

# THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE SAHEL ON HUMAN SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Madrid, 30 November 2018

report

from the Dialogue Workshop



REPORT No. **25**  
November 2018  
[www.euromesco.net](http://www.euromesco.net)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dialogue Workshop “The impact of climate change in the Sahel on human security in the Mediterranean” was held in Madrid on 30 November 2018. The event was organized by IEMed and Policy Center for the New South in collaboration with Royal Institute Elcano as part of the EuroMeSCo ENI Project, co-funded by the European Union and IEMed.

A total of 21 participants, including EuroMeSCo researchers involved in the project, as well as other experts and stakeholders attended the workshop. The participants discussed the preliminary findings of the Joint Policy Study and shared their views about climate change in the Sahel, its consequences on the ground and the policy responses to mitigate them.



The presentation of the Joint Policy Study's chapters was preceded by a key note intervention by European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Ambassador Angel Losada on the EU response to security and development challenges in the Sahel.

In the first session, Bouchra Rahmouni Benhida, Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South focused on the link between demographics and climate change. In the second session, Amira Abdelhalim, Analyst at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, discussed the impact of climate change on the creation of gray areas that become a nest for criminal activities and terrorism. In the third and fourth session, Niklas Bremberg, Research Fellow at The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, and Patricia Lisa, Analyst at Elcano Royal Institute, analyzed the EU's response to human security and migration challenges in the Sahel.

## DETAILS OF THE FOUR SESSIONS

### **Key Note Intervention: Security and Development Challenges in the Sahel. The EU's Response**

Ambassador Angel Losada presented three conceptions of the Sahel, the geographical one, the institutional one, mainly represented by the G5 Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) sharing security and development challenges, and the geo-strategical one that takes into account the G5 Sahel's neighboring countries, such as the Maghreb states, Nigeria and Senegal. These last two do belong to the geographical Sahel but do not share the same challenges. Nigeria is considered to be a special case: it is a rich country which excludes it from the development focus of the G5 Sahel, however, it shares the security challenge. As for Senegal, it is considered to be a stable and wealthy country and thus, does not share the same challenges with the G5 Sahel.

During his intervention, EUSR Losada focused on the institutional dimension, describing the Sahel as a "crisis zone" that faces many challenges, such as

the peace process in Mali and other transversal ones, including terrorism, radicalization, security, poverty, illegal trafficking of humans and goods, as well as migration. The security crisis results to a large extent from the failure of the authorities to provide basic services to the population, including access to water, as well as from the lack of inclusiveness and poor governance.

In this context, climate change was presented as a cross-cutting challenge, evidencing serious shortcomings in the region such as controlling borders and exacerbating other problems such as inter-community conflicts (in particular between farmers and nomads), socio-economic developments and demographic trends.

In order to address those issues, the European Union has developed a set of policies. First of all, the EU Strategy for Security and Development – the so called “Sahel Strategy” adopted in 2011, remains a key framework for EU engagement in the region. In April 2015, the EU Regional Action Plan was agreed upon, with 4 main priorities: 1) Youth, 2) Preventing and countering radicalisation, 3) Migration and mobility, 4) Border management, fight against illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime. Furthermore, the Emergency Development Program in the Sahel was developed between the EU and the Alliance Sahélienne to tackle three main issues: water, food aid and conflict prevention. The EU has been also actively involved in the coordination of strategies towards the region (currently there are 17 different strategies on place), pushing for governments’ appropriation of the latter, and the protection of human rights, as well as the upgrading of the role of women in the region.

### **Changements climatiques dans le bassin méditerranéen: Impacts et difficultés au Sahel**

Bouchra Rahmouni Benhida focused on demographic trends in the Sahel, human and food insecurity, as well as migration flows. Regarding demography in the Sahel, it was noted that the number of inhabitants increased from 27 million in 1950 to 135 million in 2017 and is expected to reach 670 million by 2100. The youth represent 26% of the population which, according to Benhida,

with a proper education, could become a big opportunity in the region. However, youth unemployment at the moment reaches 27%.

