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GENERAL ASSEMBLY, EXPRESSING DEEP CONCERN, INVITES MAJOR UNITED NATIONS ORGANS

TO INTENSIFY EFFORTS IN ADDRESSING SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Deeply concerned about the possible security implications of climate change, the General Assembly today invited the major organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to intensify their efforts to address the challenge, as appropriate and within their respective mandates.

Unanimously adopting a draft resolution on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and titled "Climate change and its possible security implications" (document A/63/L.8/Rev.1), the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to its next session a comprehensive report on those implications, based on the views of Member States and regional and international organizations.

On 17 April 2007, the United Kingdom convened a day-long Security Council debate on the impact of climate change on security, which featured interventions by more than 50 speakers. However, many delegates from developing countries questioned whether the Council was the proper forum to discuss the issue. They included the representative of Pakistan, representing the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, who saw climate change as a development matter to be dealt with by the more widely representative General Assembly.

Introducing the draft in the Assembly today, on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, Nauru's representative emphasized that rising oceans could, sooner than previously thought, leave little of that regional group's already tiny homelands above water unless urgent action was taken. Already, the impact of climate change included inundation of heavily populated coastal areas, loss of freshwater, failure of agriculture and other results of saltwater intrusion.

As a result, resettlement and migration were already occurring and dangers to international peace and security would soon increase, she stressed. The Assembly's adoption of the text would encourage dealing with climate change in a holistic manner, while demonstrating serious concern for the survival of whole populations and the existence of their lands.

Nicaragua's representative, speaking before the vote on behalf of the "like-minded group" -- Bahrain, Bolivia, Ecuador, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Venezuela -- said the group would join the consensus on the compromise text. In addressing the issue, however, it was vital that Member States, particularly industrialized nations, promote sustainable development, while adhering to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, and fully implement Agenda 21 and other relevant development commitments.

Following the Assembly's adoption of the resolution, the representatives of many small island developing States took the floor to underscore the dire nature of the threats that climate change posed to their nations, including the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Samoa and the Maldives.

Palau's representative said: "We do not carelessly call climate change a security threat. When we are told by scientists to prepare for humanitarian crisis, including exodus, in our lifetimes, how can it be different from preparing for a threat like war?" All United Nations organs, most particularly the Security Council, must act urgently. Under Chapter VI of the Charter, the Council may investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions must be the focus, and the goal must be effective, enforceable action to that end.

Other representatives of developing countries, including those of Indonesia and Bahrain, the latter on behalf of the Arab States, said they had joined the consensus out of solidarity and the need for a united front in combating climate change. Joined by the representatives of Argentina, Brazil and China, they stressed, however, that the resolution must not undermine the primary responsibility of the General Assembly, and in some areas the Economic and Social Council, both of which must address climate change from the viewpoint of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) should provide the outline for action on the issue, they said, urging all States to fulfil their commitments under that instrument, particularly the industrialized nations that generated most greenhouse gases, while developing countries were the most threatened.

Haiti's representative, speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said there were different perceptions of the nature and scope of the security dimension of climate change. CARICOM anticipated that the comprehensive report to be provided by the Secretary-General could provide a platform for further consideration of the issue in the Assembly's sixty-fourth session.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, the representative of the Czech Republic said the bloc advocated a multilateral response in which the United Nations system would play a pivotal role. By its adoption of the resolution, the United Nations membership had made a first important step towards considering and addressing security risks related to climate change.

Canada, Iceland, the United States and other developed countries welcomed the Assembly's adoption of the text and its intensified consideration of climate change. However, some delegates, such as the representative of Switzerland, said they would have preferred a

stronger reference to the Security Council's role in addressing the crucial challenge. The representatives of Japan, New Zealand and Australia outlined some of their assistance to regional small island States.

Australia's representative said that the most important issue addressed today was respect for some of the smallest members of the international community. The representatives of those States deserved congratulations for their dignified participation in the long negotiations, as did all other States that had taken seriously their concerns about the dangers of climate change.

Speaking after the vote, Venezuela's representative noted that affirmations of support for the Mauritius Declaration and related documents, mentioned in the preambular paragraphs of today's resolution, were not binding.

Also speaking today was the representative of Chile.

The General Assembly will meet again at a date and time to be announced.

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