



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 21 September 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross; Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Ms. Inna Modja, Land Ambassador and environmental activist; as well as the statements delivered by His Excellency Mr. Kalla Ankourao, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Niger; His Excellency Sir Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; His Excellency Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and South Asia of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Tunisia, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “Humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security”, convened on Thursday, 17 September 2020.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members for this video-teleconference, the following delegations and entities submitted written statements, copies of which are also enclosed: Brazil, Denmark, Ethiopia, the European Union, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mexico, Namibia, the Peacebuilding Commission, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and Ukraine.

Pursuant to the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the enclosed statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Abdou **Abarry**  
President of the Security Council



**Annex 1****Statement by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer**

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council, and I also thank the Government of the Niger for having organized today's Security Council meeting.

For decades, the discussions on humanitarian challenges centred around the consequences of either armed conflict or disaster. Each had its specific and distinct laws, protocols and procedures that informed humanitarian action, and there was little crossover between the two.

Accordingly, the Security Council maintained its focus on conflict-related humanitarian challenges. It focused on security issues and on mitigating impacts on vulnerable populations, including civilians, women, children and displaced communities; on protected places such as hospitals or schools; on the availability of weapons and their use; and on the need of belligerents to comply with the law.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has increasingly noted that communities living on the front lines of war, violence and devastation are more frequently — and more urgently — citing climate shocks as a key issue of concern, alongside poverty, injustice, exclusion and weapons availability. For decades now, environmental dimensions have been incorporated into the ICRC's humanitarian response: on, for example, explosive remnants of war and land contamination; the management of waste; and the ensuring of safe drinking water. Our operational response has paved the way for more in-depth policy reflections on the links between environmental degradation, climate risk, humanitarian needs, and peace and security.

While some of the concerns reported by the populations affected are fears of future disasters such as rising desertification or displacement from extreme-weather events, others are living those horrors today. Communities living in the Sahel and Lake Chad region are among the most resilient in the world. But in the face of the cumulative pressures of conflict, climate change and environmental degradation, they now walk a tightrope of survival.

Last week I visited the Niger and Burkina Faso, where people told me about their experiences of rising violence and displacement. Yes, they are displaced, first, because of conflict and violence as well as violations of laws and principles. But they also recognize the increasing tensions between communities because of changing rainfall patterns and scarcity of land for agriculturalists and pastoralists. They talk about the erosion of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms in communities and the manipulation of tensions by armed groups and irresponsible leaders.

At the same time, those same communities are being hit by damaging floods and drought. More than 1 million people have been forced to flee their homes in Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso because of conflict and violence over the past year, leaving them highly vulnerable to the next shock, such as the deadly floods of the past weeks.

How can the Security Council, and how can we, as front-line humanitarian organizations, support those who have been chased out of their lands and are surviving in precarious conditions; those who have lived for months or years in leaking shelters or cramped rooms shared with host families; and those who are now flooded by torrential rainfalls?

For too long the world has neglected the Sahel, leaving vast humanitarian needs unmet. Yet climate change and environmental degradation are felt more dramatically there than in many other places around the world. Years of conflict, underdevelopment and criminality have led to fragile social and economic systems and enormous humanitarian needs.

The ICRC sees those patterns repeated across many of the conflict zones in which we work. It is starkly evident that people affected by conflict are also disproportionately impacted by climate shocks. This also includes those living outside of regular governance systems. It is the ICRC's estimate that today approximately 66 million people worldwide are living in areas controlled by non-State armed groups and thus are outside adequate governance efforts to deal with the complexities of the issues.

Urgent action from members of the Security Council — from all States as well as from legal experts and development, climate and humanitarian actors — is critical. But what action should be taken?

Let me share one predominant message that I bring home from visits to the ICRC's operations. The populations affected do not want handouts, even if they may need them temporarily. It does not matter if the cause is conflict or disaster, or both, people demand an independent future, one in which they can feed their families without our help. With that in mind, the ICRC's focus today is twofold.

First, I turn to the issue of providing humanitarian action that mitigates the impacts of conflict and protects communities from harm. We are invested in helping to build strong and resilient communities that can withstand environmental degradation and successive climate shocks. We work at the levels of systems, communities and individuals: from building walls that protect communities from floods, to supporting new microeconomic enterprises and introducing waste-management systems and practices, to vaccinating livestock and distributing drought-resistant seeds.

The second area of focus for the ICRC is respect for international humanitarian law. In the light of the climate crisis and the extensive environmental degradation resulting from war, the ICRC is accelerating its outreach to States and next week will release its updated guidelines on the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict. The guidelines will assist States and others in interpreting and applying international humanitarian law and in incorporating its rules in military manuals as well as in national policy and legal frameworks to enhance the protection of the environment.

From the Sahel and Lake Chad region to war zones around the globe, millions are suffering on the front lines of environmental degradation, climate change and conflict. Peace and security will not be established by focusing on military and security measures to curb conflict and violence.

We must ensure that those most at risk are our urgent priority. Building resilient communities alongside efforts to protect those communities from violence is critical. Robust action needs to be well framed and executed in strict respect of laws and principles in order to avoid fuelling further cycles of violence.

While many of us may agree in general terms on the linkages between peace, security and our climate and environment, the "how" of our response still needs more critical analysis and sharing of experiences. The ICRC would welcome regular and systematic discussions on today's issue. That would allow us to learn from one another, to design contextual and innovative responses and critically to ensure a greater impact over time.

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to bring the humanitarian perspective into this discussion today.

**Annex 2****Statement by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Ibrahim Thiaw**

Allow me to thank the Council presidency of the Niger for having extended an invitation to me as the Security Council discusses a very critical topic, namely, “Maintenance of international peace and security: the humanitarian impact of environmental degradation and peace and security”.

Today’s threats to international peace and security have shifted from conflicts between States to violence due to non-State actors. An assessment of the root causes of those conflicts shows that a large proportion have a link to the environment. That link is due either to an abundance of natural resources such as oil, minerals or wildlife, or to scarcity of land, water or vegetation.

In arid lands, such as in Africa’s Sahel region, violence often erupts over competition for access to depleted land and scarce water resources. A combination of three factors exacerbates that situation.

The first factor is a heavy reliance on natural resources for the satisfaction of basic needs for farmers, pastoralists and fishermen/women. City dwellers may have additional income, but they, too, are largely dependent on income generated in rural areas. Secondly, with land degradation, drought and climate change, resources are shrinking. And, thirdly, a steady population increase has put additional pressure on natural resources.

Satisfying the growing demand of a population that relies essentially on resources that are being depleted at an alarming rate makes the situation unpredictable in the long run, a situation that is compounded by weak governance, weak institutions and limited capacities to respond to emergencies.

Despite the heroic efforts of the humanitarian community, lives are being saved but not changed. Year after year, the vicious circle intensifies. We must dig more deeply in order to address the root causes.

Conflicts over access to natural resources are not new, but their intensity and frequency are unprecedented. Farmers and pastoralists fight for control of scarce fertile land and water. As the users of natural resources are from different tribes or religious groups, and in the absence of a strong judiciary system, there are cases of excessive violence, leading to cycles of dangerous retaliations.

Droughts hit more frequently and more severely. Drought has always been a serious threat to lives and livelihoods. It is a phenomenon that is already affecting every climatic region, with approximately 70 countries now regularly affected. In the past three years alone, more than 25 countries have declared a national emergency due to drought. Drought means water shortages, power outages, degraded health and stalled economic momentum. Droughts annually wipe out enough produce to feed 81 million people every day for the entire year; that is the equivalent of the population of Germany.

Episodes of drought can double the risk of rioting in vulnerable communities. Food prices spike and civil unrest erupts, triggered mostly by vulnerable people living in the suburbs of large cities. Years of drought generally correspond to years of economic downturn for many countries whose economies essentially depend on the primary sector.

I believe that there are four dimensions to consider when we address environment and security linkages: first, ecosystem goods and services fundamentally underpin human well-being and human security; secondly, conflict, irrespective of its source,

affects the viability or sustainability of investments in environmental protection and their outcomes; thirdly, ecosystem degradation, resource competition and the inequitable distribution of benefits increase vulnerability and the risk of conflict; and, fourthly, environmental cooperation can increase capacities for conflict management, prevention and recovery.

The scope of security and insecurity is by no means limited to violent conflict or its absence but includes the roots of sustainable livelihoods, health and well-being. Different types of violence are associated with increased rural-urban migration due to drought and desertification. For example, grievances against a Government might increase when agricultural outcomes are depressed by drought and its induced out-migration.

In other cases, the unfulfilled economic hopes of poor migrants, combined with the prevalence of youth street gangs, lead youth into spirals of violence. Desperate and lacking many prospects, young people may be easy prey for terrorist groups and traffickers of all stripes. Frustration and dissatisfaction due to the inequitable sharing of State income, especially that generated from extractives, lead to serious grievances and sometimes rebellions.

The vast majority of the world's population relies on ecosystem services rooted in the soil. Therefore, the health of the land — due to its direct and indirect influences on the economy, degree of empowerment and human rights — catalyses the impact of environmental degradation on peace, security and stability.

Our capacities to assess and address the security risks driven by environmental degradation and climate change are not keeping pace with the speed with which the risk landscape is changing.

So how do we prevent environmental degradation and foster peace and security? We need to understand how difficult it is to mobilize societies against a threat whose costly consequences may not be felt until it is too late to prevent them.

Environmental security underpins the rationale for investment in global environmental benefits and is essential to maintaining the Earth's life-supporting ecosystems, which generate water, food and clean air. Reducing environmental security risks also depends fundamentally on improving resource governance and social resilience to natural-resource shocks and stresses.

Indeed, the positive aspect of the central and fundamental link between humankind and land is that the pendulum may swing in both directions. Protecting lands could thus trigger a broad peace, stability and ecosystem recovery cycle, a constructive feedback loop extending far beyond an initial choice to protect the environment.

At the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, most of our flagship programmes tackle environmental degradation as a means to promote peace and security, for example, the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa, which is aimed at addressing the security challenges linked to land degradation and desertification. It aims to support African countries in the creation of decent green jobs in land rehabilitation. Another important initiative with a similar goal is the Great Green Wall. I am sure that Inna Modja will speak more about the vision of that initiative.

These are just examples of actions, but the threats that climate and environmental change pose to international peace and security need to be addressed across the entire impact chain by mitigating climate change, attenuating its consequences for ecosystems, adapting its socioeconomic systems, better

managing the heightened resource competition it will bring about and strengthening conflict-management institutions.

To prevent conflicts while protecting our planet, we ought to tackle environmental degradation. Our environment is our health, our wealth and our well-being. If we, in a coordinated way, avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, we can better pre-empt, prevent and manage many conflicts in the world.

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**Annex 3****Statement by the Land Ambassador and environmental activist, Inna Modja**

It is an honour for me to address the Council on the maintenance of peace and security.

I am a Sahelian girl, born and raised in Mali and Ghana. I carry within me a great responsibility and a lot of love for that region, which is very vulnerable.

During my journey along the Great Green Wall from the west to the east of the Sahel, I met the rural communities living there. I realized how urgent it is to find solutions to the effects of desertification and climate change and the impact that can have on security and peace.

I remember young men uttering a poignant phrase — “Barcelona or bust”. Forced migration and the dream of an El Dorado in Europe have taken away many of our young people. My wish is to bring the African dream back to the continent by offering opportunities and a concrete future to these youth, who constitutes more than 50 per cent of the Sahel. Youth and women, in particular, can become major actors of change if we give them the necessary support. Their role is very important.

During my trip, I also met children and young people whose families were killed by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, in a zone weakened by the scarcity of food resources, among other things. I am very hopeful that projects such as the Great Green Wall will help address the multiple problems in the region, such as forced migration, instability and conflict in the Sahel.

**Annex 4****Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Niger, Kalla Ankourao**

[Original: English and French]

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the victims of the recent floods in the Niger, the Sahel, East Africa and other regions of the world.

As we examine the effects of climate change, these foreseen disasters, which are not the first such alerts, remind us once again of the gravity of this recurring phenomenon that puts at risk our way of life and undermines the ecological stability that has ensured, thus far, a certain harmony between humankind and the environment.

I would like to emphasize that all regions of the world are experiencing, in varying degrees, the effects of climate change. Nevertheless, nowhere is this phenomenon more acute or responses to it feebler than on the African continent. That situation can be explained by pointing to various constraints, including adaptation challenges, desertification, the scarcity of water and arable land, as well as decreases in or disappearing water levels. These all adversely affect the economic and social life of people worldwide, often in extremely precarious situations.

That is particularly the case in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin, which are characterized by great fragility and exponential population growth. Indeed, as we already know, those regions are subject to very high climate variability, which is reflected in changes in rainfall patterns, the appearance of extreme weather events and recurring droughts — three in the past decade, with tangible effects on agricultural land, pastureland and water availability. The Niger, for example, is losing 100,000 hectares per year. The frequency of these climatic shocks greatly reduces the resilience of the population.

As indicated by His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger and Chairman of the Climate Commission for the Sahel region of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the situation in the Sahel shows the extent to which climate disruption and environmental degradation have an impact on food and nutritional security. Along with conflicts, it is indeed one of the causes of the increase in famine in recent years. In a region where the vast majority of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, if not handled properly, an increase of 2°C by 2050, could lead to a 15 to 25 per cent reduction in food production, in the context of a population that doubles every 18 years in the Niger.

In addition to the climate shock I mentioned earlier, the Sahel is also undergoing a security shock, with devastating and tragic consequences. The escalation of violence in the Sahel strip and the Lake Chad basin has led to an increase in the number of displaced persons throughout the region. Currently, one in four people in the Sahel live in conflict zones and 4.5 million people are either internally displaced or refugees. That represents almost three times the number in 2012.

In the context of this double shock, as the agencies on the ground have so aptly stated, climate change and conflict dynamics create a feedback loop in which the impacts of climate change create additional pressures, while conflict undermines the capacity of communities to cope. Moreover, no implementation of environmental restoration projects is possible in areas depopulated as a result of terrorist attacks and insecurity, thus leading to further degradation.



The climate-security-development nexus is indisputable. The effective handling of this problem requires cooperation policies better adapted to these new challenges that spare no country and pose a real threat to the peace and stability of States and the fate of future generations.

That is why taking climate change into account requires a more global and concerted approach, because it is only together that we can tackle it. Combating the security risks linked to climate change will require a behavioural change of open-mindedness with regard to the ongoing quest for harmonious balance that will eventually reconcile humankind with our environment.

As the Security Council, our objective is not only to resolve conflicts; we also have the fundamental responsibility to prevent them. Understanding the causes, effects and complexities of climate change, especially in conflict zones, is therefore essential in that regard.

It is critical that the international community ensure international humanitarian law so as to enable the delivery of aid, without political considerations, to millions of women and children made vulnerable by the triple impact of conflicts, the coronavirus disease pandemic and the effects of climate change, particularly in Syria, Palestine, Yemen and Libya.

Combating the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation on peace and security is a multidimensional struggle. It integrates the protection and recovery of land, the prudent management of natural resources. In a word, we must lay the foundation for sustainable development that, by meeting the needs of the people, also safeguards them from the propaganda of terrorist groups. As is often said, poverty and precariousness are the breeding grounds for violent extremism and terrorism.

