



## ENVIRONMENT & SECURITY: THE ROLE OF EUROPE

Comments at the “Greening of European Security” Conference, Brussels, December 2006

### (i) Introduction

Let me start by picking-up on something that was said, at the beginning of our discussion this morning about the original European Parliament report of 1998. I happen to be a believer in Parliamentary aggression at certain moments in the discussion of foreign policy. As there is so much military expertise in the room, I shan't attempt to suggest what kind of military forces Parliament might be! But Parliament has deniability. It is allowed to say things, think things, propose things, whether they are currently permissible or not. I would encourage my former colleagues to continue to be as aggressive as they feel on a subject as important as this.

As Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee I was allowed to suggest an “Own Initiative Report”. When I suggested that the Committee might like to look at Environment and Security, there was a gasp in the room. “That is not a subject for us! Environment is a feminine subject! This is a real Committee talking. Don't you understand that we are dealing with real substance?” Eventually we combined it with Mrs Maj Britt Theorin's report on the “Role of the Military in Cleaning Up the Environment”. That led to some complexities. Should we spend our time in looking at non-lethal weapons, cluster bombs, depleted uranium or at much broader issues? I came to the conclusion, having sat through the work on that Report, that one needs to do both. It seems to me a diversion if one gets stuck entirely in the specific issues, however great the significance of depleted uranium. You miss the really big issues that are there. John McNeill in “Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century World”, points out that the real impact of the military on the environment was the existence of ‘security states’ such as Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Preparation for war proved to be much more damaging to the environment than war itself.

Parliament has maximum influence at moments when foreign policy is under review. One might say that, on both sides of the Atlantic, foreign policy is ‘under review’ at the moment. I am very impressed with what the Working Groups have come up with. They are effectively saying: “Look there is new thought, there are new technical issues, and there are many areas where the debate has moved on”. It seems to me that this needs to be converted from technical expertise into stories. Stories that politicians can tell to electorates. Stories that enable people to motivate political advance and change. Policy isn't just a collection of technical instruments. It is a way by which we define ourselves as Europe or define ourselves as America.

Let's see if, in this session, we can broaden out some of the discussion. We might contemplate what American Foreign Policy will look like after Iraq or what European Foreign Policy will look like after Mr. Solana? We should think about the role which foreign policy might once again play in a Europe that had extricated itself from the deadlock of a mishandled Constitution. All these are stories which we need to tell ourselves about the role of Europe in the world.

I have a couple of encouraging observations. In November I was in Nairobi for the Climate Change Conference of the Parties. I was very struck, at a Green Group fringe meeting, by the contribution from the Italian Environment Minister who made the direct link between forestry and employment in the developing world, and Europe's immigration policy. He was talking about Darfur and West Africa and the security of the Mediterranean. That is the kind of integrated thinking that interests me about the relationship between Environment and Security. In the American edition of the Financial Times yesterday, a senior British military figure was saying that the British, despite all Margaret Becket's speeches etc., have not yet taken seriously enough the long term military impact of climate change. In “Another Bloody Century”, by Colin Gray, a Brit but who worked for American military strategic thinking for a generation, maintains that the likelihood is that by the middle of the twenty first century, we will be back to classic state-to-state wars over resources. Yes, of course, we need to think about the current challenges of environment- induced terrorism and disorder, but we could be pushed back into something that looks very much more like what we had in the twentieth century.

One thing that I find missing so far in this discussion is the impact of religion. I think that anyone who tries to predict the twenty first century without vectoring in religious factors is doomed, at the very least, to be inaccurate. I am just beginning to sketch out some work for the Ismaili community, looking into environment and Islamic societies. If you look forward fifty years, how robust will Islamic societies be in the face of critical environmental change? As regards issues such as the role of women, education and democracy, Islamic societies are amongst the most potentially fragile that exist.

There is a lot of richness here. My advice is to keep it broad, look for the language and look for the poetry. However I am encouraged on two fronts. Fifteen years ago, I think it unlikely that either a German Green or an Irish diplomat would have felt it quite proper to contribute to a debate like this! So let me give the floor first to the Irish diplomat ...

## **(ii) Contribution to Closing Remarks**

The first thing I tried to ask Michael Ryan was about Chinese behaviour in Africa, not about Chinese environmental policy back home. He didn't answer that, and a for very good reason, because no one knows what to do. Europe claims that it is interested in Africa, and claims to have some special relationship. But the Chinese are tearing a hole in everything that we do there: in terms of human rights, in terms of attitudes to the government in Sudan, in terms of timber. The biggest destination for illegal timber from South East Asia is China. We are benefiting from cheap Chinese goods in the West, but the price of that is the disruption of our development policies. I think we need to make that link more clearly, and confront the Chinese more clearly with it.

Secondly, I am left with a couple of questions. The most difficult of them is the recognition that the four working groups don't form a coherent sequence. In other words, countries like The Lebanon can move backwards and forwards from conflict prevention to reconstruction and back again. Maybe it has to be seen as a board and people move around on it. I am not sure about how we reflect that in our discussions.

I have two thoughts in terms of the parameters of what we are covering. I am uncomfortable with including disasters per se in this discussion. I am sure that big companies or organisations such as IBM, EXXON Mobil or a military organisation could in no time move 500 bulldozers to a disaster area. But I am not sure whether or not it is directly relevant to our concern about Environment and Security. I think the message is so important that we should concentrate on it. Yes there are disasters we should deal with. Many are caused, or enhanced, by man-made stupidity. For instance in South America hurricanes do more damage to communities there because the houses are built on slippery slopes, this in turn is caused by poverty and desperation. But we should concentrate to those areas where there is an identifiable link between security and environment.

I am left regretting that Environment and Security doesn't have a "Putin" in the way that Energy and Security does. You have a nice picture of Mr Putin turning the tap on the Ukrainian gas, and even the dumbest politician in Europe recognises that as a threat. Actually what we are dealing with is a thousand times more dangerous than Mr Putin's tap. We don't have a way of getting that into the mind of every tabloid editorial.

We have to do away with niceties to get this message across. We have to find the political pheromone that moves people who would not naturally come into this room to discuss this subject. That is what I think we haven't found. We have marvellous ingredients from the work done over the last year, but as yet no cake. I am arguing that the relevant time-scale is over the next two and a half years. I think we should be aiming at all the institutions, not only the European Parliament. We should regard the work done so far, not as an end. We are at the end of the beginning. What we have here is a huge opportunity, partly given us by the energies and excitements that everyone has brought to this. Now all we have to do is deliver.

