

Climate change threatens global security, warn medical and military leaders

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Medical and military leaders have come together today to warn that climate change not only spells a global health catastrophe, but also threatens global stability and security.

"[Climate change](#) poses an immediate and grave threat, driving ill-health and increasing the risk of conflict, such that each feeds upon the other," they write in an editorial published in the [British Medical Journal](#) today. Their views come ahead of an open meeting on these issues to be held at the British Medical Association on 20 June 2011.

The authors point to several reports, highlighting the threat that climate change poses to "collective security and global order."

For example, the Pentagon's 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review to Congress stressed the potential for climate change to contribute to "poverty, [environmental degradation](#), and the further weakening of fragile governments."

The UK's Ministry of Defence also states that "climate change will amplify existing social, political and resource stresses" and will shift "the tipping point at which conflict ignites," while the UK's Foreign Secretary, William Hague, recently described climate change as "perhaps the 21st century's biggest foreign policy challenge."

A recent report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies concurs: "Climate change will increase the risks of resource shortages,

mass migration, and [civil conflict](#). These could lead to failed states, which threaten global stability and security." It stresses the need for "sustained investment in infrastructure and new technologies" of which "a shift to [renewable energy sources](#) will be the most visible effect of efforts to mitigate emissions."

"It might be considered unusual for the medical and military professions to concur," say the authors. "But on this subject we do."

They conclude: "Although discussion is good, we can no longer delay implementing tough action that will make a difference, while quibbling over minor uncertainties in climate modelling. Unlike most recent natural disasters, this one is entirely predictable. Doctors, often seen as authoritative, trusted, and independent by their communities, must make their voices heard in calling for such action."

Such subjects will be discussed at a forthcoming open meeting "Climate change - how to secure our future wellbeing: a health and security perspective" to be held at BMA House on 20 June 2011.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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