I would like to reassure the Council of my country's commitment to supporting any regional or international initiative that provides robust responses to the problems related to environmental degradation and its impact on peace and security. In the same vein, I would like to reassure the Council of my country's readiness to improve its cooperation with States, international organizations and stakeholders.

**Annex 5****Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Louis Straker**

At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines commends you, Sir, for convening this important discussion, and we thank the briefers for their pointed and sobering remarks.

The scale of human suffering wrought by climate change and its attendant hazards demand firm political will and decisive collective action in order to urgently and comprehensively address this crisis. Millions have been displaced as a result of drought, desertification, floods, coastal and river erosion and other environmental hazards. Millions more suffer due to acute food and health insecurity, fractured social contracts and painful cycles of violence initiated by competition over increasingly scarce resources. With the livelihoods of approximately 2.5 billion people worldwide depending on agriculture, the secondary effects of environmental degradation, such as reduced land fertility and biodiversity loss, threaten further suffering.

Across the Sahel region, the Lake Chad basin and numerous countries, including Haiti and Afghanistan, environmental degradation has significant humanitarian, socioeconomic, political and security implications. Inequalities are heightened, development is undermined and scarce financial resources are diverted towards adaptation and mitigation, with significant opportunity costs for affected populations. Moreover, the increased presence of risk multipliers, such as hate speech and disinformation, serves to further compound the already challenging situation as intercommunal tensions rise, political polarization increases and trust in public institutions erodes, thereby impairing governance capacities.

In order to effectively address these multidimensional challenges, we need an integrated and coherent approach that leverages the technical capacities of all United Nations organs and specialized agencies, within their respective mandates. The three international conventions concerning biodiversity, desertification, land degradation and climate change are a composite and integrated whole for which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its unwavering support. Climate change and environmental degradation are inextricably linked, and both have dire consequences for peace and security in many contexts. We therefore reiterate the importance of incorporating the humanitarian and security concerns of climate change and environmental degradation in all mandated reports for situations on the Security Council's agenda.

Additionally, we call for the delivery of capacity-building initiatives to improve land tenure and strengthen environmental governance as a means of building resilience in environmentally vulnerable and conflict-affected countries. Developed countries must also honour finance pledges for climate adaptation and mitigation, at a minimum. Moreover, we reiterate that all States must commit to the terms of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and take all necessary actions to keep temperature rise at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. If they fail to do so, global environmental degradation and ecological destruction will continue.

We also reiterate our concerns over the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, which represents a looming environmental disaster that would exacerbate the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people. An explosion of the tanker could cost lives and an oil spill would destroy the marine environment and the livelihoods that depend on it. Urgent action on this issue is therefore needed.

Conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities must be informed by a holistic, longer-term approach in order to be effective. We must therefore work diligently, as an international community, to integrate environmentally sensitive strategies across the peace-security-development-humanitarian nexus. That is the surest way to better protect the most vulnerable to environmental degradation and to safeguard the biophysical environment on which all life depends.

**Annex 6****Statement by the Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon**

I thank you, Sir, for keeping the linked challenges of environment and security on the Council's agenda, and for shining a light on how the changing climate is eroding human security across both the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin.

I also thank our expert briefers — Peter Maurer, Ibrahim Thiaw and Inna Modja — for their very valuable insights. It is great to see Mr. Maurer again. It is important to continue to bring expert insights to our debates in the Security Council. We note that it was 13 years ago that the United Kingdom convened the first open Security Council debate on the importance of climate security (see S/PV.5663). Indeed, this is the second time in the past three months that I have joined a Security Council debate, which underlines the importance that we collectively attach to this important agenda item.

As we work towards the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow next year and seek to turn the commitments made in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change into specific deliverable actions, there are 200,000 people who are victims of floods across Chad and the Niger telling us that now — not tomorrow — is the time to act.

Climate change exacerbates food insecurity and, indeed, the causes of conflict. This year, there are 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance across the Sahel, alerting us again that now is the time to act.

The most recent United Kingdom National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, published in 2015, identified climate change as one of the biggest global long-term challenges to our country's security. And this year, for the first time in the history of the World Economic Forum's annual *Global Risks Report*, the top five global risks were all environmental. With temperatures warming at one and a half times the global average, the Sahel knows all too well the urgency of that threat. The warnings grow louder and louder and come from further and further afield. Now is the time to act.

For our part, the United Kingdom has sought to lead by example. In the Sahel, we have given \$64 million to the World Bank Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program over the past six years to help Governments of the region improve weather data and adapt to climate shocks. Over the same period, we spent \$179 million in the region on pilot projects to build resilience and adaptation measures. Overall, the United Kingdom has pledged to provide over \$14 billion of international climate finance over the next five years. A significant proportion of that will go towards building resilience. The cliché that we can only overcome this problem by working together has rarely been so true.

This challenge is enormous and that is why we have committed to leveraging our co-chairmanship of COP26 to drive the expansion of climate financing, to improve early warning systems and the capacity of countries to act on the risks and to strengthen inclusive social protections, especially for women and the most vulnerable across societies.

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Climate change and conflict dynamics interact in a vicious circle. Of course, we must tackle the governance challenges that are the root causes of conflict. But if the Security Council is to support peace and security in regions on the front line in the battle against climate change, we must also make climate risk assessment and climate resilience an integral part of the Council's work.

We need to routinely factor climate risks into United Nations conflict prevention and resolution strategies and into peacebuilding plans. We need to strengthen the ability of our United Nations system to analyse and act upon climate risk as a fundamental way of working. We know from our work together that insecurity hits the most marginalized and the most disadvantaged groups the hardest.

The same is true of climate-driven insecurity. And as we all know, tragically and sadly, it is girls and women who are routinely more exposed to disaster-induced poverty and indeed exploitation. Our approach to climate security must absolutely address the needs and priorities of women and girls and draw on their potential to lead our collective response from their key positions within their own communities.

In thanking you once again, Sir, for convening today's important debate, I would conclude by saying that the regions of the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin provide us all with hard and harrowing evidence that climate-related security threats are real. They exist. They are immediate and profoundly undemocratic, and we must address them in a collective and holistic way. The Security Council presents to us the best vehicle we have for doing just that. Now is the time to act.

**Annex 7****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Philippe Kridelka**

I would like to thank the Niger for organizing this debate during its presidency of the Security Council, and I thank the briefers for their briefings.

The massive ongoing flooding in the Niger is a dramatic demonstration that climate change is intensely affecting the Sahel. These floods have now caused more deaths in the country than the coronavirus disease.

Some may think that the Security Council is not the best forum for a meeting on climate change, but Belgium believes it is appropriate that we meet to discuss the consequences of climate change on conflict and humanitarian needs. The Lake Chad region is a symbolic case — a terrible but convincing example — where the interaction of climate change and armed conflict is undermining sustainable development, creating a long-term humanitarian catastrophe and nurturing extremist movements that capitalize on weak governance. The links between climate and conflict are already today an appalling reality for these populations.

Vulnerability to climate change is not always greatest where environmental degradation and climate change are having the most severe effects. This vulnerability to climate change is mostly defined by the capacity of communities to adapt and prevent climate risks. Where this capacity is low, as in situations of fragility, people are most vulnerable. Belgium therefore calls for a deeper analysis of the humanitarian challenges brought by the interaction between the environment and conflict as well as reflection on the ways humanitarian and other responses can strengthen resilience. We hope a virtual ministerial meeting organized jointly with the Niger, the European Union and the International Committee of the Red Cross and scheduled for 25 September can start the reflection on these overlapping vulnerabilities.

Let me share with the Council some of our observations in advance of our meeting on 25 September.

First, many conflict and post-conflict countries receive very little climate funding, whereas they might be the countries that need that funding the most. In addition, overall, a large part of official development assistance in fragile countries, as well as half of the aid to extremely fragile countries, is humanitarian in nature. As such, it acts as a sort of fire extinguisher, but it does not contribute to the prevention of conflict. It is extremely challenging to align aid to the multidimensional and long-term needs of fragile contexts, of which climate change is a part.

Trying to address this challenge, the Belgium has launched a four-year humanitarian project aimed at youth resilience in the Lake Chad region. The programme is being executed by Plan International and our partners at Oxfam. Experience teaches that aid efforts in fragile contexts need to be adaptable, flexible and innovative, and it must be executed in close coordination with local authorities and the academic world's understanding of how climate change affects specific situations. After all, it does not really help to teach young men and women how to fish when there is no lake left to fish in or when access to the lake has been rendered impossible by security measures.

Secondly, the Security Council needs to act. During our current term on the Council, one of Belgium's priorities has been to mainstream climate-related security risks into relevant Council mandates. We are pleased with the progress made so far, and we vow to continue pressing on this issue whenever a mandate comes up for renewal.

But let us also look at the broader picture. A climate and security angle should be incorporated throughout the entire cycle of conflict, from prevention initiatives through mediation strategies to peacebuilding plans and peace talks. This includes engaging in negotiations on the sharing of natural resources, anticipating future climate risks and making the local population more resilient. For all of this to be successful, it is crucial that climate-risk assessments be made available, including to the Security Council, and incorporated in more general conflict and fragility assessments. I cannot but underscore the role of the Climate Security Mechanism and the wider academic world in this matter.

Lastly, essential civilian infrastructure is regularly targeted during conflicts, which destroys the livelihoods of communities and increases their exposure to climate change. Allow me to note that international humanitarian law does indeed reach protecting the natural environment.

**Annex 8****Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

I welcome you, Sir, in chairing this meeting. I also thank Mr. Maurer, Mr. Thiaw and Ms. Modja for their briefings.

Climate change and environmental degradation are common challenges for all countries. According to the United in Science 2020 climate report, the warming of our planet has not stopped despite the coronavirus disease pandemic; in fact, greenhouse-gas concentrations have reached record highs in 2020. In the world today, we see places where climate change and environmental degradation endanger people's livelihoods, exacerbate the scarcity of resources and even aggravate existing tensions and conflicts. In Africa and the Middle East, tensions and instability, which are being compounded by environmental crises, have led to serious humanitarian consequences. Millions of people are being displaced by natural disasters, famine and conflicts.

No country is immune from the impact of global challenges, including climate change. The international community must unite to address these challenges holistically and in a coordinated manner. In this regard, I wish to highlight four points.

First, we must prevent conflicts and promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. There is no direct link between environmental issues and peace and security. The security implications of environmental degradation differ from country to country and from region to region. We need to discuss and handle them in country-specific ways. The first step is to identify the root causes of a conflict, evaluate the environmental aspects of the security situation and work towards a targeted and specific solution. Policies and mechanisms that can balance and reconcile conflicting interests must be put in place. For its part, the Security Council should effectively implement its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes and paving the way for reconstruction.

Secondly, we must prioritize development and earnestly implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Climate change is, in essence, a development issue and can be addressed only through sustainable development. As we kick off the Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the international community should prioritize development and put people first. Countries need to enhance macroeconomic policy coordination with development at the centre, promote green and low-carbon transformation and enhance climate resilience. Efforts should be made to alleviate the humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation and help the vulnerable, making sure that no one is left behind.

Thirdly, we must honour commitments taken by multilateral consensus and faithfully fulfil international obligations. If climate change has security implications, then the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other aspects of the international consensus on climate change matters not only to the environment, but also to international peace and security. All countries, but especially a certain major Power, should reinvigorate multilateralism instead of putting itself first. It should fulfil the obligations it once took under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. It is important to follow the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and of equity and respective capabilities, and work towards an equitable climate-governance regime. Developed countries should honour their commitment to mobilizing \$100 billion a year in climate financing by 2020, set a new collective quantified goal and help developing countries build preparedness.



Fourthly, we must attach great importance to Africa and support its effort to achieve peace and security. Africa is the home to one-fifth of the world's population, and African affairs make up two-thirds of the matters on the agenda of the Security Council. Silencing the guns in Africa is not only the aspiration of the people of Africa, but also the top priority of our work. The international community should let the initiative of African countries to resolve their own issues play out fully. Efforts should also be made to strengthen African countries' capacity to address the potential security risks of climate change and environmental issues. Given the special challenges facing developing countries, more resources should be pooled to support their mitigation and adaptation efforts, including through funding, technology and capacity-building.

China stands firm in pursuing green, low-carbon and sustainable development. We faithfully fulfil our obligations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement and have met our climate target for 2020 two years early. China accounts for 25 per cent of the global net increase in leaf area since 2000. We are willing to make greater contributions and are considering a mid-century long-term vision for climate change.

China is advancing the development of a green Silk Road. We jointly initiated the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition with the United Nations Environment Programme, helping relevant countries develop renewable energy projects, boosting energy transition and green development.

China is an active champion of South-South cooperation on climate change. We have allocated over ¥1 billion in recent years to support developing countries, especially African countries and small island States, in confronting the challenge of climate change, including through developing low-carbon demonstration zones, carrying out mitigation and adaptation projects and providing assistance for capacity-building.

As we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization, it is high time that States Members of the United Nations uphold solidarity and unity, champion multilateralism, safeguard the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, join efforts to address climate change and strive for peace and the development of our world.

**Annex 9****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations**

We thank the Niger for convening today's important meeting and the briefers for their briefings.

Today, we are putting a human face on our discussions on climate and security. We are encouraged by the progress of the international community's awareness on the issue and by the efforts of the majority of the members of the Security Council to keep it on the agenda and explore different dimensions of what the Secretary-General has called the greatest threat to humankind.

The Dominican Republic recognizes that the Security Council is faced with the challenge of considering an unconventional threat to international peace and security. However, in the light of the continued deterioration of the environment, it is obvious that new, natural enemies have become more frequent, disproportionate and fierce, positioning themselves as permanent violent affronts to millions of people.

Of the 20 countries at the top of the list of regions most vulnerable to climate change, 60 per cent are currently in fragile and violent situations. In many cases, climate shocks can lead to development reversals and systemic breakdowns in essential services and undermine the ability of humanitarian actors to reach those in need or to anticipate such needs effectively.

We stand with the millions of people and families that dedicate every day of their lives to farming, herding or fishing and have to live with the anxiety of seeing their incomes eroded and their livelihoods threatened by conflict, floods, droughts and other extreme weather events, leading them to displacement or other negative ways of coping.

Far too often, conflicts themselves harm the environment and the essential civilian infrastructure on which people rely to survive. These are violations of international humanitarian law, and we must take every possible step to make parties to conflicts refrain from those actions. In addition, in times of conflict, adaptation efforts aimed at overcoming the immediate effects of climate change become less of a priority than is the striving to ensure the very security of people.

Having recognized climate change and environmental degradation as major security-risk factors, the fact that those climate risks, when combined with armed conflict, make matters worse, not only for countries and regions affected, but also for the United Nations in its efforts to respond and effectively support them, makes it a priority for the Security Council to join efforts with other relevant United Nations organs to effectively address all dimensions of the climate crisis in a holistic, mutually reinforcing way. It is also critical to address these consequences while taking into account the existence of other issues, such as those related to gender, youth, children and the elderly, and especially internally displaced persons and refugees.

