

Building resilience in the face of global climate risks

Thank you, Foreign Minister Maas. Heiko, it is always a pleasure to see you and join you at the UN Security Council. And to our expert briefers, to Colonel Mahamadou, to the Assistant Secretary-General, and to Ms Coral Pasisi, thank you for your insights and expertise in briefing the Council today.

Today's threats to prosperity are tomorrow's geopolitical problems. The briefers have clearly set out the impacts of climate change on international peace and security.

We, the United Kingdom, have kept this issue high on the Council's agenda since we first convened it in 2007, and unfortunately, what we said then and what many others have emphasised since, have been proven right.

This year, for the first time in its history, the top five global risks in the World Economic Forum's annual report were all environmental.

It is clear that climate change is a multiplier of stress and hardship. It hits hardest in the most vulnerable communities, in the most vulnerable countries and regions across the world.

As we have heard, scarce resources, economic shocks, displacement and sea level rise lead to significantly higher chances of violent conflict. With the added multiplier, as we've all experienced during the course of this year, of COVID-19, the threat to peace becomes extreme.

We all feel the impacts of climate change, but they do not affect us equally. We know, for example, that women and girls suffer disproportionately. Gender inequalities can limit access to education and to decision-making, to food and adequate housing. Girls and women can be more exposed to disaster-induced poverty or exploitation. Women are significantly more likely than men to die during a climate-related disaster. And we know that gender-based violence – tragically, but true – and exploitation increase during crises. In their aftermath, women and girls are often subject to sexual violence and exploitation as they attempt to access food and other basic needs following disasters.

I know I joined you, Mr President, last week to focus on these specific concerns. And let me once again emphasise and reiterate that the United Kingdom is dedicated to tackling all forms of gender-based violence globally, including through the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative.

Our approach to climate security must be sensitive to these inequalities and deep concerns. Women's full, effective, pivotal and meaningful participation is key for sustainable peace. The evidence proves it. We must be led by the needs and priorities of women and girls and we must draw on their potential,

their insights, their expertise, their experiences, to lead our response. The Security Council must take this opportunity to address this imbalance.

And of course no nation is unscathed. Every country needs to decide how to adapt to climate impacts, and how to build resilience.

At the heart of our priorities for COP26 next year, the UK wants to bring countries together to urgently increase climate action in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the objectives of the UN FCCC. At COP26, we will prioritise action that builds adaptation and resilience, particularly in climate-vulnerable regions, including through better coordination and increased finance. By building resilience, we can reduce risk, including climate-related security risks.

And also, if I may, Mr President, as the leaders of all 54 Commonwealth countries emphasised in their recent statement on the COVID-19 pandemic, we must come together, work collaboratively, collectively, to build back better. This includes continuing to advocate for small and vulnerable states, recognising that the pandemic has exacerbated many of the inherent challenges that these states already face. Working together benefits each and every one of us.

But above all, we need an evidence-based approach to climate security threats. With this approach, we can tailor solutions to the fragile and conflict affected states on our agenda. We have already done this on some resolutions at the Security Council, on Mali, on Darfur, on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on South Sudan and indeed Somalia. We now need to push for effective implementation of these resolutions. We need to integrate climate resilience into our development, peacebuilding and humanitarian work. We need to use data, evidence and best practice.

To do this effectively, we need to understand the drivers of conflict and the implications for long term stability. I would like to echo calls for a comprehensive Secretary-General report to the Council on climate-related security risks.

Secondly, we would also welcome climate risk assessment and climate resilience as an integral part of the Council's work. This will correctly factor climate risks into UN operations, conflict prevention and resolution strategies and peacebuilding funds. Through the risk-informed Early Action Partnership, we will expand early action financing, improve early warning systems and build national capacity to respond and early to risks. We are supporting the development of a re-implementation plan that will make one billion people safer from disaster by 2025.

And thirdly, we will support strengthening the ability of the UN to enable analysis and action on climate risk as a fundamental way of working.

And finally, we will integrate climate forecasting with broader conflict prevention measures to keep our efforts on target.

In conclusion, Mr President, there is no doubt that climate-related security

threats, as you yourself articulated, are real, they are immediate and they are here to stay. Therefore, we must work together so that the UN system can consider climate risks and threats holistically when we make decisions and implement them into UN mission planning.

Thank you so much.