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## Green Diplomacy – The Chance to Mitigate the Effects of the Economic Crisis in the Context of Sustainable Development

Stefu Ioan <sup>a\*</sup>

*<sup>a</sup>Spiru Haret University, No.7, Turnului Street, Braşov, Postcode 500152, Romania*

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### Abstract

This study presents the main developments regarding the current ‘green diplomacy’. The transboundary nature of pollution, the natural ‘solidarity’ of the environmental factors, the export of pollution or the affirmation of the global ecological issues, such as the greenhouse effect and the climate change, the ozone layer, the biodiversity conservation, desertification, etc. require specialized international development cooperation at bilateral, regional or global scale. We think that the main instrument to promote it represents a new kind of diplomacy, more ‘technical’, more flexible and more direct: ‘the green diplomacy’ or the ecological diplomacy.

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### 1. Introduction

The importance and universality of the ecological issues and the offensive character of some environmental actions have made environmental protection a priority of the internal policies of the states and of the international cooperation. The transboundary nature of pollution, the natural ‘solidarity’ of the environmental factors, the export of pollution or the affirmation of the global ecological issues, such as the greenhouse effect and the climate change, the ozone layer, the biodiversity conservation, desertification, etc. require specialized international development cooperation at bilateral, regional or global scale. The main instrument to promote it represents a new kind of diplomacy, more ‘technical’, more flexible and more direct: ‘the green diplomacy’ or the ecological diplomacy. It is a modern way of manifestation of diplomacy, asserted in the second half of the twentieth century, which considers not only to harmonize the interests of a state or another, but a much broader one, common to all, belonging to all individuals, communities and states, to humanity as a species: the protection and conservation of the natural conditions of existence. A diplomacy where the specialist’ word is more important, the technical nature more obvious, the civic participation more direct and shared responsibility is effective. Therefore, it is a diplomacy of the present and especially of the future.

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\* Corresponding author: Stefu Ioan, Tel.: 0040-722-287-056  
*E-mail address:* [ioanstefu@yahoo.com](mailto:ioanstefu@yahoo.com)

## 2. A new diplomacy

Unlike traditional diplomacy, held under the sign of reciprocity, which aims to get a balance as accurately as possible between the obligations accepted by the state and the benefits got by another state (according to the Roman law maxim *do ut des*), the ‘green diplomacy’ aims at raising awareness and promoting common interests in the management and protection of the shared natural heritage of humanity. Regardless of the geographical areas where people live, they are on the same planet and are equally affected by the global environmental problems that they generated; hence, the problems can be definitely solved only through the involvement of all.

### 2.1. Going global

‘The green diplomacy’ becomes global in the interest and on behalf of the international community. As an expression of this feature, since 1972 the so-called ‘green summits’ have been institutionalized, for example those from Stockholm (1972), Rio de Janeiro (1992), ‘Rio + 5’ (New York, 1997) and Johannesburg (2002). It is a fact that nowadays there is no major international meeting, especially at the top (such as the G-7, WTO and others), which does not take into question, if not the actual ecological issues, at least the environmental implications of the issues discussed. This makes the green diplomacy be especially a high level one.

At the same time, it is a diplomacy aimed at promoting solidarity between generations, the saying ‘After us, the flood!’ being replaced with ‘After us, future generations’. Breaking the patterns of classical law, the right of the future generations to a healthy and balanced environment is now recognized as the current generation’s duties to preserve and pass down a nature of quality. Defusing and solving the ‘green conflicts’ or tensions exhibited internationally, having become a constant in recent decades, is another priority of this new diplomacy.

Aggression and environmental tensions can occur in various ways: scarcity of vital resources, such as water (for example, the conflicts that arose from Turkey’s refusal to negotiate the planning of the courses of the Tigris and the Euphrates with the downstream states, the disputes on water resources, particularly Jordan, from the Middle East, etc.), the disputes regarding some global issues (such as those between the EU and the U.S.A. regarding the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol about the reduction of the emissions of the greenhouse gases and its aftermath, the production and trade of GMOs), the settlement of the disputes arising from major ecological accidents, solving the ecological refugees’ problems, which create environmental disadvantages etc.<sup>†</sup>

## 3. International framework

Internationally, there is even a permanent institutional framework for conducting negotiations and other diplomatic tools aimed at ecological issues. It is, above all, about the United Nations Environment Programme (1972), the Commission on Sustainable Development (1992), the Global Environment Fund (1990). The United Nations has assumed the overall responsibility for environmental protection since 1992, the European Environment Agency, and it is possible to take into consideration a future global environment agency. Moreover, the idea of creating an international environment organism returned on the agenda, acquiring new supporters, but keeping its opponents: the developing countries and the U.S.A. Maintaining the present situation, with the UN assuming, after the Rio de Janeiro Conference (June 1992), the overall responsibility to manage global environmental problems, enhanced at the green Summit in Johannesburg, is not too beneficial because the global organization is already