We are currently experiencing a global health crisis. Accordingly, beyond the achievements made in the assessment of risk factors, the coronavirus disease pandemic has created new and unexpected circumstances to be considered when evaluating possible mechanisms that will allow us to prevent conflicts in the face of non-conventional threats. The Dominican Republic reiterates its commitment to making further progress on this topic so that together we can achieve a comprehensive human-centred vision and plan of action for resolving the problem.

We emphasize the critical need to join forces in solidarity in order for the Security Council to address the adverse effects of climate change on international

peace and security in its work. In this way, the response to armed conflicts will be considered from various angles — humanitarian, security and resilience-building — allowing for actions that address the complexity of the current circumstances and meet the challenges to achieving international peace and security.

**Annex 10****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I thank the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Peter Maurer; the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw; and Land Ambassador Ms. Inna Modja for their informative and insightful briefings.

The significance of the link between climate change and peace and security was first addressed in the Security Council 13 years ago, in 2007 (see S/PV.5663), during the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council, and today it is more relevant than ever. In order to improve people's livelihoods in Africa, including in the Lake Chad basin region, it is important to address this link more efficiently.

Many of the countries vulnerable to climate change do not have the capacity to cope with climate-related security risks and need assistance from the international community. There are tools available; the key is to use them.

In order to understand the consequences of climate change in armed conflicts, such as in the Sahel region, data is a fundamental prerequisite. We need reliable and accurate information. Therefore, it is important to improve the collection and quality of data and to find, *inter alia*, innovative solutions to analyse the exacerbating role that climate change plays in the context of armed conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. That will allow for both better risk assessment and better risk management. Also, it will enable a systematic approach to including climate-related security risks in the work of the Security Council — an approach that is urgently needed and an idea that could become a reality if the Security Council were to receive systematic reporting by the Secretary-General on climate-related security risks.

It is clear that climate change poses a real and current threat to peace, security and stability in many regions around the world, including the Sahel region. Populations that depend on economic activities such as farming, herding and fishing are extremely exposed to such risks and are affected by food insecurity. Climate change brings competition for energy and natural resources. Therefore, it is important to create well-designed resource-management policies and to invest in building the resilience of the most affected regions.

However, the implications of climate-related security risks are not just a local or a national problem but a cross-border phenomenon, and day by day the latter worsens in areas with permeable borders and insufficient State authority. Consequently, this calls for duly multilateral coordination and an uncompromising humanitarian response, including better implementation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In order to effectively respond to security threats posed by climate change in the Lake Chad basin region, we need comprehensive national, regional and international collaboration, as well as strengthened coordination and integration within the United Nations and its agencies and missions.

Finally, it is important to continue our efforts to find pertinent solutions. That is not a quick fix, but it is the only way forward.

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**Annex 11****Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I would like to welcome your presence among us, Mr. Minister, and to commend the presidency of the Niger for organizing this debate, which follows the meetings held at the initiative of Germany in July (see S/2020/751) and France in April (see S/2020/340). This demonstrates the integration of the environmental dimension into conflict prevention and crisis resolution. It has become a reality at the Security Council.

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Inna Modja spoke with conviction. The consequences of climate change and environmental degradation are considerable. They lead to the displacement of populations and an increase in the level of food and health insecurity, as well as nutritional, economic, demographic and social imbalances. The Sahel is unfortunately an excellent illustration of that, and the populations have undeniably understood this. The French Development Agency therefore supports several Sahelian non-governmental organizations that are at the forefront of the fight against desertification through regional projects, such as the Great Green Wall. It is an ambitious project, commensurate with the challenges of the region.

In support of the populations and authorities, which are of course on the front line, we need preventive diplomacy that addresses all the destabilizing factors, including those related to climate change and biodiversity collapse. This will be my first point.

We need to anticipate the humanitarian consequences of environmental disasters. We are not starting from scratch. For the past ten years, the European Union and the United Nations have established a partnership to build capacity in conflict prevention and land and natural resource management. That needs to become more systematic.

We need to go further and equip ourselves with analytical tools. Some 2,500 conflicts are linked to fossil fuels, water, food and land, with already terrible humanitarian consequences that will be even more destabilizing in the future. In order not to be taken by surprise and to enable the Security Council to react in time, France would like the Secretary-General to be able to present every two years an assessment of the threats to international peace and security posed by the impacts of climate change in all regions of the world and over different time horizons.

In addition, it is essential to assess the risks of environmental damage in fragile humanitarian situations. This will be my second point.

The case of the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker in Yemen demonstrates the seriousness and urgency of the problem. The tanker poses an immense risk to the ecosystem and biodiversity, as well as to the health and livelihoods of millions of people in the Red Sea coastal States already affected by conflicts and environmental disasters. That is particularly the case in Yemen. It is urgent that the United Nations teams can have access to the tanker.

Finally, climate and environmental issues must be systematically integrated into the planning of interventions by armed and security forces, while conducting humanitarian relief operations after natural disasters or during peacekeeping operations. Taking climate and environmental refugees into account is a global

challenge that requires considerable coordination efforts between all actors, particularly on the ground.

It is also with that in mind that we are continuing to reflect as to how to adjust our humanitarian instruments to better anticipate and take into account the possible environmental and climatic consequences of any humanitarian action on the ground.

Protecting the environment therefore requires the full investment of all and greater international cooperation, since reconstruction and lasting peace depend on that. Rest assured that France, in conjunction with its partners, will continue its efforts in that direction.

## Annex 12

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Dian Triansyah Djani**

At the outset, Indonesia thanks the presidency for convening this meeting today. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Kalla Ankourao, at this meeting. I also welcome His Excellency Sir Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and His Excellency Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and South Asia of the United Kingdom.

I also thank the briefers Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); and Ms. Inna Modja, UNCCD Land Ambassador.

Across the globe, we increasingly witness the adverse impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, which affect people and livelihoods. They have become an aggravating factor that not only can prolong conflicts, but also threatens to reverse economic growth and development. Against that backdrop, I would like to outline the following points.

First, we need enhanced partnership, cooperation and information-sharing. Environmental degradation and its related security impacts are indeed a complex area that is impossible for any single actor to address. A true partnership between the United Nations and its partners is vital to understanding the root cause of conflict and the impact of environmental degradation in that regard. It is the first step in finding a suitable and tailored solution. Priorities must be set in places where climate risks intersect with a fragile security situation, such as in the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel, where today nearly 10 million people depend on humanitarian aid due to the prolonged armed conflicts of the past decade. The coronavirus disease pandemic has increased the fragility. I would like to echo Mr. Peter Maurer in saying “building resilient communities alongside efforts to protect those communities from violence is critical” (*annex 1*). Indeed, it is important to assist such communities in building adaptive capacity and enhancing resilience based on their needs and priorities.

Secondly, it is important to mainstream environmental degradation and climate change throughout the peace continuum. To do so, we need strong synergy within the United Nations system. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change remains the leading forum to address climate change. We expect countries to uphold the Paris Agreement, including its financial commitments, and to meet their nationally determined contributions.

At the same time, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, which is currently being discussed, should not shy away from considering the impact of climate change on peace and security. Through such synergy, we can find an integrated response strategy.

Thirdly, the role of regional organizations is crucial. The Security Council has recognized the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as the leadership of countries in West Africa and the Sahel, in spearheading initiatives to address the security challenges in the region. As countries in West Africa and the Sahel face elections this year, more often the political situation becomes more fragile. In this year of Silencing the Guns by 2020, the pressure for ECOWAS and the African Union to step up is high. They need our

strong and collective support. African solutions for African issues is an important concept and it should be supported internationally. We continue to encourage global and multi-stakeholder partnerships, along with regional stakeholders.

In closing, allow me to reiterate what my Foreign Minister stated in a similar debate on January 2019:

“Climate change is real, and it is happening now. ... Indonesia stands ready to contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.” (*S/PV.8451, p. 11*)



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**Annex 13****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Chumakov**

It is undeniable that environmental degradation is heavily aggravating the socioeconomic challenges in certain countries and regions. The region of West Africa and the Sahel, which is particularly vulnerable to climate-related challenges, presents a good case in point. We fully understand the motivation of our colleagues from the Niger in convening this meeting. In the Niger alone, according to Reuters, the Sahara Desert keeps expanding at a rate of 48 kilometres a year, further degrading the land and eradicating the already scarce livelihoods of the rapidly growing population. Even the blue people of the desert, the Tuareg, have to adapt and move further south due to the lack of grazing areas and water sources. We share the concerns raised by the presidency and the need for the world community to treat the related issues in a priority manner in appropriate formats.

However, we have yet again to register our doubts that the Security Council is a platform for a generic environment-related debate. In that respect, we would like to reiterate the following points.

There is no automatic link between environmental issues, including climate change, and conflict. There is no conclusive, universally recognized and scientifically substantiated evidence that climate change has an impact on armed conflicts either.

The social and economic situation in individual countries and subregions may be exacerbated by the adverse impacts of climate change and other manifestations of environmental deterioration. However, security and stability are often affected by more direct causes, about which not all the members of the Council are inclined to talk. These include external interference in Member States' domestic affairs, abuse or even the generation of conflict situations for the purpose of exploiting natural resources without the consent of host Governments. That is not only contradictory to international law, but also fraught with environmental disasters. In that context, we have many examples in Africa and the Middle East. Unfortunately, we have to note that, when the representative of the United States enumerated examples, he forgot the example of the occupation of the Syrian oil fields. We would like to highlight that, as well as the barbaric methods of oil production, which are fraught with ecological disaster in north-eastern Syria.

Another way of interference is economic and political pressure in various forms. That includes the application of unilateral coercive measures without a Security Council mandate. Such actions particularly undermine the capacity of developing countries to achieve socioeconomic development goals and environmental protection and hinder their ability to participate in collective efforts to address climate change. The consideration of environmental aspects on its own may therefore be selective and ignore the broader context.

Assisting developing countries in their sustainable development efforts, including environmental protection — both in general and in post-conflict situations — is a mandate of the United Nations development system and resident coordinators, with reliance on intergovernmental mandates and relevant scientific findings. Donor countries should not shy away from their commitments to help. In order to minimize environmental effects, it is necessary to help countries to strengthen their resilience.

As for international humanitarian law, which our presidency included in the concept note (S/2020/882, annex) in the context of today's discussion, it is also well known that it prohibits the use of methods of warfare that are intended or may be

expected to cause damage to the natural environment. However, that prohibition cannot prevent the severe effects of armed conflict on the natural environment, irrespective of the level of adherence to this important rule. In that regard, it is paramount that the Security Council focus its efforts on the fulfilment of its core function of the maintenance of international peace and security on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations. If that is addressed, it will certainly contribute to the protection of the environment.

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**Annex 14****Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

Allow me to first congratulate the Niger on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and for convening this meeting to highlight the potential impact of environmental degradation on peace and security situations. We are delighted to see you, Mr. Minister, presiding over the Security Council as we address this important issue.

We also thank Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms. Inna Modja, Land Ambassador and climate activist, for their briefings. We also acknowledge the Ministers who are present today.

There is certainly a need to better understand the impact of effective environmental governance and policy and whether this may influence the reduction of conflict and help bring about peace and security.

South Africa recognizes that climate change represents an existential threat to humankind and all other species. In fact, all forms of environmental degradation require our urgent attention and a progressive, ambitious and collective multilateral response from all Member States. Sustainable Development Goal 13, on climate action, together with the other 16 Sustainable Development Goals, remains critical to the effective pursuit by all of humankind of the basic tenets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — namely, the alleviation of poverty — by leaving no one behind on the path to sustainable development and by assisting those furthest behind first.

We also recognize that factors, such as drought, water scarcity, food insecurity and desertification, which are thought to be caused or exacerbated by climate change, increase the risk of violent conflicts. In Africa, there is evidence to suggest that this is the case in the Sahel, the Lake Chad basin, as well as the Horn of Africa. In these instances, as with elsewhere, climatic pressures associated with climate change are threats or risk multipliers, which escalate tensions and conflict, by placing additional strain on scarce resources like water and grazing lands.

The impact of the ferocious deteriorating climate situation in the Sahel, the Lake Chad region and elsewhere in the world, desertification, floods, desert storms and locust invasions, over and above the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), has led to untold suffering for millions of people, as we heard from the briefers and Ministers today. People are on endless move. Migrants and internally displaced persons are running from terrorists attacks for survival and hoping the future will be bright as the world gathers next week to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations under the theme “The Future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action”.

There are different aspects of dealing with the challenge of environmental degradation. The first is to address the root of development issues that spark this initial conflict. The second aspect is to deal with the consequences of the outbreak of conflict, thought to be linked to climate change or environmental degradation, once it has taken place and, in this regard, the Security Council’s experience in dealing with conflict may be useful. It is clear that a holistic approach is needed to deal with the ramifications of environmental degradation on peace and security.

In this regard, we encourage the Security Council to support the lead United Nations organizations and processes, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity and other multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the work of relevant regional organizations, such as the African Union (AU). These collaborations will ensure that the Security Council may obtain information on the potential impact of climate or environment-related security risks in conflict settings.

The UNFCCC enjoys near universal membership among Member States, adheres to principles that seek to promote equity and recognizes the need for common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as well as the Convention's legal obligation for developed countries to provide the means of implementation support to all developing countries. The UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we believe, will also promote continued, multilateral negotiation of the sensitive changes that all Member States need to adopt to address climate change, while also providing mechanisms to safeguard the development policy space of all countries, especially developing countries.

South Africa fully supports a multilateral approach to climate change, premised on the guiding principles of the UNFCCC, which include equity, the differentiation of actions required between developed and developing countries and the provision of support to all developing countries that require it. At the national level, we are prioritizing the just transition towards more equitable and sustainable patterns of production and consumption. At the continental level, the African Union is developing the African Green Stimulus programme as a contribution to the overall AU recovery effort from the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing all three pillars of sustainable development.

We continue to look to the Security Council to fulfil its international peace and security mandate. In this regard, we are interested to hear the views of Council members on what value the Security Council might add to addressing the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation on peace and security.

What is clearly needed, no doubt, is enhanced global solidarity with effective multilateralism and the United Nations at the helm.

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**Annex 15****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

I would like to thank the Niger for organizing this meeting and choosing to focus one of its signature events on the humanitarian impact of climate change, a subject which needs more attention in our discussions on climate and security. I thank the briefers for their very informative presentations.

Climate change is impacting our environment. That is an indisputable reality based on scientific data. Growing climate disruption and environmental deterioration are increasingly affecting populations across the globe. However, such an impact, even though global in nature, is not felt equally by all populations and is not affecting our lives in the same way. In fact, the most severe impact is greatest in areas, such as Somalia, Yemen, the Sudan and the Sahel, where people's ability to cope with and adapt to these changes has been severely reduced.

As clearly described by the briefers, the most vulnerable populations, including displaced people, refugees and people living in conflict zones or already afflicted by dire economic conditions, are disproportionately affected by the impact of droughts, floods, storms and heat and have limited capacity to adapt to these extremes and additional risks.

Combined with violence and armed conflicts, in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and add to the plight of these people making their lives even more miserable and aggravating the humanitarian disasters that they are facing. A hunger catastrophe is looming in Yemen.

