Statement for Security Council
Open Arria-Formula meeting on the role of Climate Change as a threat multiplier for Global Security
30 June 2015

"Check against delivery"

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Co-Chairs,

I am pleased to deliver these remarks on behalf of the following Pacific Small Island Developing States with Missions to the United Nations, namely Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu and my own country Papua New Guinea.

We are grateful to the Governments of Spain and Malaysia, both current Members of the United Nations Security Council, for providing a platform so that we can have a focused discussion on the role of Climate Change as a threat multiplier for Global Security. We also thank the panelists for their thought provoking presentations.

Let me contextualize our remarks.

Years of real life experiences from the impacts of climate change and the impending threat this has on the survivability of some of the Pacific low-lying islands, explains why as a group we will utilize any and every opportunity that presents itself in whatever fora, the Security Council included, to highlight the importance of U.N. member states working together to address the root-causes of climate change. As an existential issue for our region, too much is at stake for us to be complacent in our advocacy and be distracted in our focus.

Today’s meeting comes especially at a critical time and complements efforts being made at all levels to canvass political will and commitment such as yesterday’s successful PGA High-Level event, as we prepare for COP21 in Paris later this year. The Pacific SIDS also cohosted an event yesterday which highlighted the socio-economic consequences of climate change and the importance of forging genuine and durable partnerships in combating Climate Change.

We were pleased and supportive of the strong call made yesterday for global action on climate change, particularly for a legally binding agreement in Paris, from many world leaders including from our Pacific leaders such as President Anote Tong of Kiribati and Minister Tony De Brum of the Republic of Marshall Islands.

We fully support the calls for strong political leadership and commitment and to build on the positive momentum generated to accomplish an ambitious, universal
and legally binding climate agreement in Paris this year. For us, it is critical that the Paris Agreement sets the right tone to limit the increase in global temperature to below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

As small island Pacific nations we have been a canary in the coalmine on climate change and we will continue to make this clarion calls. This is because we clearly recognize the seriousness and urgency of the threat posed by climate change to our sustainable development and our future survival as a people and nations. We also underscore the pressing need for the international community to collectively address the root causes of climate change and adaptation measures as this issue cannot be dealt with by individual nations alone.

Co-Chairs,

Previous speakers have eloquently described the numerous ways by which climate change can affect security at different levels. The adoption of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/281 marked the first time that the international community collectively recognized the security implications of climate change.

The Secretary General’s 2009 report on climate change and its possible security implications identified several channels through which climate change could threaten international peace and security as well as nationally. Many of these channels relate to issues that the Security Council has already identified as warranting its attention, including food security, natural resource scarcity, poverty, and human migration to name a few.

One of the key conclusions of the Secretary-General’s report was that existing mechanisms to address the largely unprecedented challenges posed by climate change may prove inadequate. In 2011, the Council held its second open thematic debate on the “maintenance of international peace and security: the impact of climate change” which concluded with a Presidential Statement from the Security Council. Therefore, for us, there is no question that the Council has a role to play in addressing the security implications of climate change.

While we welcome this debate, as well as supported previous ones convened by Pakistan and UK in 2013, Germany in 2011 and the UK also in 2007, we believe the Council members can take a step forward, from their 2011 Presidential Statement in addressing this issue, and approach this topic in a more systematic way.

In the past Pacific SIDS have put forward concrete proposals which all were made aware of... such as a call to appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security to be appointed to help expand our understanding of the security dimensions of climate change. The Special Representative would regularly report to the General Assembly and the Security Council on emerging climate-related security threats, as well as facilitate regional cooperation on cross-border issues. In the future, the
Special Representative could be an invaluable asset in preventative diplomacy efforts.

Another proposal was to ask for the Security Council to request the Secretary General to evaluate and report on the capacity of the United Nations and its specialized agencies to respond to the security impacts of climate change, as well as to offer recommendations on how to enhance the UN's capacity and improve its response to meet the security challenges.

We have heard how climate change will have profound effects on food production, water availability, territorial integrity, human migration, and forced displacement — all of which are potentially destabilizing — yet we have only the vaguest idea of what an international response to these growing impacts would look like.

The question is, what avenue is available to Pacific small island nations like ours who may not have the opportunity to serve in the Security Council, to discuss such proposals again? Isn't it time to again look at the latest science and developments which highlight the increasing threats including existential threats to nations as a result of climate change so we can take appropriate action? How do we ensure that the security dimension of Climate Change is regularly addressed by the Council?

We also see a need to update the 2009 Secretary General report on “Climate Change and its possible Security implications” because a lot has happened since then. For example, Samoa has already relocated whole villages since; Cyclone Pam recently affected 60% of the population of Vanuatu and left in its wake a cost equivalent to 60% of its GDP; the President of Kiribati has announced they are already taking steps for “migration with dignity” and we have heard several other examples which also highlight Climate Change as a threat multiplier.

Co-Chairs
In closing, our clarion call today is for global political will, commitment and leadership and by particularly all the 15 Members of the Security Council to seriously address the security implications of climate change. We agree with the US Secretary of State John Kerry who said in February 2014 that "climate change can now be considered as the world’s most fearsome weapon of mass destruction".

Our challenge to the serving Security Council members and those to come in future is that a paradigm shift in addressing this existential threat is overdue. A more dedicated and systematic approach by the Security Council to this critical issue is therefore imperative and will only further contribute to the enhancement of its mandate to deal responsibly with the security implications of climate change. This also speaks to the relevance of the work of the Security Council to addressing all evolving security issues of our times, including one that affects us globally such as climate change.
We again thank Spain and Malaysia for organizing this event and continue to encourage their leadership on the issue.

Thank you for your attention.