

Speech: Climate change threatens lives and economies across the globe

Thank you very much indeed Madam President, and may I once again thank and congratulate Sweden for picking such a good menu of themes for us to discuss in the Security Council. I was here in 2007 when we had the first climate change debate in the Security Council and I think this is already shaping up to be a very worthy continuum in that theme and it's obvious that there's lots of common ground. Thank you to all of the Ministers who have taken the time to come and be with the Council today and share these very interesting and compelling and very sad stories.

The Earth is known as the blue planet but many of you have given descriptions of how some of the most iconic, geographic features on the planet are being irredeemably affected by climate change. That's an important warning to us all and hopefully out of this meeting we can find a renewed sense of commitment to take action. I particularly welcomed what his Excellency, the Iraqi Minister said, about joint cooperation with neighbours to try and solve some of the resource problems that flow from climate change. But I think like many speakers, it was your presentation Ms Ibrahim about your people that was most compelling.

I think you very graphically set out the link between development and security and what it means on the ground for ordinary families and how much they are vulnerable to developments like terrorism because of the incredibly stark and unfair choices that they face. So, thank you for bringing that to the Council's attention and for the United Kingdom, we will work as hard as we can with Sweden and other partners to try and help the UN come up with answers to address the points that you and the Ministers have made. It must be considered as a holistic issue throughout the UN system so I think we very much welcome Madam President some of the ideas that you and the Netherlands have been setting out. The interplay between climate and security is not an abstract, theoretical risk – if we don't manage climate change, we will threaten lives, livelihoods and economies across the globe. With migration, that will begin to impact on all of our economies, even those that are not directly affected by climate change.

One figure that really struck me was the one that I have heard from the World Bank which estimates that 720 million people are at risk of being pushed into poverty by climate change by 2050. So, that's not only a shocking figure in itself, what it means is that it would be reversing much of the progress that we would have had in the first quarter of the 21st century. So, we're working against ourselves if we don't take action to do something about this. That is in addition to the fact that there will be other consequences of conflict and instability that arise from climate change.

My Prime Minister, Theresa May, has gone on record as saying that there is a clear moral imperative for developed economies to help those who stand to lose most from the consequences of man-made climate change. We have pledged

7.7 billion dollars in international climate finance to try and help alleviate the problem. I think the actions and solutions that we agree on in the Security Council need to take into account all the risks that we face today and how they might interact to address potential risks in future. I think the Council has, if I may say so Madam President, been quite good about reflecting in recent resolutions these points, particularly on Lake Chad, Somalia and the Sahel. Of course, the task now is to have effective implementation. For our part in the United Kingdom, we have committed to champion a greater focus on building resilience to climate change and this is for the Secretary-General ahead of his 2019 Climate Summit. We will be collaborating with a range of actors, including governments, aid agencies, regional bodies and the United Nations to launch what we hope to be genuinely transformational actions to build climate resilience.

As I've already said, we completely agree with you that we need an improved understanding of climate related risks. We ourselves have been working on climate risk assessment and were one of the first countries to conduct a national climate change risk assessment and we will support other countries in doing theirs. We have worked very closely with experts in China, India and the US to look at complex, systemic risks including how climate change interacts with security. We will, with the Chinese, develop a framework to monitor climate related risk continuously and we hope to launch that later this year. So there's lots of good work happening in which I think we can all reinforce each other and make sure that we build on all this progress rather than duplicate it.

I think I'll just conclude by saying you know we've always known, particularly in the UN, about the interdependence between security and development and stability and issues like human rights. That in itself is not a new concept and indeed the Charter alludes to it. But, I think it is true to say that it is now all intensifying as the world becomes more complex and above all it's exemplified by climate change. And it was given a very moving guise by Ms Ibrahim's testimony today. So I hope we can all go away from here with renewed determination to put right some of the problems you have all highlighted.

Thank you.