

# ANNEX

## Human Rights Annual Report 2007: Climate Change

A stable climate is an essential public good. Delivering a stable climate is a security, prosperity and moral imperative, not simply a long-term environmental challenge. It underpins much of what we try to achieve internationally. An unstable climate threatens the achievement or protection of many human rights.

The latest science, collated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fourth assessment report in November 2007, has demonstrated that the climate challenge is more urgent than previously thought.

Sir Nicholas Stern's review of the economics of climate change was the most detailed economic assessment to date. Its clear message was that the most vulnerable globally – those who are least able to adapt – are being hit first and hardest.

This severely damages the prospects for reducing global poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As least developed countries have also contributed least to global greenhouse gas emissions (their emissions are a fraction of those in the developed world), this is also a fundamental question of global inequality. The foreign secretary underlined this in his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2007. "We must address the greatest long-term threat to our aspirations to tackle inequality. Climate change affects all countries. But the poorest countries, and the poorest people within those countries, will suffer the most disruption and devastation." The full speech can be found at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk).

Climate security is central to national and international security. Without a stable climate, it will become ever harder for governments to put in place the conditions needed for security and prosperity in a crowded and interdependent world. To address the root of the security issues we face, we must tackle the global insecurities underlying them. We must focus, among other things, on the four resource pillars on which the security and prosperity of the international community rests: food security, water security, energy security and climate security. These pillars of security are interdependent. For example, many in the world will need affordable energy to lift them out of poverty. Energy services are crucial to sustainable development, to promoting better health, access to education, increased productivity and enhanced competitiveness, and to improved economic growth. Without a concerted shift towards cleaner energy production and use, the increased use of fossil fuels will accelerate climate change. Thus in our search for growth we risk undermining the most fundamental conditions for prosperity and security.

The impacts of climate change may not be the sole cause of conflicts, but climate change will exacerbate existing tensions as a threat multiplier, increasing the risk of conflicts and making them more complex and intractable through its impact on food and water security. At worst, climate change could be a factor that causes a state to fail. Rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, more frequent and more widespread droughts, increased flooding and rising sea levels will all disrupt and damage the supply of these vital resources. Resource shortages will combine with growing populations to increase tensions in fragile regions. Climate-induced resource shortages are one of the drivers of the conflict in Darfur.

## **FCO in action to address climate change**

The FCO's network of posts has been active in amplifying the findings of the Stern Review, including its message that the poorest across the world would be hardest hit by climate change. The posts contributed to the research, facilitated visits by Sir Nicholas Stern and his team, and helped to amplify the report globally, through events with leading opinion formers. They are also playing an important role in the preparation for the follow-up Stern symposium, which is due to be held in 2008.

In south-east Asia, Mexico and Brazil, the FCO and other government departments are supporting further economic analysis, building on the Stern Review, to assess the economic implications of climate change at a regional or national level.

The former Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, put climate on the agenda of the UN Security Council for the first time under the UK's presidency of the council in April 2007. This attracted the largest attendance for a thematic debate and helped to empower countries whose survival is under threat from climate change, such as small island developing states facing rising sea levels, to speak out and demand that the world's major economies do more.

The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, took part in a virtual press conference, which followed the "Human Dimension of Global Climate Change" conference in the Maldives in November 2007. In his address to the island nations, the foreign secretary said: "You are the front line in the battle against climate change."

We have provided support to the European Capacity Building Initiative, to build the capacity of negotiators from developing countries to take part in UN negotiations on a future framework for global action on climate change.