Executive Summary

The relationship between environmental stress and national security is likely to become a more explicit and important foreign, as well as domestic, policy concern for all countries. Linkages between the physical environment and national security issues are not entirely "new"; for example, there has long been a concern with the potential environmental effects of nuclear war. The issue, however, is evolving as environmental damage or stress on ecological systems increases, and as political decision-makers and the public become more aware of such threats.

Understanding this evolution requires that a distinction be made between environmental stress, i.e., negative environmental effects, and the more general, but intricately linked, case of scarcity of resources. There is also a need to clarify the context in which the term national security is being used. <u>The primary purpose of the Paper is to identify and where possible elucidate the linkages between environmental stress and national security. In so doing, the Paper attempts to contribute to our understanding of the forest (environment-national security in its broadest and almost all-encompassing sense), by more narrowly focusing on an individual tree (the environmental stress-violent conflict dimension of national security).</u>

A conceptual framework for facilitating the understanding of how environmental stress may contribute to violent conflict is set out in the Paper. Most importantly, the framework serves to highlight: the case-specific nature of environmental stress-national security linkages; the fact that conflict may be intrastate or interstate; the large number of variables (such as population, technology and social factors) that influence causation; and the anecdotal nature of empirical evidence on causation.

The Paper calls for increased international cooperation on analyzing environmental stress-national security linkages, but suggests that such cooperation will likely be hindered by divergent views surrounding the nature of the problems and their potential solutions. With no international consensus on (1) population growth, (2) how population growth (through what might be called a "technological filter") may contribute to environmental stress, and (3) how environmental stress translates into intrastate or interstate violence, progress will be difficult. Until there is a convergence of views on the various aspects of the environmental stress-national security nexus, it is not likely that adequate collaborative measures and responses will be undertaken. In considering this complex relationship and the appropriate role for international as well as domestic measures, several of the key points raised in this Paper need to be borne in mind. These are:

●   For the 21st century and beyond, national security will only be attained through