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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
877TH MEETING

10 SEPTEMBER 2019
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

CONCEPT NOTE

Climate Change and its Impacts on Small Island States in Africa

OPEN SESSION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS ON SMALL ISLAND STATES IN AFRICA

I. BACKGROUND

1. All countries, particularly developing countries, are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and are already experiencing an increase in such impacts, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, sea-level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification, further threatening food security and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Climate change remains one of the greatest challenges facing countries today and as global temperature continue to increase, the rising sea levels pose a significant risk to Small-Island Developing States (SIDS) and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for some, this represents the gravest threat to their survival and viability.

2. SIDS are recognized as a distinct group of developing countries facing specific socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities. They are low-lying island nations that are highly vulnerable and often affected by **weather extremes** and climate change, including the increased severity of cyclones, storm surges, heavy rains, droughts, sea-level rise and ocean acidification. The countries share similar sustainable development challenges including small but growing populations, limited resources, remoteness, susceptibility to natural hazards, vulnerability to external shocks, excessive dependency on external trade, and fragile environments.

3. The countries are prone to hydro-meteorological hazards, such as tropical cyclones (tropical storms and hurricanes), thunderstorms and/or lightning, coastal storm surges, floods, flash floods, coastal flooding, river flooding, drought, strong winds, heat waves, and dust or haze – with the following potential impacts: coastal erosion, landslides, mudslides, epidemics, and the movement and spread of toxic substances and volcanic material.

II. RESPONSES

4. In responding to Climate Change, the African Union remains strongly committed to the global fight against climate change – whose impacts affect the continent most. At least 50 countries in Africa have ratified the Paris Agreement to-date. The African Union through its Committee of African Heads of States and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) continues to provide political leadership and strategic guidance on the continent's engagement on climate change. It also advocates for the upholding of a Common African Position on climate change that ensures a strong African voice at the climate negotiations – working closely with the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) on Climate Change.

5. The Commission is enhancing its efforts to support the work and operationalization of the three Climate Commissions established at COP 22 in Marrakech: which are: - the Sahel Climate Commission led by H.E the President of Niger; The Congo Basin Climate Commission led by the H.E the President of the Republic of Congo and the Island States Climate Commission led by H.E the President of the Republic of Seychelles.

6. While Small Island Developing States and Member Island Territories are already enhancing their weather and climate services, further improvement and sustainable modernization is essential. In addition to investments in observing networks, more funding is needed for communication systems and service delivery. Meteorological services also need the ability to gain greater access to information from the leading global weather centers.

7. Investments in disaster risk reduction, including early warning systems and adaptation measures for critical sectors, are essential for building resilient communities and facilitating sustainable development. There is also need to improve the institutional capacity building to improve the ecological and economic resilience island nations.

8. The oceans, seas, and their resources are important for global food security and for achieving sustainable economic prosperity and combatting climate change. The Blue Economy presents a new economic potential of Africa's oceans. African SIDS should enhance their efforts to harness their marine and oceanic resources for their long-term sustainable development. Member States need to include the blue economy as an integral part of national development and investment plans and programmes.

9. Improved ocean governance, notably to combat marine pollution, sustainable management of fisheries resources, such as fisheries surveillance and integrated coastal zone management. This could be done through a holistic and integrated approach to addressing issues such as coastal erosion, early warning and carbon sequestration which are all part of building coastal resilience of ecosystems and fishing communities

10. Implementation of agreements such as the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Both Agreements have identified the Small Islands as having specific needs.

III. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

11. The Open Session should, among others recommendations, adopt strategies that should:

i. Improve resilience through encouraging investments in disaster risk reduction, including early warning systems and adaptation measures for critical sectors
ii. Institutional capacity building to improve the ecological and economic resilience island nations
iii. Achieve sustainable economic prosperity and combatting climate change through integration of Blue Economy as a key component of national development and investment plans and programmes.
iv. Conservation of biodiversity and in particular marine and coastal resources for their ecosystem services for the well-being of the populations and also for combatting climate change

v. Improved Ocean Governance including combating marine pollution and sustainable management of fisheries
vi. Combating climate change through the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Nationally Determined contributions
vii. Support the implementation of the Climate Change Commissions established at the Climate Change Conference held in Marrakech in 2016: the Congo Basin Climate Commission, the Sahel Climate Commission and the Small Island States Climate Commission.
viii. Support the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway.

IV. PARTICIPATION

12. The Session will be an open session of the Peace and Security Council. Participation will include key departments of the AUC, Permanent Missions to AU, the wider diplomatic community, and members of the media, civil societies, international organizations and UN agencies.

V. DATE, VENUE AND WORKING LANGUAGES

13. The Open Session of the AU PSC will take place at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa on 10 September 2019, at the Plenary Hall of the Old Conference Centre. The Session will be held in all the AU working languages.