When climate disruption collides with conflicts, it can only worsen food and economic insecurity, aggravate health disparities and limit access to basic services and resources, while weakening at the same time the capacity of Governments and institutions to provide support to local populations.

In the Lake Chad region, where more than 10 million people already depend on humanitarian aid, climate change heightens tensions around the use of water and land, which contributes to more forced displacement especially in a context of limited ability of central authorities to control territories, manage resources and resolve tensions.

The impact of such overlap is very high from a humanitarian perspective and requires us to adapt our response and action to people's conditions and priorities beyond immediate needs and early action in a more sustainable way that helps conflict-affected communities become more resilient to environmental deterioration and to adapt to a changing climate. Such response needs to rely on a deeper understanding of the short- and long-term climate risks. It needs a better knowledge of the regional implications of a changing climate and more coordinated actions across several sectors and in many different countries, especially because climate change also presents challenges that can aggravate existing situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence.

This climate change and security nexus has become more obvious and increasingly recognized at the international level and should be considered further by the Security Council as the effects of climate change increasingly interact with root causes of conflicts and act as risk multipliers.

Today, in addition to the context-specific approach, we need to pursue an integrated and systematic approach to climate-related security risks in order to enable appropriate responses by the Security Council. We also need to integrate

long-term climate risk factors into the assessment and management of threats to peace and security at the national, regional and international levels. To prevent conflicts related to climate risks, we need also to develop forecasting tools and early warning systems, in addition to strengthening the United Nations system database with scientific data and relevant knowledge.

Finally, Tunisia, as a member of the like-minded group on climate and security, would like to reiterate that these issues need to remain on our agenda and require a more in-depth discussion by the Security Council.

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**Annex 16****Statement by the Political Coordinator of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

We are pleased to have you join us in the Council today, Sir, albeit virtually. The United States appreciates the opportunity to reflect today on this very important issue. We have seen instances of environmental damage resulting from armed conflict all too frequently, and we know how this can impact humanitarian conditions in fragile contexts.

Since 2004, when then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted the relationship between the environment, security and socioeconomic development, this organ has discussed various aspects of environmental effects on international peace and security. And as we know all too well, there is a growing competition for water resources and arable land playing a major role in driving conflict in both the Lake Chad basin and the Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger tri-border region. The problem has grown as a multitude of non-State actors have exploded on the scene. Militias and organized criminal entities contribute to violence that destroys the environment within which they operate, and that perpetuates protracted and complex humanitarian crises.

In times of conflict, the illegal exploitation of resources is used to support and fuel the conflict to the extreme detriment of the local populations. Indeed, the exploitation of natural resources and related environmental stresses frequently become part of the full range of the conflict cycle. Minerals, timber, wildlife, land and water resources can quickly become contested, their exploitation can finance conflict and the associated environmental degradation and social upheaval can undermine prospects for peace. Unfortunately, we have too many examples of this globally. In 2017, the so-called Islamic State triggered vast toxic clouds by setting ablaze oil wells and a sulphur factory near the Iraqi city of Mosul, poisoning the landscape and the people.

Those engaged in conflict have used biodiversity hotspots for refuge — places like Garamba National Park, which borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, and Virunga National Park and Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is leading to the decimation of native protected plant and animal species owing to the poaching and trafficking of wildlife, illegal logging and illegal mining associated with conflict.

In Colombia, illegal armed groups have continued to contest resources in rural areas, some of which were controlled by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia prior to the 2016 peace accord. Concerns include land-grabbing and deforestation, illegal mining and coca cultivation and cocaine production. Newly deforested hectares in 2016 were 44 per cent higher than in 2015, and continued to increase in 2017. In 2018, deforestation decelerated somewhat, but remains one of Colombia's most critical environmental challenges.

And in Venezuela, the illegitimate Maduro Moros regime is complicit in and profiting from illegal gold mining, which is devastating the environment and indigenous populations across the southern part of the country. Armed criminal groups, including some from Colombia designated as terrorists, are indiscriminately poisoning the land and water, clandestinely exporting the wealth that is the birth right of every Venezuelan.

These are just a few examples of how environmental damage during conflict can prolong the effects of these conflicts on innocent people. Even after the conflict ends, its impact on the environment can hinder or outright prevent individuals'

ability to recover, including the safe, dignified and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes.

The economic impact of environmental damage can be felt not only in direct financial losses, but also in the costs associated with rehabilitating the environment post-conflict. The United States has partnered with many Governments to help repair the effects of environmental damage related to conflict.

In 2018, the United States, through the United States Agency for International Development's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment, addressed wildlife trafficking in areas of south-eastern Central African Republic and north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by the Lord's Resistance Army. Partners of the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment operate in collaboration with communities living near targeted protected areas of Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chinko Nature Reserve in the Central African Republic to control wildlife poaching and trafficking, which is a source of financing for groups active in the region.

These activities addressed security and governance vacuums and disrupted operations of transnational organized syndicates. These programmes strengthen the management of the protected areas of the park while improving security and the rule of law in the region and ensure that the rangers are able to protect the park, pursue and arrest poachers and other perpetrators of illicit activity, and work with surrounding populations to conserve and manage the park's resources in a responsible manner.

As a result of this support, the number of elephants poached has dropped from 100 per year in 2017 to fewer than 10 per year in the past two years. The number of attacks on villages by the Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups within Garamba's area of operation was reduced from 68 in 2015 to only one in 2019.

The United States and Colombia signed an memorandum of understanding in 2018 to combat illegal gold mining by supporting its regularization and formalization, working jointly to detect and eliminate the use of mercury, strengthening legal economic alternatives to illegal mining, strengthening efforts to identify and monitor areas affected by illegal mining and strengthening the capacity of law enforcement to prevent, control, investigate and prosecute crimes associated with the illicit exploitation of minerals. A similar memorandum of understanding with Peru in 2017 became the basis for the Colombia memorandum of understanding. We are also working with the international community to combat the disastrous environmental and security impacts of illicit gold mining in Venezuela, as facilitated by the illegitimate Nicolás Maduro Moros regime and other criminal actors.

A sensitive issue, and one that hits closer to home for us in the United States, is from the Viet Nam war, which involved a chemical defoliant with severe and lingering human health impacts. The United States has been working to support Viet Nam's efforts to clean up dioxin, or Agent Orange, contamination. In 2018, the United States concluded its support of a six-year, \$110-million project for environmental remediation of dioxin at Da Nang airport. On 5 December 2019, the United States and Viet Nam announced further support for Vietnam's dioxin remediation efforts at Bien Hoa airbase, and we have committed \$300 million to the 10-year effort to restore the airbase and surrounding areas.

Finally, as we discussed just this week and has been mentioned by others today, we must act with urgency as it relates to the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker off the coast of Yemen. Few potential environmental disasters loom as large. Failure to address this situation, as the Council has been briefed about at length, would have catastrophic environmental and humanitarian implications, not just for Yemen, but for much of the region.



In conclusion, we urge all Member States not to lose sight of the environmental dimensions of conflict and the associated economic and health effects for the populations affected.

**Annex 17****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

Viet Nam expresses its deep appreciation to the Nigerien presidency and its leadership for convening this timely debate. I would like to thank the briefers for their insightful contributions.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to humankind. The adverse effects of climate change, including frequent extreme weather events, water scarcity, drought, land degradation, sea-level rise, among others, can lead to food insecurity, large-scale displacement and social tension. They are also linked to the degradation of the ecosystem as a result of poor management and destruction in armed conflicts. These humanitarian impacts of climate change and ecosystem degradation have become increasingly visible in many corners of the world. In the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel region, the availability of and access to life-saving resources are diminished, and therefore millions of lives have to depend on annual emergency humanitarian assistance. Unless addressed or mitigated, the adverse effects of climate change can aggravate vulnerable political and security situations, prolong, exacerbate and even instigate conflicts and instabilities.

We are convinced that managing the adverse effects of climate change, ecosystem degradation and their humanitarian and security risks should be part of our efforts to maintain international peace and security. My delegation would like to stress the following points.

First, our response must gather cooperation across borders. In the competitive global situation that is emerging, the importance of consolidating international cooperation cannot be overemphasized. Special attention must be paid to countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, countries in humanitarian need, least-developed countries and small island developing States, as they are particularly prone to the adverse effects of climate change but often lag behind in response capacity.

Secondly, climate resilience can and should be integrated into humanitarian, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict strategies. We welcome the progress the Council has made in recognizing the adverse effects of climate change in 13 country-specific resolutions. We note that 8 out of the 10 largest peace operations are deployed in countries with high exposure to climate change. It is crucial that the Council base its deliberations and actions on science and ample evidence and tailor its approach to the conflict-affected States. United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions can contribute to strengthening the Council's analysis of climate change security and humanitarian risks in situations on its agenda.

Thirdly, the Council's response to climate change needs to be coordinated with other parts of the United Nations systems and all its partners. In this connection, we wish to highlight the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in building regional resilience and adaptation capabilities. In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), we set the strengthening of human and institutional capacity in implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation as one strategic measure of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025. Cooperation between the United Nations and ASEAN in this regard can be further explored.

Last but not least, international efforts to address the humanitarian and security risks of climate change, including ecosystem degradation, must fully respect the Charter of the United Nations and its principles and other rules of international law, including international humanitarian law. The United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change must continue to guide national and global responses and it is crucial that our commitments under these agreements be fulfilled.

Viet Nam is among the countries most heavily affected by the adverse effects of climate change. We support all efforts to address climate-related challenges, including here in the Security Council. We firmly believe that the fight against climate change cannot be won or the consolidation of peace and security achieved by any single country. It is time we all came together, joined our efforts and built inclusive partnerships to address this global challenge.

**Annex 18****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Ronaldo Costa Filho**

Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on convening a debate on the links between humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and international peace and security, with a special emphasis on the Sahel region.

The humanitarian implications of natural phenomena — the elevation of average temperatures, rising sea levels, hurricanes, earthquakes, draughts, desertification and erosion of soils, among others — require close attention and scrutiny by the international community.

Member States, with the support of multilateral and regional organizations, are duty-bound to assist vulnerable countries, in particular small island developing States (SIDS) and landlocked countries, to the best of their capacities in order to ease suffering, especially that of the most destitute people.

Prior to considering the international community's responses to the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation in peace and security, it is also important to highlight the State's sovereignty over the management of natural resources and its primary responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction do not cause damage to the environment of other States or areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

Brazil is cognizant of the fact that natural phenomena — man-made or otherwise — might be, on a case-by-case basis, a factor in exacerbating security challenges. The humanitarian consequences of environmental degradation have been especially dire in the Sahel region, where other factors such as poverty, social inequality, weak governance, ethnic divisions, food insecurity, transhumance and violent extremism also play a key role. This confluence of factors has resulted in the record number of 24 million people — half of them children — needing life-saving assistance and protection in the Sahel as of last June, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In the face of this complex and multifaceted reality, the aggravating impact of environmental degradation on conflict and post-conflict situations must be dealt by the Security Council on a case-by-case basis, taking into account national and local specificities. Resolution 2349 (2017) was a milestone in that respect as it pioneered the recognition that environmental factors might play a role in the deterioration of the security environment specifically in the Lake Chad Basin region.

One must be cautious not to jump to hasty conclusions in mistaking correlation for causation when it comes to the links between the environment and the international peace and security agendas. Rather than emphasizing the impact of environmental degradation on peace and security, Brazil considers it all the more important to understand the adverse consequences of armed conflicts on the environment and how it, in turn, affects the population.

Furthermore, peacekeeping operations must take into account their potential impact on the environment, with a view to reducing their environmental footprint on the ground and contributing to the health, safety and security of local communities. In the light of this, we think of efforts to establish guidelines for environmental practices in missions under the aegis of international organizations, based on Brazil's successful experience in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

Moreover, from Brazil's perspective, climate change and environmental challenges are phenomena that can have no possible military solution. These are

challenges that must be dealt with primarily through development tools, avoiding the risk of undue securitization.

The United Nations system relies on a roster of forums and agencies tasked with handling environmental issues: the Economic and Social Council, the Second Committee of the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification rank among them.

A similar reflection must be undertaken regarding the strictly humanitarian aspects of the matter at hand. Humanitarian crises require close cooperation among humanitarian, peacebuilding and development actors, and this is especially true in the Sahel.

We must also recognize, however, that any blurring of the lines between humanitarian assistance and military operations poses a risk to principled humanitarian action and, indirectly, to humanitarian access and the safety of humanitarian personnel. In armed conflicts, it is important that all parties abide by their obligations to environmental protection in accordance with international humanitarian law and other applicable legal regimes. In a report dated May this year, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that politicization and militarization constitute major threats to humanitarian action in the Sahel.

Humanitarian crises associated with armed conflict have, of course, already been discussed in the Security Council, mostly in connection with humanitarian access issues in specific conflict situations. While the Council has an important role in this regard, as is the case with environmental issues, the international community has at its disposal forums and agencies designed to address all aspects of humanitarian issues, such as General Assembly's Third Committee or the annual humanitarian affairs segment in the Economic and Social Council, which this year included an event on the interconnected challenges facing the Sahel, in which the Niger's own Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management contributed greatly to the debate. In addition, the International Law Commission is currently studying the topic of the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, an issue whose complexity cannot be overestimated.

It is incumbent on Member States to be watchful of the division of labour among the different bodies of the United Nations system, seeking synergies and complementarities, while retaining their respective mandates and competencies. It can never be underscored enough that the Security Council is mandated to respond to concrete threats to international peace and security requiring immediate attention from the international community. While connections do arise between the Council's activities and environmental and humanitarian issues, other forums that boast a wider and more representative membership hold the primary mandate to address these issues in a comprehensive manner. Diverting the Council's attention to issues beyond the mandate entrusted to it in the Charter, however critical such issues might be — and they often are — is counterproductive and potentially detrimental to the proper functioning of the multilateral machinery.

**Annex 19****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, Martin Bille Hermann**

I have the pleasure to submit this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Denmark. We are pleased to see the Security Council paying sustained attention to the peace and security dynamics associated with climate change and welcome today's opportunity to speak to the issue of the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation.

Climate change is a risk multiplier. The security implications and human cost of climate change are becoming increasingly evident, while the presence of armed conflict weakens communities' coping mechanisms in the face of climate change. Environmental degradation and climate impacts deepen the root causes of fragility, heighten tensions over scarce or deteriorating land and water resources, and constitute key drivers of food insecurity. Taken together, these factors risk triggering or worsening conflict, displacement and migration, reversing hard-won peacebuilding and development gains, and increasing the scope of humanitarian hardship, as seen in Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, where millions of people are on the brink of famine. Climate change is also a key driver of biodiversity loss, which is one of the root causes of the current unprecedented health crisis and its derived effects on international peace and security. We must therefore take urgent action to address climate-related security risks in a coherent and interlinked manner. Allow us to highlight three key elements.

