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Side Event “Climate Change: It is happening here, it is happening now.”
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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to join this discussion on fighting climate change through international solidarity. I extend my sincere gratitude to the co-organizers of today’s event, with particular thanks to the Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII and the Permanent Mission of the Philippines. I would also like to thank the many co-sponsors of this event. I greatly appreciate your support of my mandate, and your concern for the fact that our event title succinctly states, “climate change is happening here, and it is happening now.”

Thus far in my tenure as Independent Expert, I have closely examined the interconnections between the principle of international solidarity and migration. I have now prepared and submitted two reports in this area and a third is almost ready. The international solidarity issues within the climate change area is one the priorities I outlined in my first report to the Human Rights Council. Therefore, this event presents a welcome opportunity for me to gather ideas and explore some of the themes that I would like to develop in my future research and analysis of the interconnections between the international solidarity principle and the combatting of climate change.

Today’s event is all the more timely as I anticipate conducting country visits to Malawi in November 2019, to Costa Rica in March 2020 and to Fiji in December 2020. During these visits, I will (among other issues) examine not only the negative effects of climate change, but also good practices for implementing human rights-based international solidarity in the realm of climate change. Hence, I propose to briefly outline several areas of interest, and then I am keen to engage with my esteemed co-panelists and our audience here on your comments and questions.

To provide a framework for my remarks, I refer to the Draft Declaration on the right to international solidarity, which my predecessor submitted to the Human Rights Council in 2017. The Draft Declaration defines international solidarity as the expression of a spirit of unity among individuals, peoples, States and international organizations, encompassing the union of interests, purposes and actions and the recognition of different needs and rights to achieve common goals.

The Declaration identifies the components of international solidarity as preventive solidarity, reactive solidarity and international cooperation. Preventive solidarity is when stakeholders act to proactively address shared challenges. Reactive solidarity refers to collective actions of the international community to respond to situations of crisis.

Applying this international solidarity framework to the realm of climate change, we can ask how the various stakeholders gathered here today can express the union of our interests, purposes and actions. How can we recognize our different needs and rights to achieve the common goal of combatting climate change?

Furthermore, we can ask whether stakeholders have sufficiently engaged in preventive solidarity in the area of climate change. Have stakeholder actions more so reflected reactive solidarity to date? How can we encourage greater international cooperation to advance human rights-based international solidarity in climate change?

Turning to more specific questions about how we can combat climate change through the strengthening of human rights-based international solidarity, I refer to my report to the 38th session of the Human Rights Council, wherein I set out my vision for the mandate and identified climate change as a thematic priority. In the report, I raise the issue of equity in the emerging climate finance framework. At the root of this issue is the question whether the most vulnerable climate change-affected countries should get the most funds.

My report also highlights the nexus between climate finance and the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights for everyone in the world. I consider the issue of common but differentiated responsibilities in the climate change area (based in part on uneven contributions to its generation). How can we take a human rights-based international solidarity approach to these common responsibilities while recognizing existing differences?

This study will be particularly relevant in the context of future iterations of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as in the context of the broader effort to implement the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Finally, I will conclude by providing some concrete examples of how I have analyzed States' demonstrations of human rights-based solidarity in the two country visits that I have conducted so far, which were to Sweden and the Netherlands.

In Sweden, I observed that the authorities and the people of Sweden have supported environment-oriented development, and they have engaged in international advocacy to advance this policy. For example, in March 2018, the Government agreed to a new strategy for its global development cooperation in the areas of environmental sustainability, sustainable climate and oceans, and the sustainable use of natural resources for the period of 2018 to 2020.

In the Netherlands, the Government reported that it had created a new national fund for climate and development, and that the fund would focus on financing climate projects in developing countries with an emphasis on climate adaptation.

In my reports on both country visits, I commended the Swedish and Dutch Governments on their embrace of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure a sustainable approach to their environmental actions, inside and outside their countries.

Thus, it is my hope that the dissemination of these approaches to combatting climate change through international solidarity will assist stakeholders who are seeking out examples of good practices, and I welcome your suggestions of others.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to responding to your comments and questions.