

## **Climate change disasters and international peace and security**

Speech by Dr Paul Oquist to the UN Security Council, 25 January, 2019. Dr Oquist is the Minister-Private Secretary of National Policies, Presidency of the Nicaragua.

Climate change disasters have already led to failed states and even failed societies. This has been the case in the past and this is occurring incipiently today; future projections are catastrophic if urgent action is not taken.

Four thousand two hundred years ago the great civilizations of the Bronze Age collapsed due to droughts lasting more than 100 years, and in some cases up to 300 years. Almost simultaneously, the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia and the Ancient Kingdom of Egypt, the first civilizations with central governments, collapsed. The early Minoan civilization also collapsed, initiating the Greek Dark Ages. I ask whether our present civilization could survive a 300-year or even a 100-year drought?

We have the advantage that the current climate change process is caused by human activity and so we can both influence the causes and adapt to the consequences, but we are not doing enough. Our situation is even more serious now because it is damaging not only human society but also the ecosystems that maintain life on Planet Earth.

Currently, the advance of the Sahara Desert is destroying the livelihoods of pastoralists and farmers; at the same time there is an Islamist war, leaving 15.6 million people in the Sahel affected by a food crisis and generating a dangerous mass migration to the North...

Lake Chad has dried up by 95% affecting populations in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and the Cameroons; these countries are facing a climate change crisis and a crisis provoked by Boko Haram operations.

As for the future, if subsistence farming economies continue to collapse, an estimated 20 million refugees from the Sahel alone are expected by 2050.

Central America and the Caribbean are among the most vulnerable regions to climate change in the world. In Mesoamerica, Southern Mexico and Central America, there is an increasingly arid dry zone inhabited by 3.6 million subsistence farming families. If climate change leads to economic collapse, some 18 million people would swell the poor neighbourhood of the region's cities or march north to climb over, dig under or pass through any wall they find in the way.

As the Scientific Panel of the IPCC [International Panel on Climate Change] has pointed out, if we do not reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by 2030, in order to achieve a sustainable zero-emission society by 2050, it will not be possible to halt the rise in the global average temperature at 1.5°C.

Just one example of the consequences of this, we know that at the current 1.1°C rise above the pre-industrial temperatures, the coral reefs are dying, at 1.5° 70% of the corals are going to die, while at 2°C there will be no corals reefs, an extinction from which there will be no return, with all that this implies for the marine food chain.

Political will is the biggest obstacle. One indicator is the provision of climate finance. For mitigation and adaptation the real test is the Replenishment of Green Climate Fund Fund in 2019.

The only scientific, fair and ethical way to cover losses and damages is for the countries that have caused the phenomenon to assume their historical and current responsibility by compensating those suffering the consequences, as [Nicaraguan] President Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra proposed in his message to the UN General Assembly in 2015.

We must remind those who find this approach very radical that the concept of compensation for damages has been part of all the legal and ethical systems of the world since time immemorial. Of course there are those who find it old-fashioned because they think that survival is too expensive.

To defend international peace and security from the impact of climate change we have to make decisions on which to base our policies:

Science or Greed?

Focus on the common good of humanity and the Planet in the long term or short term national economic advantage?

The defence of the most vulnerable populations or the promotion of the selfish economy of endless, limitless and meaningless growth of production, consumption and capital accumulation on a Planet with limited resources?

There are 11 years before 2030 and climate change is advancing much faster than the international community. It is essential to strengthen the Framework Convention on Climate Change and implement the Paris Agreement, through commitments to the reduction of emissions and financing that will limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5°C.

The future of our civilization and ecosystems vital to life on Mother Earth depend on the 1.5°C target. We need a real and effective movement for survival.