First, a prerequisite for effective climate-sensitive conflict prevention and response is context-specific analyses. The United Nations must collaborate with Governments, regional organizations, climate actors, including meteorological services, and civil society to improve early-warning tools and conflict-forecasting models that systematically integrate climate information into conflict analyses and operational plans. The Climate Security Mechanism can play a supporting and coordinating role in this regard. We also need to see conflict analysis integrated into climate scenarios, as well as mitigation and adaptation efforts, and we encourage efforts to mandate a regular comprehensive report by the Secretary-General on the climate-security nexus.

Secondly, sustainably addressing climate-related security risks requires increased investment in disaster risk reduction, preparedness to climate shocks, resilience work, adaptive capacities and strengthened conflict sensitivity across the entire system. To that end, fostering an integrated approach across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus is key — from the way we fund to joint analyses and the way we work on the ground. Continued support to protracted crises should be combined with a longer-term development-oriented approach. Climate change, environmental degradation and conflict need to be addressed in emergency response planning and implementation from the outset in order to more effectively mitigate their combined impact.

In order to shift the emphasis from reactive to proactive responses, we need to invest in strategies for safeguarding ecosystem functions and services, as well as long-term sustainable food systems, social protection, skills development and job creation focused on building long-term community resilience in climate-sensitive and conflict-affected areas from which the most marginalized and vulnerable may otherwise be displaced or compelled to migrate. Good governance and strong and responsive institutions are also key to bolstering resilience to climate-related security risks. United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks

and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provide the blueprint for such efforts.

Thirdly, although international humanitarian law prohibits deliberate attacks against the natural environment, causing severe damage to the natural environment and to the health of the population, such attacks persist. The Council already addresses issues related to conflict and natural resources, but could also serve as a platform to supplement ongoing international legal and policy discussions in a coherent framework, thus bridging the work in the International Law Commission, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Environment Assembly, among other forums. In this regard, we welcome the ongoing work of the International Law Commission on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, as well as the updating of the International Committee of the Red Cross guidelines for the protection of the natural environment in situations of armed conflict, as well as other recent initiatives.

We know that, for climate change adaptation and conflict prevention strategies to be effective, they must be grounded in the needs and realities of affected populations. Women and girls are important actors for generating solutions and are often disproportionately affected by climate-related security risks. A rights-based multi-stakeholder approach that advances inclusive and meaningful participation for women, youth, indigenous peoples and marginalized groups must be central to the response.

In closing, addressing the climate-security nexus requires a system-wide approach, encompassing the entire United Nations family, bilateral donors, international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations. The intersection between climate change, fragility and conflict underscores the urgency of delivering in an integrated manner on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda.

**Annex 20****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Taye Atskeselassie Amde**

Let me first congratulate the Niger on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during this historic month in the long journey of the United Nations. We applaud you, Mr. President, for having convened today's timely debate. We thank all the briefers.

Climate change is the single greatest threat facing humankind today. Climate-induced disasters such as flash floods, cyclones, strong winds, heavy rains, persistent drought and locust infestation are upending the lives of millions around the world. Our collective aspirations for peace and development are facing severe tests from climate-induced stresses.

Indeed, we cannot disentangle climate change from socioeconomic development. Population growth, migration, expansion of agriculture and industrialization often lead to the overexploitation of natural resources, environmental degradation and loss of ecosystems.

As we all know, competition over increasingly scarce resources heightens communal tensions, resulting in conflict and increasing humanitarian needs. Millions of people, including in my own country, already rely on annual emergency humanitarian aid. Even before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic hit, the trend had been projected to worsen in the coming decades. We believe that reversing that trend and tackling the multidimensional impacts of climate change requires concerted global actions and a genuine commitment to multilateralism.

It is clear that climate change exacerbates new and existing challenges. Its adverse effects transcend national borders. The transboundary nature of climate change and environmental degradation should therefore compel us to pursue robust cooperation at all levels on mitigation and adaptation as well as natural-resource utilization and management strategies.

The health and future of our environment depends on the collective and coordinated efforts of Member States and international, regional and subregional organizations. Poor people, especially in the least developed countries, contribute little to the problem, but they are bearing the brunt of climate-change-induced disasters. To mitigate such catastrophes, developing countries need capacity-building support on risk assessment and to develop early-warning systems and build local resilience to a changing climate and environment. Regional efforts to combat desertification and drought such as the African Union-led Great Green Wall initiative, which strives to grow trees and other vegetation across the Sahel, and from Dakar to Djibouti must be encouraged and supported.

The Security Council should explore mechanisms to help the most vulnerable countries and regions, including through efforts to mainstream the impacts of environmental degradation across the peacebuilding architecture. In the Sahel, the Lake Chad region and countries in the Horn of Africa region, the destabilizing effects of climate change have slowed progress towards peace and prosperity. It is important that the international community recognize the fact that environmental change, life-threatening economic problems and lack of social cohesion have enabled terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab to exploit the genuine grievances and development needs of local communities.

To tackle those challenges, United Nations peacebuilding, prevention and peacekeeping efforts should incorporate programmes such as quick-impact projects into their respective prioritization and mandates to support local efforts



aimed at reducing vulnerability to climate change and factors that contribute to environmental degradation. Nothing drives home this point more than the fact that eight of the 10 largest peace operations are deployed in countries with high exposure to climate change.

Climate change has to be a big part of all our policy interventions at the national, regional and international levels. We in Ethiopia are taking practical steps to combat ecological factors that degrade the environment, including desertification, lack or loss of water, soil erosion and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

In that regard, the Green Legacy Initiative, launched in 2018, is not just a conservation or afforestation program. It is part of our 10-year national development plan, which envisions a green and climate-resilient economy. The plan promotes climate-resilient agriculture to prevent ecosystem deterioration, including the enhanced recovery of small springs and wetlands. This is a national imperative for us.

We strongly believe that our ability to end hunger and poverty; ensure access to sanitation and sustainable energy; and guarantee decent work for the youth and women all depend on the actions that we take today. We must raise public awareness about the dangers of environmental change and make our citizens part of the solution. That is why we mobilized Ethiopians from all walks of life in the context of the Green Legacy Initiative, planting 5 billion tree seedlings this year alone, even despite the COVID-19 pandemic. This has now become an annual tradition, and we are seeing an encouraging shift in attitudes towards the environment and conservation. Our target is 20 billion seedlings by 2024.

Our endeavour to overcome the multifaceted climate-related challenges in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Horn of Africa region deserves attention and robust support from partners. Flooding in Ethiopia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Kenya have displaced tens of thousands of already vulnerable people. The massive locust infestation across the region has also left already food-insecure communities in dire straits. The loss of stocks in those displaced communities needs strong restocking intervention in order to prevent resource-induced conflicts and uncontrolled migration.

In conclusion, to build back better after this pandemic, all Member States must redouble multilateral efforts to achieve our commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as well as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. We are glad that the Security Council has, in recent years, given due attention to that issue. This is an area where we believe that the United Nations system as a whole should continue to deepen cooperation and partnership with a view to providing meaningful capacity-building support to national and regional efforts.

Ethiopia remains fully committed to doing its part in accelerating the implementation of our international and regional commitments relating to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

## Annex 21

### **Statement by the Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

We welcome the initiative of the Republic of the Niger to hold an open debate on the important issue of the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The adverse consequences of climate change and environmental degradation remain of the utmost concern for the European Union (EU) and its member States, as they undermine peace and security, global sustainable development, water security, health, economic prosperity, food security and livelihoods. Climate change is an existential threat to humankind and biodiversity across all countries and regions and requires an urgent collective response.

In the Council of the European Union conclusions on climate diplomacy, of January 2020, EU member States once again acknowledged how climate change multiplies threats to international stability and security, affecting in particular those in the most fragile and vulnerable situations.

The EU recognizes that the effects of environmental degradation and climate change not only increase the risk of humanitarian crises, displacement and conflict — especially in fragile States — but are also felt most strongly by populations already affected by such crises, including refugees, internally displaced persons, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other persons in vulnerable situations. That has become particularly clear in conflict zones impacted by droughts and floods, such as the Sahel, north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen and South Sudan. Women and girls are disproportionately hit by the effects of climate change and disasters; their inclusion in decision-making processes is key to building inclusive resilience.

Protecting the environment, tackling climate change with global action and ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources is a means of fostering peace, security and sustainable livelihoods.

The EU is committed to addressing climate change and environmental degradation through an ambitious policy on climate-change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental protection globally, as enshrined in the European Green Deal. Reducing emissions to achieve a climate-neutral EU by 2050, increasing energy sustainability and efficiency, building a resource-efficient and circular economy and reversing biodiversity loss will ultimately increase resilience globally and reduce the risk of conflict over natural resources in future.

Following the EU's approach, the mitigation of climate-related risks and the alleviation of environmental stress can be addressed more effectively through global cooperation and multilateral channels, notably through the three Rio Conventions, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Water Convention.

Hazards can be prevented from turning into disasters by building resilience and through anticipatory risk-reduction action, early warning and early action. Increasing climate adaptation capacities and disaster risk reduction globally is a priority for the EU, in particular supporting the efforts of least developed countries

and small island developing States, which are extremely vulnerable to disasters, climate change, floods and drought, as well as threats to water security. As part of the European Green Deal, the EU is enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change with a new, more ambitious EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, to be adopted early in 2021. The EU's commitment to supporting international climate action will be backed by financial support, with at least 25 per cent of EU development cooperation finance allocated to climate change.

The EU humanitarian development and peace nexus approach aims to address the root causes of conflict and forced displacement, including disaster-related displacement, and minimize its impact; strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities lies at the core of EU support. Risk and impact assessments can help better anticipate potential issues related to climate/disasters that could cause displacement. Without opening the application field of some legal instruments such as the 1951 Geneva Convention, the EU supports efforts to consider how existing legal frameworks could be applied more effectively to environmentally related displacement, identify gaps and strengthen guidance in this area. EU humanitarian aid not only helps displaced populations in the aftermath of a disaster but also supports local capacities for risk reduction, preparedness and early action in response to increased risks.

In our assessment of conflict risks, we should integrate climate, water and environmental degradation risks as threat multipliers. Climate and protection concerns are increasingly a key consideration in humanitarian interventions. Similarly, climate and environmental actions should be conflict-sensitive. Cooperation will have to increase not only between humanitarian and development actors but also with civil protection, climate science, civil society and the military. It is necessary to ensure effective humanitarian civilian-military coordination when armed forces are called upon to support, as a last resort, disaster management and relief efforts as a result of more frequent and severe weather events.

The EU and its member States are also committed to advocating globally for the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict through supporting compliance with international humanitarian law and by taking all appropriate measures to address the protection needs of civilians. The destruction and degradation of the environment, either by its use as a weapon of war or as a result of damage by attacks and conflict-sustaining activities, ultimately hinders the recovery of conflict-affected populations that depend on natural resources for their livelihoods and well-being. It can also lead to irreparable damage to ecosystems, reducing nature's and society's resilience to the adverse consequences of disasters and climate change. In particular, the EU condemns the use of access to water as a weapon.

The EU and its member States reiterate their commitment to continuing to take climate and environmental factors and risks, including on water, into account in our strategic engagement with partner countries and to work on preventive measures such as early-warning systems. We continue to encourage the Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole to create a comprehensive information basis for the Council on climate-related security risks; to fully integrate short- and long-term climate and environmental risk factors in the assessment and management of threats to peace and security, at the country, regional and international levels; and to draw on the expertise of the United Nations system as a whole in order to devise operational responses to those threats and strengthen United Nations missions on the ground. Climate- and environment-related security risks should also be consistently considered in conflict-prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies, and the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory role on such risks should

be strengthened. The EU appreciates the Recovery and Peace Building Assessment as a valuable partnership framework of the United Nations, the World Bank and the EU, contributing to a shared understanding of the context of conflict, crisis and instability.

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**Annex 22****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations**

Guatemala congratulates the Republic of the Niger on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and thanks it for having convened this high-level open video-teleconference to address the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security. We also thank all the briefers for their presentations.

Extreme weather events, the spread of diseases, humanitarian crises, displacement, increasing poverty, drought and hunger are just some examples of the serious consequences that climate change and environmental degradation can have for the sustaining of peace in our societies. Disasters may also exacerbate existing conflicts, altering their form and duration, and lead to the outbreak of new ones, fuelling divisions.

Guatemala is one of the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters and to the negative effects of climate change. In past years, extreme weather events and extended dry seasons have had an impact on the livelihoods of our people, especially in the Dry Corridor, where hunger and poverty increase pressures for migration, reducing the resilience of our families.

For example, during the coronavirus disease pandemic, Guatemala and our region have been affected by tropical storms, which has shown how such weather events can reverse the achievements made and further increase pressure on livelihoods, national budgets and governance.

We fully understand the urgent need to intensify efforts at the international level for more sustainable and climate-resilient development, with a focus on inclusiveness, that would contribute to the advent of more peaceful societies.

Globally, we have the instruments to address these issues. All the relevant multilateral environmental agreements, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, must be fully implemented, leading to the building of peaceful, just, prosperous and inclusive societies.

Guatemala highlights the need to create early-warning systems, investing in science and innovation in order to reduce the technology gap, develop human capital and promote education for peace and respect for the environment. Solidarity and international humanitarian assistance are key, as is investing in long-term development strategies. It is important to strengthen the participation of local Government, civil society and the private sector and to empower women, youth and indigenous peoples, taking a whole-of-society approach.

But there are still gaps that we need to fill in order to stop the current drivers of conflict that undermine social and economic resilience. Preventive diplomacy must be at the centre of our efforts. Investing in prevention and peacebuilding efforts have tangible benefits for responding to a crisis and avoiding the damaging and long-lasting effects of conflicts. In that context, the link between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission is fundamental.

We make a strong call to overcome persistent fragmentation among Member States and across the United Nations, and to strengthen the linkages across the three pillars of United Nations action worldwide. We need to improve coordination across the system and invest in peacebuilding projects. The time to act is now.

**Annex 23****Statement by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations**

We thank the organizers for convening today's discussion on the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security.

Environmental degradation affects not just the ecosystem but also the people who depend on it and live in it. It is also a multidimensional issue. To begin with, when it is caused by those living in an ecosystem, it is due to a range of interrelated factors, primarily poverty, and not necessarily greed. In many developing countries, such problems arise from issues related to people living at subsistence level. The question then is — do we want to treat poverty and subsistence agriculture as peace and security issues?

In many other cases, the perpetrators of environmental degradation may well be outside national boundaries, while the people suffering are inside. Is peace and security then the right paradigm to address this issue, or is strengthening the implementation of agreements a more appropriate and, probably, more effective way to do it?

Environmental degradation can have a humanitarian impact or effect, like many other aspects of human activity. However, merely linking everything related to environmental issues with peace and security does nothing to enhance our understanding of the problem, and neither does it help us address those issues in a meaningful way or call out the real perpetrators in order to make them adhere to their commitments on environmental issues and help change the behaviour of people living at subsistence level.

There has been an increasing tendency, both in the Security Council and outside it, to start discussing environmental issues with a certain disregard for the various important principles that govern environmental discussions on topics such as climate change and biological diversity. Principles such as common but differentiated responsibilities are sacrosanct in this matter. Steering away from those principles and other commitments or attempting to discuss such issues by obfuscating those responsible for addressing them will only do a disservice to the real issue and will make it difficult to have a meaningful discussion on it.