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<sup>†</sup> The thesis that scarcity of natural resources favour the onset of civil or international conflicts led to the development of three possible scenarios. The first hypothesis: the offer of tangible environmental resources, such as clean water and quality land would cause conflicts between states, ‘mere rarity’ conflicts or wars for the possession of the resources; the second hypothesis: the vast population movements caused by environmental constraints will induce ‘group identity’ conflicts and mainly ethnic confrontations; finally, the third case, a severe scarcity of resources would worsen economic deprivation, tearing the key institutions which, by ricochet, would cause civil wars and insurrections (Th.F. Homer-Dixon, *Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict*, in *International Security*, Boston, vol. 19, 1994).

overcome by the magnitude of the tasks which it assumed in other areas of international cooperation. However, the Johannesburg Declaration (September 2002) reaffirmed the main role of the global organisation in the field. In this general context, there was even a proposal as Interpol, the collaborative network of specialized agencies in combating crime, to act as environmental police. Environmental crimes and offences transcend national borders and finding and punishing them involve general and special collaboration of more and more national and international structures. Finally, aware of this important challenge of contemporary, national diplomacies have included environmental issues permanently among their concerns and have adapted their tools and remedies to the new priority of national and foreign policies. All these developments have had an impact on this new field of international law, emphasizing its more obvious features.

At the same time, it is noted the involvement in the conduct of this diplomacy of some non-state factors, headed by representatives of civil society, particularly the NGOs and the ecologists. They are either included in the official negotiating delegations or take part in discussions with states on behalf of the organizations they represent. Also, within global environmental meetings are held special meetings of the NGOs, whose resolutions are submitted and taken into consideration by the decision makers while taking their final decisions. It is, for example, the case of the Green Cross International organization and its leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, who intervened in the Middle East to find a peaceful and equitable solution for sharing the waters of the Jordan among Israel, the Palestinian Territories Administration, Syria and Lebanon. Thanks to this mediation, no vital installation of water supply was attacked during the Intifada. ‘Policy makers in the region have confirmed to me that no lasting peace could be established without solving the water sharing problem. The responsible management of the Jordan waters will lead to strengthening regional cooperation, and thus peace’<sup>‡</sup>.

#### 4. A special and specialized democracy

The ‘green diplomacy’ is specialized, with a more pronounced technical character, requiring from its practitioners, in addition to the basic training of every diplomat, minimum ecological, biological, economic, legal, etc. knowledge. Moreover, a diplomat acting in the ecological bi and / or multilateral cooperation will not be able to pursue objectively the ‘art of negotiation’ without having adequate knowledge of the issue taken into consideration. This concern has led some states (France, for example) to establish one or more ambassadors specialized in environmental issues. Meanwhile, the environmental issues represent a permanent thing of international cooperation and a dimension of the contemporary civic culture, the minimum ecological knowledge should be part of every diplomat’s cultural horizons regardless of the actual field in which they operate. Finally, the ‘green diplomacy’ is essentially a peace diplomacy, one of (re)conciliation of man with nature in the name of the general interest of sustainable development, of the continuation of the survival of human civilization.

The considerable increase of the importance of ecological issues (XXIst century will be ecologist or it will not be at all?), both domestically and internationally, their increased global and intense character will make diplomacy a prominent tool in solving them, and the ‘green diplomacy’ its more and more significant form. Indeed, a good example in this respect is the eco-climatic issue caused by global warming. The climate change topic is already the subject of a specific ‘subdiplomacy’, expressed organizationally in many countries through the creation of some general directions, temporary on topics of this kind, initiatives to create new political and diplomatic structures

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<sup>‡</sup> M. Gorbaciov, *Le Figaro*, 19 January 2002. Even before the first World Zionist Congress in 1897, a hydrologic committee drew up the boundaries of a viable Israel. It corresponded almost to the limits of today’s Israel due to the occupation of West Bank (allowing it to control the Jordan) and the Golan Heights. The occupation of the southern Lebanon also allowed Israel to control the Litani River (1975 – 2000). Before the Six Day War (1967), the then Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, said: ‘Those who would tend to divert Jordan would not only play with water, but also with fire’. R. Cans stated, ‘the only state that Israel has managed to make true peace with is Egypt, with whom it had no hydrologic conflict’.

covering climate change. Therefore, we can say that it is a genuine diplomacy of the future, of survival of human as a species among species.

