dimension can enrich traditional policy-making and eventually improve the quality of life and the pan-European environment altogether.

Messages to the European Ministers of Environment

As the environment does not know any borders, the first step to building peace with neighboring countries could be to work jointly to save the environment. What is needed is adequate, factual information about environmental condition and risk for constructively reviewing development

needs and opportunities for cooperation. Wide political support is needed for the work of inter-governmental and –organizational programmes, such as the ENVSEC Initiative, to ensure coordinated action on conflict prevention and environmental management.

The ENVSEC Partners wish to call for the attention of the European Ministers of Environment to;

- acknowledge the interdependency of natural resources, environmental conditions and and human security
- create conflict-sensitive environment and development policies, and an intergrated approach to fully address environment and security risks in the Pan-European region.
- with input of other relevent sectoral ministries to address the link between environmental management and conflict prevention
- promote engagement of civil society in the integrated approach of environmental protection and conflict prevention

A short, concise and targeted document ('Category I') will be prepared by the ENVSEC Partners to facilitate the Ministers' discussions and provide a recommendation for a text to be adopted by the Ministers, possibly as part of the Ministerial declaration.

For more information: www.envsec.org

Contact the ENVSEC secretariat:

Marika Palosaari, Coordination Officer
11-13, ch. des Anémones, 1219 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 917 8779, Fax: +41 229178024
Email: marika.palosaari@unep.ch