Consequently, linking environmental degradation to humanitarian impact and then to peace and security does not enhance our collective effort to address environmental degradation in any meaningful way. What we need is collective will to address such important issues multidimensionally without shirking our respective commitments under the various important conventions, inter alia, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

What we need, therefore, is greater resolve to implement the commitments and contributions undertaken under environmental agreements, instead of the securitization of environmental issues.

We commend the efforts and initiatives undertaken by affected countries to address this issue in a meaningful manner so that the humanitarian issues impacting the lives of ordinary people are tackled. We also call on countries in a position to do so to assist those countries, especially in keeping with their obligations under the various relevant conventions. That will ensure that environmental degradation and the consequent humanitarian issues are addressed in a collaborative fashion so that they do not develop into potential conflict areas.

There is also need for greater sensitivity in connection with the energy mix of various countries, many of which are not of their choosing. One should resist the temptation of painting all countries with a varied energy mix with the same brush. The touchstone should be whether their respective commitments are being honoured. Demonizing one particular energy source and calling for action without allowing for organic energy transitions, which require huge commitments, does not help.

It may be equally relevant to ask whether there is enough evidence to suggest that there is a link between environmental degradation and peace and security. Chapter 4 of the *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2019, states that:

“[I]and degradation may trigger competition for scarce natural resources, potentially leading to migration and/or conflict, though, even with medium evidence, there is low agreement in the literature.”

In other words, even the best science available to us does not indicate definitively that environmental degradation is a threat to peace and security.

India is a leading contributor to climate action. Over the past few years, we have reduced our annual carbon emissions by 38 million tons. In the course of the past decade, around 3 million hectares of forest and tree cover have been added, which has increased the combined forest and tree cover to 24.56 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. Going forward, India aims to restore 26 million hectares of degraded and deforested land and to achieve land-degradation neutrality by 2030. We have set additional targets of eliminating single-use plastic by 2022 and installing 450 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030.

India has taken a leadership role in order to protect the environment. We organized the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in 2020 and 2019, respectively.

Going forward, each of us, including the private sector, civil society and the Government, can make more climate-friendly lifestyle choices to ease the transition to a sustainable lifestyle. Let us view environmental degradation as an opportunity to strengthen multilateralism and seek equitable and inclusive solutions to build a greener, cleaner and more sustainable world.

**Annex 24****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations**

Ireland would like to commend the Niger for facilitating this debate.

Environmental stress can amplify other drivers of fragility in vulnerable places, undermining peace and stability. The abilities of States and communities to cope with crises and shocks are strained by the overexploitation and degradation of natural resources, particularly when we consider soil, air and water pollution, the loss of biodiversity and the effects of climate change.

Again this year, extreme weather events and unpredictable weather patterns are disrupting places as diverse and far apart as the Sahel, the Caribbean and the Pacific. As we are learning, painfully, the loss of forests and biodiversity is creating conditions for new infectious diseases, and also allowing diseases we thought suppressed to come back. When pandemic, conflict and climate change come together, humanitarian crises are made even more devastating, requiring more complex and more expensive responses.

Conflict, and in particular explosive weapons and remnants of war, continue to impact communities even long after hostilities have ended. The environmental impact throughout the life cycle of weapons, including their production, storage, use, abandonment and disposal, can be significant.

We must also pay heed to the use of natural resources in armed conflict. For example, the tactical use of rural and forested areas by armed opposition groups around Lake Chad impedes communities' access to these essential natural resources and undermines their livelihoods.

The United Nations system, and the Security Council in particular, must address environmental factors as part of its peace mandate. I have four points in this regard.

First, we can build on recent positive developments. The establishment of the Climate Security Mechanism and the Informal Expert Group on climate and security can provide essential analytical capacity for the United Nations system. This must inform its conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding work. Ireland continues to call for a special representative on climate and security, who could further support these efforts.

Secondly, the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on women and youth cannot be ignored, given the adverse effects on health, education, livelihoods and food security, and increased risk of gender-based violence. Supporting local ownership, improving leadership and ensuring the inclusion of women and youth in decision-making and governance processes around natural resources in conflict and fragile settings remain critical to effective peacebuilding.

Thirdly, peacekeeping operations must continue to be responsive to the environmental drivers of insecurity, while also being increasingly aware of their own environmental footprint. We must continue to consider the inclusion of climate and security in peacekeeping mandates, where appropriate, as well as provide all the necessary supports for the full implementation of the United Nations environmental strategy for missions.

Finally, we must address the effects of armed conflict on the natural environment. This means ensuring that parties to conflict abide by international humanitarian law prohibiting attacks on the natural environment, in addition to their responsibility to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to communities



in need. We can also learn from the provisions on environmental remediation in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The Security Council plays an indispensable role in protecting peace and preventing conflict. A peaceful and safe world will not be possible if we fail to address the environmental and climate-related challenges that we now face. Ireland, as an incoming member of the Security Council, will continue to drive this issue and advance the collective United Nations efforts towards peace.

**Annex 25****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Ishikane Kimihiro**

I would like to express my appreciation to the Niger for organizing this meeting on the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security.

Environmental degradation, particularly when triggered by climate change, is posing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of people around the world. Water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity are ravaging the people in the Sahel and other arid regions. Sea-level rise and the erosion of coastlines threaten those in small island developing States. While climate-related natural disasters and environmental degradation are jeopardizing human security in every corner of the globe, it is always the most vulnerable people affected by conflicts who face grave humanitarian challenges.

In places where national and local institutions are too weak to protect civilian populations and communities lack resilience, environmental degradation could become a driver of instability and threaten peace and security. Hence the need for adequate risk assessments and risk-management strategies with regard to the factors of instability, including the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes, as recognized by resolution 2349 (2017), on the Lake Chad basin region.

In Japan's view, the key to tackling environmental degradation, minimizing its humanitarian effects and preventing a relapse into conflict is institution-building. Institutions are not limited to security and judicial systems, but also include economic and social systems that enable the public sector, at both national and local levels, to deliver basic services, such as health and education, to the people. Building inclusive, accountable and functional institutions would contribute to reducing vulnerability, ensuring human security and restoring people's trust in their Government. Japan has consistently emphasized those points within the Peacebuilding Commission.

We recognize that the African continent is severely affected by climate change and is the least prepared to manage and respond to climate change risks. At the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), held in Yokohama last year, Japan reaffirmed its commitment to make efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Japan supports African institution-building efforts under the New Approach for Peace and Stability in Africa initiative, launched at TICAD VII.

Japan also promotes dialogue with countries in other regions seriously affected by climate change and environmental degradation through the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting and the Japan-Caribbean Community framework. Japan has committed to provide ¥1.3 trillion in 2020 to support developing countries affected by climate change.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the United Nations must play a leading role in furthering international cooperation for robust action in order to address the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation on peace and security, in all its aspects. Japan will be an active partner in such an endeavour, without any reservations.

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**Annex 26****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations, Christian Wenaweser**

I thank you, Sir, for using your presidency once again to bring the issue of climate change to the Security Council's attention. Although climate change was discussed by the Council as recently as July (see S/2020/751), we must urgently address it again. Indeed, given the perilous situation in which we find ourselves, Liechtenstein must highlight the dire need for the Council to take drastic action on the key systemic security issue of our time.

The General Assembly first considered a report by the Secretary-General on the security impacts of climate change 11 years ago (A/64/350). The concept note for today's debate (S/2020/882, annex) also points out that the link between climate and security was first raised by the Council two years before that. Yet, according to this year's United in Science report, States have not heeded the warnings. The five years since the Paris Agreement on Climate Change have been the hottest on record, and it is increasingly possible that the world will warm by 1.5°C over the next five years, at least temporarily — a threshold deemed the point of no return during the Paris negotiations. Some may remember the call in Paris from our colleagues from the Republic of the Marshall Islands: "1.5 to stay alive".

The Council — with a small number of its members collectively responsible for more than half of the world's carbon dioxide emissions — is confronted with the fact that, without urgent action, those emissions will directly create mass insecurity on a hitherto unforeseen scale. Entire populations will die, and States will become uninhabitable — a crime against our planet and against those most vulnerable to climate change.

The violent and armed conflicts discussed in the concept note are portents of that death and destruction. We know that desertification, dwindling water resources and food and water insecurity have already led to violent conflict — both in situations where the Council has addressed the issue, such as in the Lake Chad basin and Somalia, and in those where it has not, notably in Syria and Yemen. Certain secondary impacts of climate change, such as increased involuntary migration, poverty, the loss of livelihoods and social tensions between farmers and herders, have themselves led to conflict, a fact that the Council readily accepts in some instances.

But while it is important that the Council recognize those proximate factors, it must also trace them back to their root causes. To fail to do so is to fail to exercise effective prevention and sustain peace, and to disregard human security in favour of a paradigm that recognizes the salience of conflicts only in terms of armed origins and solutions.

The Council is not short of recommendations for how to better engage with climate-related security risks. Fundamental to those is a reckoning that climate change is a root cause of insecurity and, relatedly, the need to develop an understanding of human insecurity as worthy of addressing before those affected resort to armed violence.

The Council can already tap into a wide range of expertise across the United Nations system, such as in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-United Nations Development Programme-United Nations Environment Programme Climate Security Mechanism, and in other specialized agencies. It should pursue a resolution on climate and security as a stand-alone topic — one that establishes a reporting mechanism that makes use of that considerable expertise. It may also wish to consider whether a task force of relevant United Nations agencies could

strengthen the Council's engagement on the climate-security nexus through regular briefings and otherwise supplying relevant expertise and information.

In the interim, more systematic references to the impact of global warming on situations on the Council's agenda, particularly those outside of the African continent, are necessary and long overdue. Most important, Council members must take urgent actions to reduce their emissions and spare vulnerable populations the brunt of the needless destruction that climate change is wreaking. It is not enough to more effectively address the nexus between climate change and security only when the policy decisions of Council members determine the scale of the security threat. The lives of billions around the world depend on decisions to avert climate disaster today.

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**Annex 27****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Malta to the United Nations**

On behalf of the Government of Malta, I thank the Nigerien presidency for organizing today's debate on this topical issue, which also has extensive and far-reaching effects on the international community as a whole.

Malta fully aligns itself with the statement submitted earlier on behalf of the European Union (annex 21), and I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Climate change is one of the major threats to our future, and a collective effort is needed if we are to secure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and guarantee a sustainable future for our children. Malta believes that every country can make a difference. The Security Council has mechanisms to promote and work towards an international community that is united against that existential threat. Malta is ready to continue to support ongoing work towards securing a sustainable future for all and will work hard to that end if entrusted to serve as a member of the Security Council in 2023-2024.

As we take stock of the devastating and debilitating effects of environmental degradation brought about by climate change and conflict, Malta believes that short-term interventions should be complementary to longer-term strategies. A preventive approach is essential if we are to promote peace and avoid conflict.

No country is immune to extreme weather events, or to conflict situations. From the Sahel to South-East Asia, from the Pacific to the Caribbean, Europe and the Mediterranean, people are dying or forced to abandon their homes. In spite of this, the international community continues to be reactionary, resulting in delayed actions and the triggering of impromptu mechanisms. Malta believes that it is not enough to put into motion a set of tools that are often reactive and rely on such complementary processes as disaster-risk management and humanitarian assistance.

On the contrary, we need to go beyond this. Humankind has suffered irreparable harm when we have failed to appreciate the impact of climate change and environmental degradation upon human security and socioeconomic well-being. If we stop for a minute and take the time to really take stock of the environment and the atmosphere around us, we realize that very often there is a set of complex and interrelated drivers at play that together contribute to destabilization or conflict. These drivers are the result of the effects of slow-onset climate change and environmental degradation, which affect freshwater resources, soil erosion, biodiversity, ocean resources, health and food security.

While the implications may not be immediately visible, we find upon closer examination that the worst-affected situations are those where people cannot deal with additional strain. Malta is concerned with the consequences of climate change that are increasing the severity of already existing humanitarian situations as well as threatening peace and security. The work of peace operations is becoming increasingly complex because climate change is altering the dynamics of ongoing conflicts, and therefore increasing the possibility that conflicts might become violent.

Malta calls for an increase in cross-agency knowledge-sharing and for all parties involved to proactively identify climate action as an opportunity to build sustainable peace. This would allow for greater coordination and better information on the ground, which would allow for a more cohesive peacebuilding response. A thorough assessment of climate-related security risks should be carried out prior to any peacebuilding commitment.

We have already taken significant steps to encourage further convergence between climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, this is but one piece of an increasingly complex puzzle. In order to address our security concerns effectively, Malta believes that we need to focus on a preventative strategy, one that is both comprehensive and integrative: comprehensive in the sense that any actions taken in response to climate or environmental emergencies should be complementary to our long-term mitigation and adaptation efforts, and integrative because we also need to work towards the integration of environmental and socioeconomic concerns into policymaking on national and international levels.

In conclusion, Malta believes that any forward-looking approach needs to be holistic, incorporating humanitarian, political and security responses together with longer-term development and sustainable peace.

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**Annex 28****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico thanks the Niger for convening this debate on the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation on peace and security in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Secretary-General António Guterres and Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization Petteri Taalas recently reminded the international community of the seriousness of the phenomenon of climate change and its effects through the publication of the *United in Science 2020* climate report, which clearly states that floods and droughts have caused 90 percent of the impacts of natural disasters worldwide. In this context, Mexico recognizes the relevance of the topic and wishes to make the following observations.

Climate change and its effects, such as desertification, droughts and soil erosion, as well as floods caused by rising sea levels, are a risk factor in humanitarian impacts, among other reasons for those impacts, particularly as a result of its adverse effects on the food security and displacement that we have witnessed in some regions. Accordingly, all analyses must take into account the specific cases from which they are derived and integrate them in the multifactorial analyses that inform the decision-making process.

The United Nations system must provide a multidimensional, coherent and coordinated response. Although the Security Council is not the organ charged with responding to the global threat of climate change and its demonstrated effects on environmental degradation, the humanitarian impact of this threat and its effects may accentuate the risk of instability or exacerbate existing conflicts. It is therefore necessary to work in a coordinated manner with the various entities present in the field, including humanitarian actors, to generate scientific evidence and synergies that facilitate timely analysis and improve the system's decision-making and preventive capacities.

The institutional architecture has been strengthened in recent months and is a solid foundation to build on in future. The analyses carried out by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' collaboration mechanism are the kind of concrete measures that will help us to strengthen the capacities the system needs.

Mexico is convinced that the Security Council must have at its disposal solid and targeted risk analyses to avoid situations that could lead to serious humanitarian situations. Members of the Council must also be prepared to take action to strengthen the Organization's preventive capacities, which necessarily means systematically asking the United Nations and all its entities to work internally as a genuine system.

**Annex 29****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations, Neville Gertze**

I congratulate the Niger on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September 2020 and thank it for organizing today's open debate on what is a very important topic. I would also like to thank the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Ms. Inna Modja for their briefings.

