

Climate Change and Its Possible Security Implications: The Bahamas

It is worth noting that the vulnerability of The Bahamas as well as other CARICOM Member States mirrors that of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). We are vulnerable economically, because of isolation from markets and limited internal markets, limited commodities and dependence on imports; vulnerability to external economic and financial shocks; socially, because of declining public health and poor infrastructure (roads, public utilities); and environmentally, because of our small size, geographical dispersion, natural disasters (cyclones, flooding, drought, non-tropical processes), fragility of ecosystems (coral reefs, coasts, wetlands, forests, soils) and limited natural resources and depletion of non-renewable resources. We can also add the fact that we produce very little of our own food and are wholly dependant on the importation of fossil fuels for energy supplies.

Climate Change from a national security perspective, has the potential to affect the lives of all Bahamians through increased food insecurity, freshwater water shortages, increased health problems through the spread of disease, by creating conflict from loss of property due to ground subsidence, flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events; and, other security interests such as refugee problems resulting from environmentally enforced migration; human displacement that would result in poaching, which could hasten the depletion of our fisheries resources; and, an increase in the importation of fuels. Coral bleaching events are likely to also further stress and weaken the coral reef systems that play a vital role in dissipating the wave energy of tropical processes that annually threaten our coastlines.

The Bahamas is already experiencing many of the adverse impact of climate change and based on the available scientific consensus we can expect more frequent and intense impacts over time. In order to prepare itself, The Bahamas is undertaking a detailed analysis of the likely impact of climate change to address the effects on security. Already, analyses have been done on the water issue to ensure sustainability. Research efforts are planned to understand the food security issues and to secure supplies.

We are making concerted efforts to achieve the millennium development goals of eradicating poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and, ensuring sustainable development. A national adaptation policy is in place.

We now seek global partnerships to make the technological and behavioral transition to a low-carbon economy. Equally important is access to financial and technological resources to assist us to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, sea level rise and the projected increase in the frequency and intensity of tropical processes.

An international response that includes defensive measures such as greater protection against flooding and sea level surges is urgently needed to tackle cause and effect of climate change. It also see as necessary to secure a global framework of climate change commitments for the period after 2012 to achieve quantifiable reductions in global carbon emissions to meet rising global energy demand in a sustainable way.

Finally, The Bahamas would welcome a strengthened UN system to facilitate the implementation of these and other relevant international agreements, as well as to support the sustainable development efforts of SIDS vulnerable to the security and other implications of climate change.