At the same time, a minimum knowledge of the ecological issues is now an inseparable part of a good diplomat's general training. R. G. Feltham (1996) says 'Protecting the local environment has long been a national issue facing politicians, as well as a regional problem concerning the diplomats'.

If the future of sustainable development seems uncertain and confuse, and globalization, primarily economic, deepens, the further development of green diplomacy will adapt accordingly and will integrate the economic mechanism (WTO or even EC) and their target is restricted to ensure environmental quality related to the quality of life (to the standard of living).

Regarding the green diplomacy, we can notice some obvious trends: the extension and generalization of its constitutionalization by recognizing and enshrining the fundamental right to the environment (a healthy and ecologically balanced environment), increasing the procedural safeguards, the diversification of economic and fiscal instruments and their increased use in protecting the environment, enhancing the role of civil society and of the public in achieving an environmental legislation, establishing a proper system of accountability.

The current eco-climatic order crystallized 8,000 – 10,000 years ago and its relatively modest fluctuations (especially during the cooling periods) allowed the affirmation of the human civilization and its occupation of the entire planet, the 6.5 billion people putting largely their ecological footprint on Terra's ecosystem. After the illusion of the nature liberation period, during the industrial revolution, problems accumulated gradually, reaching the impasse of global warming, which, through the obvious climate disorders, may announce, in this century, the chaos followed by the relocation of a new eco-climatic order. We do not know if people will be part of this equation anymore.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the ecological issues have become global and have lately become even a survival issue, its approach being undertaken by the UN in the three World Conferences: in 1972 (Stockholm), in 1992 (Rio de Janeiro) and in 2002 (Johannesburg). The deepening of the ecological imperative and the major differences which appeared related to the Kyoto Protocol (1997) on reducing the emissions of the greenhouse gases (GHG) blocked the actions of any existing international organization, regarding the acquisition of such concerns and problem solving. Thus there were created two eco-climatic 'blocks' with opposing views: the American-Australian one, who rejects the thesis of the decisive human contribution to climate change and refuses the solution of reducing the GHG emissions, and the rest of the world (about 161 countries, with EU as leader), the latter supporting the Kyoto Project. This situation may be overcome on the path of diplomacy and constructive dialogue. The eco-climatic compromise, especially at the scientific and political level, is predictable and necessary and in the current international context, one can notice the emergence of the elements of a global ecological governance.

In 2007, by a French initiative, at the UN level, the Commission for the Environment was set up in order to manage the major ecological problems of the planet, led by the climate ones. That commission was formally and officially joined by about 50 countries, some of them calling for a tougher reform by introducing mandatory ecological criteria in international negotiations (e.g. the commercial ones of WTO, the developed countries assuming some significant obligations regarding the reduction of pollution). Applying the principles of the ecological diplomacy, one can achieve a new world ecological order, which involves identifying and accepting the true imperatives in the field, triggering the creative dialogue, making a proper institutional framework and urgently adopting the measures to be taken.

## 5. Conclusion

Ecological (green) diplomacy manifests in society at several levels: at a social level, a political one, an educational level, a philosophic level, at an international collaboration level.

International environmental cooperation (international eco-policy<sup>§</sup>) remains somewhat difficult because the ecological issues affect the ‘core’ of the interstate relations and of the domestic political arrangements. Indeed, the progresses registered internally, mainly due to pressures related to elections and civil society’s actions cannot be implemented with the same intensity at an international level, where the circumstantial interests may be stronger and less controllable. In addition, the other aspects arise more acutely being perceived as being more serious in the near future, diverting thus the ecological measures from their true objectives. A good example is the EU – the U.S.A. relations in this field, as well as the one on climate changes and the greenhouse effect (the Kyoto Protocol) or the Genetically Modified Organisms (Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety). Of course, ecological cooperation is not limited to the interstate level, too tributary to junctures, but it is more and more stimulated by the non-state actors, through standards publication within an industry, agreements between economic sectors and the NGOs, public – private partnerships, etc. Through this the international eco-policy affirms as a future area for the global political relations.

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<sup>§</sup> The notion of ‘international eco-policy’ refers not only to the assemble of the political dimensions of the identification and solving the environmental problems, but also to the attempts of the international actors to impose their security definition regarding nature and the quality of peoples’ life. (P/i. le Pestre, *La communaute internationale face aux defis de l’environnement*, bl vol. „Enjeux et politiques de l’environnement”, La documentation Francaise, Paris, 2002, p. 79-85).