

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Speech by

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Security Council

New York, 25/1/2019

Mr President, Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

I wish to thank the Dominican Republic for organising this debate.

Belgium welcomes the role of the Security Council in examining the consequences of climate change for international peace and security. I also thank the speakers for framing this debate.

Today, it is becoming ever more clear the extent to which climate change is increasing **instability and insecurity in places as varied as the Sahel, the Middle East, Central Asia and island states in the Caribbean and the Pacific.** Increasingly frequent and violent extreme weather events, such as hurricanes and droughts, as well as rising sea levels, are multiplying socio-political tensions around the world. In view of the growing body of scientific evidence about the disastrous effects of climate change, **there should be no doubt about the importance of this theme for the Security Council.** The international community must join forces in order to find an urgent ambitious and common response. As political decision makers, we have a great responsibility and we need to listen to the calls of future generations.

Mr President, I wish to address the following three questions: (1) the importance of a preventive approach; (2) the way in which the Council should address the link between climate change and security; and (3) the response of the United Nations' system as a whole.

1. Firstly, in order to effectively carry out the mandate laid out in the Charter, the Council must be attentive to warning signs and develop greater sensitivity with regard to situations that may lead to conflict, including those related to climate change. **Conflict prevention** is not only a virtuous policy, it is also a profitable strategy on many levels. In particular, it allows resources to be invested in positive and forward-looking actions rather than having to intervene after events with sometimes costly and less effective peace-keeping operations as a result.
2. My second point concerns the way in which the Council should tackle the problem. It is high time for climate risk to be included in the **regular work of the Security Council**. Belgium attaches great importance to the integration of climate risks into debates concerning countries or regions, including when renewing mandates for peacekeeping operations.

I welcome those recent resolutions that have already taken this into account. In particular, I am thinking of the Sahel, where conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have intensified due to a shortage of water. Also, Afghanistan, where the drought is causing destabilising migratory flows. It is now clear that addressing

climate risks is no longer an option, but a necessity if we want the Council to assume full responsibility and strengthen its ability to prevent conflicts.

3. Thirdly, for Belgium, the time has come to **improve the organisation** of this theme within the United Nations system by bringing together the expertise of the UN's different agencies and departments in order to combine existing knowledge and render it operational. An institutional focal point, or "**clearing house**", would meet the urgent need to provide the Council with suitable risk analysis and management strategies for the countries and regions where this is relevant. This could be done within the Secretariat or via a solution that also associates the Member States, as is the case with subsidiary bodies. An annual thematic briefing would be a good starting point. Detailed analysis and regular reporting by the SRSGs and peacekeeping operations in the regions concerned would also be useful, and Belgium welcomes those instances where this is already implemented. Let us be clear: the aim is not to unnecessarily burden the institutional machinery, but to find a means of bringing together the available expertise in line with a One UN approach.

Mr President,

In the run-up to the Secretary-General's Climate Summit in September, 2019 will again be a critical year in terms of our response to climate change. Its consequences will be all the more disastrous if our actions lack ambition. We must do more to reduce catastrophic climate change and apply the Paris Agreement in full, but we must also

adapt to a warming world. The results of the COP24 in Katowice are an important step for improving our ability to adapt, increasing resilience to climate change and reducing vulnerability to these changes. Our Council too must participate in this effort by studying the link between climate and security more closely and by integrating this theme more in the UN system as a whole. That is why today's debate is vital. It will continue here and elsewhere.

Thank you, Mr President.