



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

United Nations Member States

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Briefing Note: Background on the Security Implications of Climate Change

1. Mandate of the Security Council to Address Security Implications of Climate Change

- On 17 April 2007 the Security Council held a debate to examine the relationship between energy, security and climate. The debate was called by the United Kingdom in their capacity as President of the Security Council for April of that year.
- Pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations the Security Council has the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”
- Article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations states: “The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

2. UN General Assembly Resolution on the Security Implications of Climate Change

- On 3 June 2009, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously passed a resolution urging the relevant organs of the U.N. to intensify their efforts to address the security implications of climate change.
- Though international organizations and many governments have considered the link between climate change and security, the adoption of the resolution ‘Climate Change and its possible security implications’ was the first time that this connection was formally recognized by the international community.
- The full text of the resolution can be downloaded at www.un.org/en/documents. It is contained in document A/RES/63/281.

3. Pacific Islands at Front Line of Climate Crisis

- The passage of the resolution marked the culmination of a year-long campaign by a coalition of Pacific Small Island Developing States (Pacific SIDS) to focus the attention of the international community on the security aspects of climate change.
- Small island states are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels, which scientists project could increase by a meter or more before the end of this century. For low-lying countries like Tuvalu, which is no more than three meters above sea level on average, just a small rise would be catastrophic and force the evacuation of its nine constituent islands.
- Even those islands with higher land may be stretched to the breaking point by salt-water intrusion into farmland, water scarcity, extreme weather events and conflicts over resources caused by climate change.

4. Report of the U.N. Secretary-General on the Security Implications of Climate Change

- The resolution 'Climate Change and its possible security implications' requested the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to prepare a comprehensive report on the security dimensions of climate change. The report was distributed on 11 September 2009 and can be downloaded at www.un.org/en/documents. It is contained in document A/64/350.

- The contribution of the Pacific SIDS to the Report of the Secretary-General can be downloaded here:

http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/ga-64/cc-inputs/PSIDS_CCIS.pdf

- The contribution of other Member States to the Report of the Secretary-General can be downloaded here:

http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_docugaecos_64.shtml

5. General Debate on the Report of the Secretary-General on the Security Implications of Climate Change

- On 16 November 2009 the General Debate considered the Secretary-General's Report on the security implications of climate change under Agenda Item 114, Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit.
- H.E Stuart Beck, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations delivered a statement on behalf of the Pacific SIDS during the GA debate on the Secretary-General's Report. He stated:

"From the report it is clear that security implications from climate change are not "possible" but real. We note in particular the identification in the report of emerging climate change related threats which merit "the focused attention and increased preparedness of the international community." These threats are ones which, in the words of the report "appear highly likely, are large in magnitude, may unfold relatively swiftly, and are unprecedented in nature." These threats include: loss of territory, statelessness, and increased numbers of displaced persons. All of these threats have occurred or will imminently occur in the Pacific. It is the reality and immediacy of these threats which motivated the Pacific Small Island Developing States to sponsor this resolution initially. It is this reality which makes it increasingly critical that all relevant organs of the United Nations take up this issue, including the Security Council."

6. Security Council Membership and Presidents

- In addition to the permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States) the current Security Council non permanent members are Austria, Japan, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Uganda, Brazil, Mexico, Gabon, Nigeria.
- The President of the Security Council for May is Lebanon, followed by Mexico (June), Nigeria (July), Russian Federation (August), Turkey (September), Uganda (October), United Kingdom (November) and United States (December).

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