

SECURITY:**As foreign ministers meet on key world issues, will climate make the cut?**

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Climate change is one of the 21st century's biggest global security challenges, and world leaders should make it a core part of their foreign policy agendas, argues a major new report commissioned by the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and the European Union.

The independent report, "A New Climate for Peace," was unveiled this morning in the northern German city of Lübeck as U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and foreign ministers from other Group of 7 major industrialized countries gathered for two days of talks.

The G-7 meeting is expected to be dominated by discussions about Iran, violence in the Ukraine and the Islamic State group. But the authors say the threats climate change poses in the coming decades are so dire that governments must look past the crises of the day -- and even past a climate accord expected in Paris this December -- to make real plans for grappling with a warmer future.

"This should be squarely at the heart of every foreign policy agenda," said Geoff Dabelko, former director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars' environment and security program and an author of the report.

No major decisions are expected to come out of this week's meetings, but the talks are considered a key run-up to the G-7 presidential summit in the Bavarian Alps this summer. Activists hope President Obama, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other leaders will put climate change front and center of that agenda to build momentum for Paris and called the fact that wealthy governments seem to want to embrace the issue promising.

"The G-7 is still a powerful, rich, influential group of countries," said Dan Smith, secretary-general of U.K.-based International Alert, and also an author of the report.

"Although not all the G-7 governments feel equally strongly or have equally clear policies about these issues, they are saying that climate poses security risks that are complex, made up of many different elements and potentially devastating in their effects when they hit communities and societies in poor countries," he said.

The report calls on foreign ministers to come out with a "strong political statement" and launch an "action-oriented task force" of senior officials that could coordinate among countries.

"Climate impacts know no bounds. They cross all boundaries, whether of nation, sector or agency. The G7 does not alone bear the responsibility to act on climate change and climate-fragility risks. But this year the G7 has a singular opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to climate change," the authors argue.

Building resilience is essential

It calls on foreign ministers today to "begin by articulating and acting on a new commitment to respond to one of the great challenges of our time: building resilience to climate-fragility risks."

In focusing on how rising sea levels, extreme weather events and pressures on natural resources will add new stresses to already-vulnerable communities, the report purposely goes beyond what Dabelko and other authors called limiting arguments about whether climate change causes conflict.

Instead, the study focuses on what can be done, including devising programs to help countries anticipate where the worst impacts will hit and take action to prevent, if possible, or minimize the dangers; development aid focused on helping communities build resilience; and peace-building and conflict-prevention programs that focus on the causes of fragility.

Liz Gallagher, an international policy expert at U.K.-based environmental group E3G, said the report zeroes in on a major vacuum in climate change policy. While the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is negotiating an emissions-reduction treaty that will contain money and some policies to help nations adapt, and a number of agencies fund resilience efforts, no one is really in charge of dealing with the fallout of climate change impacts.

"It's incredibly fragmented. No one is in charge of the big picture, and that's a worry," Gallagher said. And while she called the G-7's commissioning of today's report a "big deal," Gallagher said she also worries it will be overshadowed by other issues.

"It would be a real shame if the communiqué that comes out of the foreign ministers' meeting doesn't seize the moment on this," she said.

Paris, she and others argued, is going to be a key milestone in tamping down emissions, but dealing with the impacts of warming that scientists say is already baked into the atmosphere thanks to past emissions needs more attention.

"Paris is very important. But if [ministers] take our report seriously, and if they say, 'Yes, climate change is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century,' they cannot just focus on climate negotiations. They have to do more than that," said Lukas Rüttinger, lead author of the report.

"In the end, the UNFCCC doesn't have the mandate and isn't equipped to deal with the fragility issue," he said.

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