

Special Event
Second Committee, 64th Session of the General Assembly
“Climate Change: Impacts and Threats
Monday, 19 October 2009

On April 2007, the United Kingdom convened a day-long Security Council debate on the impact of climate change on security. At the time, many delegates from developing countries questioned whether the Council was the proper forum to discuss the issue and saw climate change as a development matter to be dealt with by the more widely representative General Assembly.

On June 3, 2009, the UN General Assembly passed by consensus a draft resolution put forward by Pacific Small Island Developing States on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit entitled “Climate change and its possible security implications” (GA A/63/281). By its adoption of this resolution, the United Nations membership made a first important step towards considering and addressing security risks related to climate change. The resolution states that the 192-member General Assembly was "deeply concerned that the adverse impacts of climate change, including sea-level rise, could have possible security implications." It called on the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly in its sixty-fourth session a comprehensive report on the possible security implications of climate change, based on the views of Member States and regional and international organizations.

1. The notion of climate change as a “threat multiplier” is underpinned by the recognition that threats already exist in some developing countries and that the impacts of climate change exacerbate these existing threats – e.g., stagnant economies, rapid population growth, resource scarcity, weak institutions for conflict resolution, persistent poverty, weak adaptive capacity. With the increased and unprecedented attention being given to climate change, how can we ensure that policymakers and practitioners give proper attention to addressing these long-standing underlying threats?
2. What are some of the main channels through which climate change is likely to impact security? What are the key factors which condition whether climate change impacts threaten security or not? What sort of early warning signs could alert governments and the international community to emergent security threats?
- 3.