

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Enrique A. Manalo

**Results of “The ASEAN Regional Forum:
Security Implications of Climate Change”**

**For the International Organization for Migration Workshop
On “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration”
30 March 2011, Geneva**

My esteemed fellow panelists,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank the International Organization for Migration for organizing this International Dialogue on Migration and for inviting me today to discuss the results of the ASEAN Regional Forum on the Security Implications of Climate Change held last November.

Over the next few minutes, I intend to provide a summary the ARF's discussions on climate change, focusing in particular on the recent Seminar in Brussels and its conclusions and recommendations.

Background

By way of background, the countries of the Asia-Pacific region are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and natural disasters.

In 2010, we witnessed the record heat wave and wildfires in the Russian Federation, monsoonal flooding in Pakistan which left millions in need of assistance, rain-induced landslides in China, and a record number of high-temperature days in the eastern United States.

Early this year, Cyclone Yasi battered Australia's east coast, destroying homes and forcing about 10,000 people into evacuation centers. And just over one week ago, continuous rain caused flooding and landslides, displacing over 15,000 people in the eastern part of the Philippines.

This is the backdrop against which the ARF discussed the security challenges posed by climate change.

The Brussels seminar on 18 and 19 November 2010 was a follow-up of the ARF Seminar on "International Security Implications of Climate-Related Events and Trends" co-chaired by the EU and Cambodia in Phnom Penh on 19 March 2009.

Participants at the Phnom Penh seminar agreed that the climate change presents non-traditional threats to security, and that existing instruments of security may not be sufficient to address these. There was also general agreement that while climate change is a threat multiplier, it can also serve to catalyze international cooperation and that the ARF – as Asia's premier security forum – has an important role to play in this respect. As such, the seminar participants agreed that there was a need to develop regional scenarios for further discussion in the ARF.

These conclusions formed the basis of our discussions at the ARF Seminar on "International Security Implications of Climate Change," which the Philippines and the EU co-chaired.

The Brussels Seminar

The two-day seminar featured presentations on national, regional and international perspectives, the impact of climate-related events on various aspects of national security, and the possible role of civil society in assisting national governments cope with these challenges.

Briefly, the presentations and discussions at the seminar noted that:

1. Climate change presents complex, non-traditional security challenges, especially to developing countries. These include threats to food, health, energy and water security and human rights.
2. There was general agreement that climate change presents trans-boundary threats (as well as internal), including forced migration and water management challenges. Climate change may also exacerbate existing low-level conflicts over renewable resources.
3. Mitigation and adaptation must go hand-in-hand in addressing climate change. However, mitigation remains the most important strategy for addressing climate change. If mitigation efforts fail, the effectiveness of adaptation techniques will be greatly reduced.
4. Countries should adopt a holistic approach to climate change by incorporating mitigation and adaptation strategies into national development planning, increasing public awareness, adopting a multi-sector approach, and fostering closer cooperation with international partners in developing strategies on adaptation and mitigation and region-wide databases, including vulnerability assessments.

Participants agreed that governments could undertake “no-regret measures”, such as ensuring access to clean water, to improve local conditions regardless of the effects of climate change.

5. There was concern that the rise in sea levels will make ascertaining maritime borders more difficult and, hence, may complicate existing border disputes. There was agreement on the importance of addressing what happens to the territorial rights of countries which disappear as a result of sea level rise, forcing its population to migrate to a neighboring country.
6. While the military is perhaps the only institution in many countries with sufficient readiness and resources to respond to these security challenges, particularly in effecting large-scale evacuation operations, the military's

perspective must be shifted from traditional security to non-traditional security when dealing with these challenges.

7. There was some discussion on the proper terminology to refer to the possible exodus of people from countries severely affected by climate change. Discussion focused on the use of the term “climate-induced migrants” as opposed to “climate refugees”, and it was agreed that terms like “climate refugees” were problematic since refugees most often refer to people who suffer political repression and thus has serious repercussions in international law. It was suggested in this regard, that such migrants would be victims of forced migration due to climate change. It was also mentioned that planning for relocation in expected crisis areas is necessary. In many ways, it becomes or is related to a human security issue, i.e., human rights, as well as economic and social issues.
8. The IOM representative noted that climate change needs to be addressed not only in terms of human and economic security or environmental protection, but also in terms of human rights. Participants observed that most movement due to climate change will be internal, that is, from low-lying coastal areas to higher ground, rather than between countries.

Participants also recognized that climate change adversely affects the affected population’s enjoyment of their fundamental human rights and that even adaptation measures have human rights implications.

One of the presenters also noted that international human rights law provides for the suspension or derogation of human rights in cases of national emergencies which may cover climate change-related events in certain extreme cases.

It was recommended that efforts be undertaken to identify and focus attention on hot spots, or areas with a complex mix of vulnerabilities and pre-existing conditions that could exacerbate the effects of climate change.

It was also suggested that facilitating internal migration could be an effective adaptation strategy, and that bolstering humanitarian action can help minimize forced migration resulting from climate change.

9. There was a consensus that, while national governments bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that their communities are able to adapt to or address the effects of climate change, international cooperation can make a difference.

The ARF, in particular, has an established mechanism for disaster relief cooperation and has even begun conducting both table-top and field exercises in this regard. Scenario planning for future exercises could take into account climate change-related events.

Recommendations of the ARF Seminar

The discussions at the seminar yielded the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The relevance of continuing a regional political dialogue on promoting understanding of complex inter-linkages between climate change and security implications in addition to efforts undertaken at national level.
2. The studies and scenarios presented showed the potential complex and trans-boundary impacts of climate change on agriculture productivity, resource pressures and national and human security, including migration. Special attention should be devoted to strengthening national and regional capacities particularly on disaster risk reduction and management, early warning and rapid response capabilities, disaster prevention through development assistance, information exchange and technology and knowledge transfer.
3. A concerted international and regional approach is needed to further explore appropriate responses to the security risks associated with climate change,

particularly with regard to protecting vulnerable sectors of the population, noting that there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

4. There is a need to set up effective collaborative platforms where the representatives of the international, regional, national and local authorities and civil society can engage in promoting the understanding of the inter-linkages between climate change and security.

Concluding remarks

Let me conclude with some personal observations.

1. There is a need to strengthen our knowledge base. Public officials, the academe, and other stakeholders must intensify discussions on the social, political and legal sciences in the context of climate change as these lag behind the debates on the physical sciences aspect of climate change. In particular, we need to examine in more depth the effects of climate change on vulnerable areas such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, infrastructure, health, migration and natural resource competition.
2. Who will act on climate change warnings? Do we have the institutional mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to deal with these security threats? As stated in the background paper, Governments need to be equipped with a range of capacities to understand and anticipate changes and formulate policies and solutions. This applies to migration as well as the other security aspects of climate change.
3. There is a need to consider establishing international, regional and national frameworks to address climate-induced migration, as climate-induced migration is arguably the most pressing human security challenge posed by natural disasters and environmental degradation brought about by climate change in the Asia-Pacific.

4. All of the foregoing requires complementary Track 1 and Track 2 exercises.
5. Given the complexity of the issue, it might be necessary to focus on particular security issues arising from climate change rather than tackle them comprehensively, or at least tackle them simultaneously with a more comprehensive approach. I believe the dialog the past two days, with its focus on migration, climate change and environmental degradation is a step in this direction.

In talking of the security challenges of climate change, a combination of mitigation and adaptation may be needed as there are differences in vulnerability. At the same time, a short- and medium-term strategy is needed, and our responses must go beyond primary responses and address the second round effects of climate change.

Thank you.