



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention of

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Development
Cooperation Alexander De Croo

**High-Level Open Debate of the UN Security Council on 'Climate and
Security'**

New York, 24/7/2020

Dear Mr. President, dear colleagues,

We are delighted to co-sponsor today's meeting and thank Germany for the initiative. We align ourselves with the interventions of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Climate and Security. Thank you to the briefers for the insightful remarks.

Mr. President,

Today's topic is not abstract, nor is it confined to the virtual walls of the Security Council chamber. As we speak, ever more erratic rain patterns are increasing tensions between herders and farmers in the Sahel. As we speak, droughts are causing displacement and are impacting livelihoods from Somalia and Yemen to Afghanistan. Affected communities become more vulnerable to recruitment by insurgents or they vie for scarcer resources. And as we speak, the melting of polar caps is leading to a militarization of the Arctic.

The impact of climate change on security is rarely straightforward. It is multi-faceted and context-dependent. Climate change reinforces existing social, political, economic and environmental drivers of conflict. Some might think that as such, the topic does not belong on the Council's agenda.

But is complexity an excuse for inaction?

The very first article of the UN Charter is clear. We as signatory states bind ourselves to “*take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace*”. Over the past 75 years too often we have focused on immediate crises. We have failed to take robust preventive action. Faced with climate change as our most existential challenge yet, can we – the United Nations - afford to tell future and even current generations that even though we knew, even though vast research was available, we did not act?

Mr. President,

As an elected member, Belgium has consistently backed an increased role for this Council to address climate-related security risks. As you can see by the wide participation in this debate and the continuous support of a clear majority of the Council’s members - from all continents – this is a broadly shared endeavour.

I see the following **priority actions** to improve the work of the Security Council:

First the Council needs to be better informed. We need data and improved information management. Analytical and forecasting tools feed into early warning systems and improve conflict prevention capacity. Existing tools rarely address climate change. Therefore, the UN needs an ‘institutional clearing house’. A body that mobilizes existing expertise and makes it available to the Security Council. We strongly support the Climate Security Mechanism in this regard and have contributed to its reinforcement. Belgium for this matter welcomes the launch of an Informal Expert Group to further institutionalize the Council’s engagement on this topic.

Second the UN needs to report. The strengthened information basis should result in a regular report by the Secretary General to the Security Council on climate-related risks and preventive measures. This will improve our collective understanding of which regions and sectors are most impacted. We further expect regular country-level reporting to be climate-sensitive and encourage the Secretariat to organize horizon-scanning briefings related to climate.

And lastly, the Security Council needs to act. During our term on the Council, Belgium's primary focus has been mainstreaming climate-related security risks into relevant Council action. We are pleased that currently twelve national, regional or thematic mandates can be considered climate-sensitive. These include the DRC, West-Africa, Sudan and Mali. We expect these missions to have dedicated capacity, both in terms of personnel and training, and to support the efforts of national and regional organizations. We also expect UN missions to be mindful of their own environmental impact.

Mr. President,

We also advocate action beyond the Council. Belgium proudly contributes EUR 15 million to the Global Environment Facility each year and has recently announced that it will double its contribution to the Green Climate Fund to EUR 100 million for the period 2020-2023. Belgium also contributed about EUR 15 million to the Least Developed Countries Fund each year for the last 4 years. In addition, 72% of the Belgian development agency Enabel's activities are executed in fragile contexts. With this in mind, we note with concern however that today globally the ten most fragile countries receive only 4,5% of climate funding. Conflict and crises early warning systems rarely include climate related security risks. To remedy these gaps in our understanding and undertakings, we have also started a multi-faceted academic analysis of the Belgian development assistance in the region of Central Africa.

Mr. President,

More and more countries are experiencing the security and humanitarian implications of climate change. This prospect frightens future generations. Under the presidency of the Dominican Republic the Council held a debate on the issue of Youth, Peace and Security. Exceptionally, the Belgian intervention was written by youth representatives. It will come as no surprise that climate and security was their number one priority.

Mr. President, dear colleagues,

Current and future generations look to us for strong and concerted action. Let us not fail them.

I thank you.