



NATO Exacerbates the Climate Emergency

July 8th, 2023, 10:00 - 11:00 AM ET, Virtual

Tamara Lorincz

PhD candidate in Global Governance at the Balsillie School of International Affairs at Wilfrid Laurier University. Member of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom / Canada Section

I'm speaking to you from Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, the traditional territory of the Treaty 6 People. But I'm with all of you in Brussels in spirit and solidarity.

I'd like to talk to you more about NATO in the context of climate change.

As you know from the headlines, this past week saw the hottest days ever recorded on planet earth.

Since May, Canada has experienced the worst forest fires ever – over 3,400 fires and 8.8 million hectares have been burnt so far this year. These are climate-induced forest fires exacerbated by heat waves and drought across the country. The Canadian Forest Service describes it as “record-breaking”, “unprecedented”, and “off the charts”.

Thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes and communities. Hundreds of houses and businesses have been destroyed. Smoke has blanketed North America making it difficult for people to go outside and to breathe.

There are still 648 active fires across the country with 339 of them out of control and we are only at the start of fire season.

What is happening in Canada is happening around the world – Europe and Asia are currently in the grip of an extreme heat wave. There's terrible flooding in Spain. We are in a climate emergency.

Remember we are only at 1.1 degrees of global mean temperature rise.

In March, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) released their 6th assessment report and they explained that at our current rate of carbon emissions globally they predict with a high to very high confidence that we are on track to reach 3 to 4 degrees of global mean temperature rise by 2100 in 70 years.

This is catastrophic climate change in our lifetime and in the lifetime of our children and grandchildren.

The IPCC scientists said we need “urgent climate action to secure a liveable planet.” We have to rapidly reduce emissions by at least half in the next 7 years and we need massively investment in climate action and adaptation. But we are not doing that.



As the fires were raging in Canada and the smoke choking people from Calgary to New York City, NATO was conducting its largest air force exercise, Air Defender 2023 from June 12-23rd. Over 250 warplanes and 10,000 personnel were involved. Bombers and fighter jets including the F-35s were flying from Germany throughout NATO's eastern flank up and down Russia's border. This exercise further inflames tensions with Russia and it also exacerbates the climate crisis.

Military vehicles like aircraft are extremely carbon-intensive. One flight of an F-35 burns more fuel than a car consumes in a year.

In January of this year, Canada's Defence Minister Anita Anand announced that Canada would buy 88 F-35s for \$70 billion. Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Italy, Finland and Romania have spent billions to buy their own fleet of these American fossil fuel-powered, poor functioning warplanes.

This past Wednesday, Chatham House held a webinar entitled "Combatting climate change: NATO's role in building climate resilience" with Canada's Ambassador to NATO David Angell and Lt Richard Nugee of the British Ministry of Defence. They admitted that there is no renewable energy alternative for fighter aircraft in the near term. That means NATO countries are locking in fossil fuel powered militarism for decades. They have no credible plans to offset their emissions and achieve net-zero.

At the NATO Summit in Madrid last year, Canada announced that it would host NATO's new Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence in Montreal, Quebec. The centre is not open yet. But the centre is really an effort by Canada to help greenwash NATO. Canada is not a leader on climate action.

Canada is one of the worst climate polluters on the planet. Our carbon emissions have been going up for the past 60 years. Canada has failed to meet every single target under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Canada has the largest and dirtiest oil and gas development on the planet – the tarsands in Alberta that is also where Canada's largest and busiest air force base, CFB Cold Lake, is located.

Yesterday, at a pre-summit press conference in Brussels, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, said that "he welcomed that NATO's new defence spending estimates that shows a real increase of 8.3% in 2023." He said "This is the biggest increase in decades, and the ninth consecutive year of increases in our defence spending. European Allies and Canada will have invested over \$450 billion extra US dollars since we agreed our defence investment pledge in 2014."



However, while NATO countries have increased their collective military spending by \$450 billion, they have also failed to meet their \$100 billion pledge for climate financing to help developing countries adapt to the climate crisis.

Military spending is on the agenda at the Vilnius Summit. Stoltenberg also said that the 2% GDP target for military spending is a floor not a ceiling. Now NATO members are expected to reach 2.5% of GDP. As you may know SIPRI showed that global military spending is \$2.2 trillion dollars; NATO accounts for 60% of this. Yet this is the same amount that the international community needs to deal with the climate emergency.

NATO's constant demand to increase military spending is depriving countries from having the resources needed to deal with forest fires, flooding, and heat waves and droughts and sand storms.

Finally, I want you to consider that when the Kyoto Protocol came out in 1997, the US refused to sign and ratify it. Instead at that time, the US pushed NATO expansion and led the illegal NATO military intervention against the former Yugoslavia - bombing and breaking up the country.

For 25 years, NATO's carbon-intensive costly wars, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and now Ukraine have exacerbated the climate crisis and derailed all attempts tackle it. The war in Ukraine is a NATO war – the US-led a coup in Kyiv against the democratically elected government in 2014 that has directly led to the war – this NATO war is going to prevent the international community from achieving the Paris Agreement and limiting global mean temperature to 1.5 by 2030.

In its 6th assessment report in March, the IPCC said “international cooperation” is needed to tackle climate change. That means we need to end the conflicts with Russia and China, lay down our arms and collaborate with these countries on our most crucial common security challenge: climate change.

So, NATO is the greatest threat to the planet and to people. It is urgent that we disband it. We must be calling for all of our countries to withdraw. I want to urge you to bring a copy of the Women for Peace United Against NATO's excellent declaration to your elected official along with a copy of the latest IPCC report. We have to demilitarize and disarm to decarbonize and decolonize.

Finally, I want to let you know that there are rallies against NATO across Canada this weekend. Tomorrow, I will be in Toronto with many other people protesting against NATO and to stop the war in Ukraine outside the US Consulate office.

Stop the wars, stop the warming. Stop NATO!



Sources:

“Combatting climate change: NATO’s role in building climate resilience”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbCC2reBZuc>

Canada and NATO’s Centre of Excellence in Climate and Security:

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/nato-otan/centre-excellence.aspx?lang=eng

Canada, climate crisis and wild fires: <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2023/06/09/our-new-normal-as-climate-change-exacerbates-wildfires-canada-faces-a-fiery-future.html>

IPCC 6th assessment report: <https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

NATO Defence Expenditures report:

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230707-def-exp-2023-en.pdf