The Security Council first addressed the link between climate change and security in April 2007 in an open debate convened by the United Kingdom (see S/PV.5663). Thereafter, in 2009, the General Assembly adopted resolution 63/281, in which it recognized the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as the key instrument for addressing climate change, and invited

“the relevant organs of the United Nations, as appropriate and within their respective mandates, to intensify their efforts in considering and addressing climate change, including its possible security implications” (*ibid.*, para. 1).

The Security Council's recognition of the adverse effects of climate change on peace and security has grown, as demonstrated in the meetings held on this issue, most notably in 2017 in an Arria Formula meeting held on 10 April 2017), in 2018 (see S/PV.8307) and in 2019 (see S/PV.8451). This recognition demonstrates the existential relationship between climate change and peace and security. The Niger's accession to the Council in January 2020 has further put this issue at the forefront, as it is one of the countries where the evidence of the impacts of climate change are there for all to see.

Armed conflicts, together with their causes, dimensions and resolutions, have some connections to climate change, a combination of which poses a threat by reversing the economic growth and development gains made by countries over the years. Climate change has been recognized as a threat multiplier, whereby it aggravates pre-existing risks and challenges. The present situation in the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin are concrete examples.

The resolve to deal with the effects of climate change would equally lead to the promotion and preservation of the blue economy, because such efforts are also aimed at addressing oceanic and riverine systems and issues, as well as those that threaten the sustainability of lakes. When these are addressed, conditions that give rise to violence, crises and conflicts are forestalled.

Namibia is one of the countries in the world most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Increasing temperatures, evaporation and the variability of rainfall translate into drought, shortage of water and floods. As a matter of fact, in May 2019, Mr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, declared a state of emergency in all regions of the country on account of a historic drought.

For these reasons, Namibia has institutionalized the synergies between the three Rio Conventions — on climate change, biodiversity and combating desertification. We based this move on the understanding that land is the infrastructure on which biodiversity can flourish. There is no way we can protect biodiversity without stopping land degradation and reclaiming degraded lands. There is no way to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects without relying on healthy lands and thriving biodiversity.



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Namibia therefore welcomes the upcoming United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, chiefly in terms of the restoration of degraded land. Moreover, Namibia welcomes the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. As the vision of the framework envisages a harmonious relationship with nature where, by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, and ecosystem services are maintained, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people, Namibia regards it as a framework for tackling environmental degradation in the context of sustainable development to contribute to building back better after the devastation wrought by the coronavirus disease.

Together with Iceland, Namibia co-chairs the Group of Friends on desertification, land degradation and drought. Currently, the Group has a total number of 23 members. I encourage other States Members of the United Nations to join the Group so that we could collectively ensure that these developmental issues are not regarded as trivial and therefore set aside.

I conclude by reaffirming that Namibia will continue to play its role in the international community to promote cooperation in tackling these issues effectively. We simply cannot afford to fall behind in combating climate change, failing which international peace and security would be negatively affected.

**Annex 30****Statement by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission,  
Louise Blais**

I would like to congratulate the Niger on its presidency of the Security Council this month and for organizing today's debate.

In my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I would like to bring to the Security Council's attention some of the Commission's observations and recommendations in the context of different regions on its agenda, including the Lake Chad basin, the Sahel and the Pacific islands.

In a number of contexts where the PBC has been engaged, environmental and climate-related challenges were considered as factors that could have a negative impact on peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. Addressing these challenges in country-specific or regional contexts can therefore also contribute to these efforts aimed at peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In numerous past interactions, national actors have highlighted that building climate resilience can also be seen as conducive to peacebuilding.

Just last week, during a PBC meeting on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on peacebuilding in the Lake Chad basin, briefers and stakeholders from the region painted a vivid picture of the multidimensional challenges facing the Lake Chad region, particularly regarding security, humanitarian and development issues accompanied by environmental change and degradation, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As in previous PBC discussions, during last week's meeting a number of speakers emphasized the importance of helping to mitigate tensions and address disputes between herders and farmers, which in the Lake Chad basin have been exacerbated by environmental degradation. It has become clear that in the Lake Chad basin initiatives that aim to support national and local actors to improve management of cross-border transhumance by building resilience to climate change and environmental degradation and strengthening community engagement remain critical to overall efforts to implement the regional stabilization strategy and require continuous support.

The complex challenges in the Lake Chad basin are affecting the lack of access to such fundamental social protections as basic health and education services, particularly for women and girls. Environmental degradation could hinder women's livelihoods and exacerbate their vulnerability, a situation that is now further complicated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dangerous challenges facing women and girls in the subregion, where they are overrepresented in the informal sector and are less likely to benefit from COVID-19 recovery programmes, should not be underestimated. For this reason, it is important to ensure women's equal access to education, health care and decent work, strengthen their role in sustainable development and guarantee their full, effective and meaningful participation in the pandemic response as well as in political and decision-making processes.

In numerous PBC engagements in support of the Sahel, representatives of affected States have highlighted the need for further assistance to address the combined effects of land degradation, reduced and erratic rainfall and lack of sufficient funding for sound environmental and development policies, all of which complicate national and regional efforts aimed at managing natural resources effectively and ensuring resilient pastoralism.

In a recent PBC meeting on the Pacific islands, representatives of the region warned about the impacts of sea-level rise, the increasing frequency and intensity of

droughts and storms, ocean acidification and consequent damage to coral reefs and fisheries — all of which have devastating effects on peoples' safety and livelihoods. Many Governments in the Pacific region have requested additional support from the international community in order to address these issues. At a time when the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, including by negatively affecting food security through supply-chain disruption, these have become urgent requests.

As outlined during the ongoing 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture and in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace issued last Friday (S/2020/773), we cannot overstress the need for coordinated efforts among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors in accordance with their respective responsibilities and mandates. This has always been true and is even more true in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In regions such as the Lake Chad basin, a collective and coordinated effort by States Members of the United Nations, international, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and, where relevant, the private sector is required to fully realize the African Union-Lake Chad Basin Commission strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas. As we seek collectively to build stronger and more resilient societies in the face of environmental challenges and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our efforts will be jeopardized without adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding and for humanitarian and development efforts.

This is the time to stand by the side of the Governments and the people whose lives and livelihoods could be challenged by climate change and environmental degradation. We need to support collective action, guided by ambitious mitigation and adaptation strategies, based on the best available science, and to promote local resilience, in accordance with nationally defined development priorities.

We must also bear in mind that the conditions that may lead to peace or conflict are complex by their nature and specific to each situation. Hence, an in-depth, country and region-specific understanding of the various social, economic and cultural variables at play in their unique specificities is required. The analysis of the root causes of a conflict is a comprehensive exercise. We must recognize that each individual armed conflict has its own specific underlying causes and that no one-size-fits-all formula applies when it comes to building and sustaining peace.

The PBC will therefore continue to improve its convening, bridging and advisory role to sustain international assistance in support of national peacebuilding priorities.

**Annex 31****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations, Francisco Duarte Lopes**

Climate change is an undeniable threat in the framework of international peace and security, particularly in contexts of fragility. It has a profound impact on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, as well as on societies and economies around the globe, with dire humanitarian consequences. It is also a driver of forced migration, displacement and food insecurity.

By increasing the threat of humanitarian crises and conflict, climate change and environmental degradation act as risk multipliers. Acknowledging that, Portugal's Strategic Concept of National Defence recognizes natural disasters and climate change as potential threats to global security. It also highlights the need to improve national capabilities with regard to prevention, adaptation and quick response to climate threats.

In certain contexts, climate change and environmental degradation can contribute to the outbreak of conflicts, which then further add to a vicious circle, as conflicts hinder the capacity of Governments to provide adequate responses to the disruptiveness brought about by climate change and environmental degradation.

Conversely, conflict can be a driving factor for environmental degradation, fuelling once again a vicious circle that well illustrates the complexity of the interlinkages discussed today. Portugal advocates for the protection of the environment in armed conflict, as the environment is civilian in nature, and strongly condemns its degradation for military purposes, in accordance with international law.

The situation in the Lake Chad basin provides a sobering depiction of the scale of the challenges brought about by those very interlinkages between environmental degradation and conflicts. Nevertheless, it is also a call for action and a cause for hope in the expressions of the resolve of the international community to come together and face those same challenges. Increased national and regional ownership is of the essence, as well as the fact that ownership must be complemented by the firm political will of the national and regional authorities and by the coherent, predictable and regular support of the international community.

The current context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic makes such issues even more pressing than before. The indirect effects of COVID-19 and its socioeconomic consequences can contribute to increasing tensions and may exacerbate existing drivers of conflict and further undermine social and economic resilience. The reallocation of both financial and human resources to support prevention and containment measures during the pandemic may also have an impact on the ability of States to respond to the challenges brought about by climate change and environmental degradation.

We therefore welcome the inclusion of the security-climate nexus in the discussions of the Security Council. In line with its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, we believe that the Security Council should pay close attention to climate-related security risks, taking on board the knowledge generated by entities such as the United Nations Climate Security Mechanism in order to better understand the interlinkages among climate change, conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

The Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole also have a role to play in what concerns the operations on the ground. Most United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions currently deployed are located in countries particularly affected by climate fragility. As such, it is important to take into

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consideration the ways that climate degradation may affect the full implementation of mission mandates, namely, with regard to the protection of civilians.

Our efforts in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and the provision of humanitarian aid will benefit from having climate-sensitive approaches that are also context specific. Climate change affects us all, but its effects are felt more acutely in fragile countries, least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as by populations in vulnerable situations. Furthermore, better coordination among United Nations agencies on the ground, other international and regional organizations, host Governments and civil society is needed to respond pre-emptively to climate risks and to build resilience.

Lastly, I would like to stress that all our efforts to address the impacts that climate change is already having on the livelihoods of many people around the world must go hand in hand with a strong commitment to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Protecting the environment and tackling climate change are essential to fostering peace and sustainable development. Our continued and firm support to the countries most in need is fundamental. However, even that will not be enough if we do not provide an urgent collective response to the existential threat of climate change and decisively reduce carbon emissions.

**Annex 32****Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations**

The Republic of Korea welcomes the continuation of these open debates on climate and security, as they provide opportunities to discuss the climate and environmental risks to international peace and security. We would like to highlight the following three points on this important topic.

First, the Republic of Korea believes that climate change and environmental degradation are an ever-growing threat to international peace and security. We are witnessing the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation all around the world, many of which are on an unprecedented scale. This year alone, Asia saw one of its worst monsoon floods; North America was struggling with historic wildfires; Europe was suffering from heat waves and droughts; and Africa experienced gigantic swarms of locusts.

All those will have severe humanitarian consequences, including, to name just a few, forced displacement, food insecurity and public health problems, which are increasingly spiralling into regional instability.

Secondly, the Republic of Korea believes that we need a United Nations system-wide approach to climate and environment-related security risks, and we need more concrete actions. In that respect, we welcome the continued engagement of the Security Council on the climate change-related agenda and the establishment of the Climate Security Mechanism and its initiatives. We also support the Secretary-General submitting a timely and comprehensive report to the Security Council regarding climate-related security risks.

Regarding concrete actions, we would like to reiterate that we can find a good example in the recently adopted Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/2, on international support to the Sahel region. The resolution sets out closer cooperation between relevant United Nations bodies and Member States, leading to more concrete actions. The Republic of Korea will continue to play an active and constructive role concerning the follow-up and implementation of the resolution. The Peace Forest Initiative, which was launched at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in 2019 and promotes peace and trust through collaboration on the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded land and forests in fragile and conflict-affected regions, provides another good example to that end.

Thirdly, we believe that our recovery plan from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) needs to place at its core the requisite consideration of climate change and environmental degradation. The pandemic is causing damage to our societies and economies at an unprecedented scale, but our recovery efforts should not put us back to where we were before. Instead, to help recover from the damage of COVID-19 and build back better, we need a green recovery plan.

In that regard, the Korean Government recently launched the Korean Green New Deal, which pursues a low-carbon and sustainable economy by investing in green sectors and creating green new jobs. That will ultimately put the Korean economy in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we believe are essential to reduce climate-related security risks worldwide.

Climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly becoming the drivers of regional instability and threatening global peace, and we cannot cope with them alone. Indeed, humankind and our planet are collectively vulnerable to those

global threats, and we must act in solidarity in response. The Republic of Korea will continue to actively participate in international cooperation to prevent climate and environmental crises from further spiralling into threats to peace and security.

**Annex 33****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Senegal to the United Nations**

[Original: French]

I would like to commend the Nigerien presidency of the Security Council for its choice to hold this relevant open debate on the links between the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security. I would also like to thank Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as the other speakers who followed, for the high quality of their interventions.

The security risks resulting from environmental degradation are a major issue that has rightly been the focus of the Security Council's attention for more than 10 years. Notwithstanding the many subsequent initiatives of the Council and other relevant bodies of the Organization, these security risks are today more acute, as natural disasters have reached a particularly alarming level in recent years, with severe ecological and humanitarian effects on a large part of the planet.

By way of proof, for the first time in 30 years forest fires ravaged approximately 8,000 square kilometres in California and produced 244 megatons of carbon dioxide between 1 January and 31 August, as compared with 181 megatons for the whole of 2019 in the Arctic Circle, according to Copernicus data.

At the same time, floods on an unprecedented scale are wreaking enormous havoc across much of the globe, particularly in the Sahel. In the Sudan alone, they have damaged more than 100,000 homes, caused more than half a million people to be displaced and raised the level of the Nile to 17.57 metres — a record for more than 100 years, according to the Sudanese Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources.

In addition, since 2015 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been sounding the alarm about the loss of thousands of hectares of arable land every year due to erosion, salinization, acidification and soil contamination, as well as its enormous impact on biodiversity.

Such worrisome phenomena are compounded by the steady invasion of desert locusts in the Sahel, according to the latest updates of the FAO Locust Watch published in September. The potential harm caused by those insects will also have to be added to the damage caused by the grain-eating birds that are already invading the Senegal River valley.

Natural disasters cause considerable loss of livelihoods and intensify competition and tensions over increasingly scarce arable land, grazing land and water resources. They also increase migration, create additional health problems and can lead to serious political, social and economic crises. They are therefore root causes or aggravating and recurring factors in conflicts.

The peace and security risks associated with natural disasters are therefore by no means a scenario in the distant future. They are already a reality for millions of people around the world, and the examples of the Sahel, the Lake Chad basin and the Middle East, which are grappling with multifaceted crises, amply demonstrate that link.

Indeed, the United Nations Environment Programme has indicated that at least 40 per cent of the intra-State conflicts over the past 60 years have been directly or indirectly linked to valuable natural resources, such as timber, diamonds, gold and oil, or to sometimes scarce resources, such as fertile land and water.



Moreover, the fact that 8 of the 10 largest peace operations are deployed in countries in the Sahel and the Middle East, regions that are highly exposed to the impacts of climate change, is not surprising. It is also no coincidence that, according to the 17 July report of FAO and the World Food Programme, the majority of the 27 countries most threatened by a food crisis due to the coronavirus disease are hotbeds of tension that were already struggling with extreme weather conditions.

These conclusions reinforce our conviction that environmental protection, in particular the fight against climate change, must be fully integrated into conflict prevention strategies, and therefore be at the top of the Security Council's agenda.

