

Storm warning

Rajnish Singh reports on how MEPs are calling for climate change to be recognised as a major security issue for the EU

As the US recovers from the devastation caused by super-storm Sandy, Estonian MEP Indrek Tarand considers his report on how EU security and defence policy should deal with natural disasters caused by climate change and other factors to be “very timely”. The report comes up for vote in next week’s Strasbourg plenary session, and highlights how the EU’s common security and defence policy needs to adapt new strategies in response to the challenges posed by climate change.

Tarand told *The Parliament Magazine*, “I find my report very timely if you consider the US elections within the context of the devastation caused to the US east coast. The consequences of super-storm Sandy reminds us of the scale of destruction that extreme climatic events can bring to the economy and security. I believe the European parliament and member states have an extremely important role to play in the issue of dealing with climate security, and invite [EU foreign affairs chief] Catherine Ashton to establish a steering group to create an EU climate and security policy. The time has come for the EU to take the lead on this issue.”

S&D Lithuanian shadow rapporteur Jurgis Gurtis also supported Tarand’s call for the European external action service (EAS) to consider climate change as a security issue. “In this respect, the EAS could strengthen the coordination between the EU and its neighbouring states in the field of climate driven crisis response capabilities.” Gurtis wants particular attention paid to enhancing military engineering capabilities in the construction of emergency air, sea, and communications infrastructures, as well as mobile hospitals and fuel distribution centres.

However, EPP shadow for the report Nadezhda Neynsky warns against creating more bureaucracy for defence forces.



A house destroyed in the US by super-storm Sandy

“The consequences of super-storm Sandy reminds us of the scale of destruction that extreme climatic events can bring to the economy and security”

Indrek Tarand

“For the EPP it is important that already existing structures and programmes are strengthened and not establish more bureaucracy in the field where rapid reaction is crucial. She went on to tell *The Parliament Magazine* that “The EU should be prepared to respond to any type of crisis in a coherent manner while avoiding duplication of actions.” The problem of replication amongst EU defence forces was also recognised by European defence agency head Claude-France Arnould, who said, “We are seeking to develop cost-effective cooperation between civilian emergency services and military forces. The overall aim is to prevent duplication and to save resources.”

Tarand’s report highlights that climate change as a possible threat to global security and peace is already recognised in articles 42 and 43 of the Lisbon treaty. These articles require the EU to develop civil and military capabilities for international crisis management, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and rescue missions.

The Estonian Greens/EFA deputy’s report also called for recognition of the urgent need to adapt and modify the EU’s common security and defence policy to take into account the effects of climate change, not only at a tactical military level, but also at a political and military strategic level, as reflected by an invitation to Ashton to create a special envoy for climate security similar to the post created by the UN. The current conflicts in the Horn of Africa and Sahel regions were highlighted in the report as being driven by environmental problems such as water scarcity.

Tarand hopes his report will ‘mainstream’ the link between climate change and security policy, saying, “I believe it is of the utmost importance that the European parliament gives a strong signal to the EAS and member states to come up with concrete plans.” ★