Migration of population from the countryside to cities in search for better economic and living conditions overburdens health and other basic services and further decreases human security. Moreover, around 30 million people in the Sahel region are food insecure. Over 60% of the population are employed in the agriculture sector. Nevertheless, agricultural productivity is very low, due to the harsh climate conditions.

Governments failed to address these challenges, which in turn deepens the lack of trust of citizens in the institutions – an attitude highly exploited by terrorist groups.

#### *Feedbacks from other researchers and stakeholders*

Participants suggested to amend the title of the chapter, in order to better align it with its content. Furthermore, it was observed that an in-depth analysis of the tables and charts included in the chapter would bring an added value to the text. The need to use more recent data on the region was also highlighted.

#### **The Gray Areas: Consequences of Climate Change**

Amira Abdelhalim elaborated on the concept of gray areas in the Sahel, created as a result of weak governance or the lack there of in the region. According to the author, some illegal groups have taken advantage of the power vacuum and seized the opportunity to strengthen their presence and increase their activities in the Sahel. In this sense, climate change can be considered as a factor explaining the rise of terrorism and organized crime. The author focused her analysis on 6 countries, namely Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Nigeria.

The changing weather conditions in those countries were subsequently examined, in order to define the most vulnerable parts/region of those countries and how those gray areas, where local governments have been unable to cope with

climate change and provide support for the local population, are exploited by criminal groups and terrorists.

#### *Feedbacks from other researchers*

The participants observed that climate change should not be understood as the only cause behind the creation of gray areas, but rather as a threat multiplier. The author has been encouraged to work together with Bouchra Benhida to avoid possible overlaps. The situation of Lake Chad was discussed and some participants noted that it may result not solely from the changing climate, but also it could be due to a natural cycle.

#### **The European Union and Climate-Related Security Risks: The Case of the Sahel**

Niklas Bremberg stressed the emerging consensus among researchers and policy makers on the necessity to address climate change and went through some of the proposals and policy agendas that international organizations, governments and local communities put forward to address the consequences of changing climate. Nevertheless, most often there was still no agreement on how the proposed set of measures should be implemented.

The author highlighted that the EU responses to face climate security risks have significantly evolved. On the basis of a number of interviews conducted with representatives of the European institutions, the author observed that there was a political will to use all available means in order to address certain climate related risks in the Sahel, including food insecurity, deforestation, and poor agricultural productivity.

According to the author, the link between climate change, security and development in the Sahel is going to be more complex in the future. In order to address that, inclusive regional cooperation, including public and private sectors, should be enhanced.

#### *Feedbacks from other researchers and stakeholders*

The effectiveness and appropriateness of responses by countries in the region

to climate related security risks were discussed. Participants highlighted the EU leading role in tackling the regional challenges, with the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa being the most relevant financial instrument. Some participants encouraged the author to develop more concrete recommendations on what policies and strategies the EU could further adopt and implement.

### **The EU's Migration Policies to Address Environmental/ Climate Displaced Persons: Lessons from the Western and Central Mediterranean "Migration Crisis"**

Patricia Lisa examined the EU's migration policies adopted to address environmental/climate-related migration. According to the author, climate change related flows are mostly internal, within a country's borders, and at furthest, it reaches the neighbouring countries. This makes it unlikely for most of climate refugees to arrive to European shores. In any case, the author addressed the lack of policy and legal instruments to recognize such type of refugees.

Since the 90's, the European Union, has been responsive to the migration circumstances by adapting its instruments to the global compacts. Nonetheless, Lisa lamented the lack of coherence between multiple agendas, including the climate change mitigation of the Paris agreement.

Some recommendations were brought to fruition as possible ways to face the migration crisis, such as humanitarian visas and agreements on free movement of people. The issue of how the EU should balance its bilateral engagement with these countries or rather focus on a multilateral approach was recognized as a possible success factor for EU's engagement in this respect.

#### *Feedbacks from other researchers and stakeholders*

Participants agreed to the idea that there was a lack of knowledge about the type of migration coming to Europe and its difference with refugees. The issue of politicizing migration and refugees was also raised. Some participants called

to reinforce the Maghreb region, as one of the ways to tackle migration issue, through boosting its economy and regional integration. The author was highly encouraged to add some more tangible recommendations to the conclusion.





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