Furthermore, strategies to preserve the environment for conflict prevention purposes should be combined with actions to combat the illicit exploitation of environmental resources in times of armed conflict, through which certain armed rebel and terrorist groups finance their activities. In that regard, it is important to improve the monitoring and protection of natural resources in times of conflict and to establish a regime of international sanctions against trade.

However, to make such an approach effective, it is first important to ensure that peace and ceasefire agreements include clear commitments by the signatory parties to ensuring transparency, fairness and the protection of ownership rights in the exploitation of natural resources and to establishing principles for the fair distribution of revenue from such resources.

Similarly, the inclusion of provisions on host country support for natural resource management in the mandates of certain peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while welcome, should be mainstreamed and significantly strengthened, including through adequate financial and logistical resources and the appointment of environmental advisers.

Furthermore, my delegation believes that it is important to develop a comprehensive and consistent approach, not only to align the work of the Security Council with that already undertaken in the context of the relevant international instruments, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, among others, but also to take into account the various regional and national actions.

In that regard, the establishment of an analytical and early-warning tool should also be considered to centralize data from the United Nations, regional organizations and States and various other partners on the effects of climate change and biodiversity degradation on peace and security. Such a tool could even be used by the Secretary-General to submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the Security Council that takes stock of the situation and makes useful recommendations on the issue.

In conclusion, the first priority in addressing the issue that brings us together today is, without a doubt, to ensure the well-being of the environment in general and the climate in particular. In order to do so, climate financing must be fully operational, especially in the area of adaptation, as it is an effective means of maintaining and sustaining activities to combat climate change and, consequently, of preventing conflicts. Senegal calls once again on developed countries to implement the commitments made in favour of climate financing to replenish the Green Climate Fund after 2020, in order to enable developing countries to better adapt to climate change, with a view to building their resilience.

**Annex 34****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations, Michal Mlynár**

Slovakia commends the initiative of the Niger to organize an open debate on humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security.

My delegation associates itself with the statement submitted on behalf of the European Union (annex 21).

Conflicts around the world are increasing in number, becoming more protracted and fragmented and pushing unprecedented numbers of people into humanitarian need. Factors such as environmental degradation contribute to humanitarian crises.

The impact of climate change has become increasingly visible. It poses existential risks for future generations and is having real impact on more and more people around the world. Changes in climate have a multiplier effect, leading to other problems, with effects impacting areas ranging from ecosystem stability to food production and human conflict. Ecosystem and biodiversity loss, deforestation, water, air and soil pollution, the overuse of natural resources, as well as demographic pressure and urbanization, trigger a serious set of social and humanitarian consequences.

Slovakia recognizes that the effects of environmental degradation increase the risk of humanitarian crises, displacement and conflict and have a severe impact on the most vulnerable populations. The integration of the environment into humanitarian action is critical to ensure the effectiveness, sustainability and accountability of humanitarian operations.

The summary by the Chair of the World Humanitarian Summit recognized that humanitarian assistance alone will never adequately address or sustainably reduce the needs of the world's most vulnerable people; rather, a new coherent approach is required based on addressing root causes, increasing political diplomacy for prevention and conflict resolution and bringing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts together.

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach aims to address the root causes of disaster-related displacement and minimize its impact. We have a range of important tools at our disposal. We need to continue to prioritize the environmental care and sustainable management of natural resources for preventing conflict and building peace. Therefore, we believe that the Security Council should use its potential for conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies.

The United Nations, through the Joint Environment Unit of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, works at the interface of the environment and emergencies, liaising closely with humanitarian and environmental actors to strengthen the sustainability of humanitarian responses.

The ways in which crises are caused by and affect people and the natural environment in which they live are increasingly complex. Action is needed now to prevent and mitigate foreseeable humanitarian crises, and in particular to avoid environmental damage, which can result in forced migration. We have to continue identifying ways of proactively addressing environmental issues in humanitarian action, seek necessary global policy responses and develop new approaches with the aim of being better prepared. Slovakia is committed to advocating for the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict through supporting compliance with international humanitarian law and by taking all appropriate measures to address the protection needs of civilians.

**Annex 35****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, Agustín Santos Maraver**

[Original: Spanish]

My statement is aligned with that of the delegation of the European Union (annex 21).

I would like to congratulate the Nigerian presidency of the Security Council for organizing this open debate, which continues to assess threats to peace and security from a global and three-way point of view. I also thank the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Ibrahim Thiaw, as well as Land Ambassador Inna Modja, for their statements.

I would like to start by recalling the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire and supporting resolution 2532 (2020), as they are relevant to the issue at hand.

We cannot continue to talk about the so-called triple nexus — humanitarian affairs, development, peace and security — without clearly including climate and environmental issues.

The coronavirus disease requires a global response that takes environmental issues into account at all stages for two reasons: first, because for any solution to be effective it must take into account the effects of climate change and the environmental situation; secondly, because the effects of climate change can worsen the situation of vulnerability of people and pose an added element of inequality in accessing a dignified life and breaking the cycle of vulnerability and poverty.

The maintenance of international peace and security requires us to strengthen humanitarian action, the protection of civilians and development instruments so that they contribute to building resilient and inclusive societies that respect human rights.

Our goal of leaving no one behind will be possible only if we include environmental issues and their impact on the agenda of the Council on a more regular basis. To that end, relevant data and serious analysis of climate factors and conditions will be essential for both prevention and early action, as well as mitigation. In the twenty-first century, climate is a critical determinant of peacebuilding policies.

Spain fully shares the Niger's position on this issue. Preserving the environment means preserving livelihoods, such as agriculture and livestock, which are essential in countries facing situations of vulnerability. And preserving the environment means protecting civilians.

Climate change is a threat to the lives of millions of people, to food security and clean water supplies, to health and diversity and to stability, peace and security.

Therefore, Spain has developed a guide to mainstreaming the environment into all humanitarian actions of our country, which will be officially presented in the coming weeks. We believe that this is the only way that we will contribute to the goal of saving lives and responding effectively to the needs of the most vulnerable people.

Another of Spain's priorities is defending and respecting international humanitarian law, which protects the environment in situations of armed conflict. I therefore recall the obligation of parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law at all times.

I conclude by recalling that, in order to respond in the best possible way to the crisis that we are facing, it is imperative that the Security Council take into account

the environment and climate change in the reports that are ordered, the decisions that are adopted, the mandates that are approved, the measures that are designed and the effective response that is planned.

**Annex 36****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations**

[Original: English and French]

Switzerland thanks the Niger for holding this important debate.

The impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on affected populations are profound, especially when combined with existing conflict drivers. Switzerland welcomes the fact that these topics are on the agenda of the Security Council, whether through resolution 2349 (2017), on the Lake Chad basin, or the open debate on climate and security in July (see S/2020/751). We welcome the increasing integration of language on climate-related security risks in the Council's outcomes. The need for improved assessment of such risks has been emphasized in various contexts on the agenda of the Council. Switzerland would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, environmental degradation can both result from and contribute to conflict. The impact on health as well as water and food security is harshest on civilians, particularly on those who are most vulnerable — children, persons with disabilities and persons that are displaced. Women very often bear the brunt of those adverse impacts. Natural disasters and the depletion of natural resources can destroy livelihoods, cause displacement and degenerate into conflict. We call on the Security Council to pay greater attention to the interaction among environmental degradation, climate change, displacement, sociopolitical risks and conflict.

Secondly, the devastating humanitarian impacts of environmental degradation and climate change call for stronger action. Member states and United Nations entities must strengthen dialogue and coordination. The Climate and Security Mechanism at the Secretariat plays an important role in providing climate-risk assessments to the Security Council and other organs of the system. The Peacebuilding Commission can also play an important role in supporting the Council on these issues. Early-warning systems, with the help of cutting-edge technology, are essential to develop adequate responses, including taking into account climate-related risks in relevant mandates of United Nations missions.

Thirdly, international humanitarian law protects different aspects of the environment. For example, drinking water supplies are an indispensable element in the survival of the population. Protecting the environment also contributes to protecting civilians. Switzerland calls on all Member States and all parties to armed conflict to fully respect international humanitarian law in order to protect the environment and alleviate the humanitarian impacts of such conflicts. We also encourage due consideration of the International Law Commission's draft principles on the protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts.

Environmental degradation and climate-related security risks may have adverse effects on peace and security. They also increase the risk of future pandemics. We must improve coordination among the entire United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a coherent response to these challenges. And it is crucial that the Security Council play a leading role in these efforts.

**Annex 37****Statement of the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations**

The United Arab Emirates thanks the Niger for convening this open debate and furthering the Security Council's consideration of the nexus between security and other critical items on the United Nations agenda, such as environmental challenges.

The United Arab Emirates views environmental degradation as an umbrella concept, inclusive of climate change, and believes, as we expressed in July's open debate (see S/2020/751, annex 50), that it is an amplifier of conflict and violence. Environmental degradation — from pollution to deforestation to topsoil loss — can drive displacement, loss of livelihoods, resource competition, hatred and resentment of other groups and recruitment by extremists, among other impacts. Conversely, environmental conservation and climate action can have the opposite effect, with clear security benefits.

Environmental degradation can simultaneously be a product of conflict and violence — sometimes intentionally in violation of international humanitarian law. Da'esh's literal use of scorched-earth tactics in Syria and Iraq is seared into many of our memories. Most recently, the Council has seen the Houthis in Yemen use the threat of a massive oil spill from the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker as a political and security bargaining chip, blocking United Nations technical teams from the site in violation of Council instructions. The Security Council's consideration of environmental issues is therefore a necessary part of maintaining international peace and security.

In this context, the United Arab Emirates would like to make four recommendations to improve the Council's action on environmental degradation.

First, we believe that the Council would benefit from greater and more standardized analysis of the security implications of environmental degradation in situations on the Council's agenda. Personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions could be trained to assess environmental and climate threats to security and to draw attention to zones of ecological importance and fragility. Existing in-country United Nations staff, such as from the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and humanitarian agencies, could also contribute their analytical capacity to these exercises. On the basis of this information, Council members could take action to prevent or address concerns with the security-environment nexus.

Secondly, we see potential to address environmental degradation through the precedents set — as far back as resolution 1625 (2005) — in the Council's commitment to taking action against illegal exploitation and the trafficking in natural resources in areas where it contributes to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict, including through the assistance of Council-backed missions. Practices such as unregulated mining, logging and poaching instigate both conflict and environmental degradation in a perverse cycle. Operationally, the Council should accordingly continue to include the illegal exploitation of natural resources as a designation criterion in sanctions regimes, leading to the inclusion of the appropriate expertise in the terms of reference for panels of experts. Furthermore, the Council should continue, where appropriate, to empower missions, as it has in resolution 2463 (2019), on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to seek political solutions to stop the cross-border flows of conflict resources and provide technical and political support for resource management. We believe that such mandates could contribute to reducing environmental degradation.

Thirdly, the Council could ensure that field missions do no harm to the environment and adhere to the United Nations Climate Action Plan. For example, missions should in particular consider their impact on ground water and ground cover. Missions could also consider replacing diesel generators with renewable energy, which would have significant cost-saving potential. In addition, investments in green infrastructure and practices would provide post-deployment benefits for local communities.

Lastly, we must mobilize environmental expertise in other parts of the United Nations and the international system to work in tandem with security responses. It would be practical to have environmental experts within humanitarian and stabilization teams, where relevant, to identify and start addressing environmental concerns, in order to reduce risks of worsening insecurity. The United Nations Environment Assembly recently adopted resolutions on conflict, and the United Nations Environment Programme regularly conducts post-conflict assessments. These are positive examples of a holistic approach that Member States can encourage through their role in governance bodies.

In conflict situations, environmental degradation does not fall neatly under the mandates of United Nations institutions. It is incumbent upon Member States to enable and spur our institutions to work together toward collective outcomes. The security-environment nexus is no exception, and the United Arab Emirates looks forward to engaging with Council members and other stakeholders to ensure the coherence and greater impact of our work and resources.

**Annex 38****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations**

Ukraine highly appreciates the initiative of the Niger to hold this open debate and expresses its gratitude to all briefers for their presentations.

Defending itself since 2014 from the Russian armed aggression, Ukraine is well aware of how far the environmental impact of armed conflicts could stretch beyond the hot phase or geographical scope of hostilities.

The list of the most dangerous environmental threats for the conflict-affected territory of Donbas includes mine flooding, the risk of dysfunction in the region's main water supply channel, pollution of surface and subterranean waters, emission of toxic chlorine substances, chemical and radioactive contamination of the environment, changes in physical and chemical properties and ground subsidence under residential areas and critical infrastructure facilities. More than 80 per cent of the industrial enterprises and critical public infrastructure damaged in Donbas belong to dangerous or very dangerous environmental-risk categories.

Due to the power outages, destroyed infrastructure, disabled pumping equipment and other causes, 39 of the region's mines have been flooded. The flooding may have resulted in acidification and mobilization of heavy metals into the local groundwater and riverine environment, with potentially significant impacts for human health and wildlife. Some of the flooded mines were earlier used as waste-storage facilities.

It is a matter of particular concern that there is a flood danger to the site of an underground nuclear test, carried out in 1979, in the Yunkom coal mine, near the occupied city of Yenakiyev. This presents the real risk of radioactive contamination spreading to groundwater, rivers and, ultimately, the Sea of Azov.

Forest fires and illegal tree cutting pose another serious threat for both the environment and the local population in the conflict-affected areas. According to an assessment carried out two years ago by the Geneva Science-Policy Platform on Environment and Security, the conflict affected, damaged or destroyed ecosystems cover an area of at least 530,000 hectares, including 18 nature reserves covering an area of 80,000 hectares. Since that time, the situation has further deteriorated, as only in July forest fire in the Luhansk region destroyed 1,500 more hectares.

We have also seen signs of severe environmental degradation in occupied Crimea, resulting from environmental mismanagement of both natural and agricultural areas.

It must be also emphasized that the principles of international law relevant to the environmental hazards that Ukraine has experienced as a result of unlawful activities in and around occupied Crimea are not limited to international humanitarian law. They also include, for instance, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The illegal construction of a bridge across the Kerch Strait is just one example of such a violation. Apart from the fact that it violates Ukraine's rights as a coastal State and disrupts the freedom of international navigation, the unauthorized construction of the bridge could have long-term consequences for the coastal and marine environment of the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea by interfering with water circulation, increasing erosion and damaging internationally important protected areas.

The weakness of the existing legal framework for environmental protection in relation to armed conflicts was one of the motivations behind Ukraine's initiative



for a resolution on the “Protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflict”, at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, in 2016. We also co-sponsored Iraq’s resolution on “Pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism” at the Assembly’s third session, in 2017.

The hazardous environmental situation in the occupied territories of Ukraine is critical and may lead to a real disaster, in particular against the backdrop of the absence of the credible system of environmental monitoring. This affects not only the entire territory of Ukraine but also our neighbours and other nearby countries.

In conclusion, we express our confidence that the environmental impact of the Russian armed aggression must be within the focus of the United Nations and its agencies in order to prevent further aggravation and the suffering of the people.

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