

# REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES



Report on Climate Change  
and its Possible Security Implications  
(General Assembly resolution 63/281)

Submitted to the  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Division for Sustainable Development  
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In its Resolution 63/281 of 11 June 2009<sup>1</sup>, the General Assembly invited relevant organs of the United Nations to intensify their efforts in considering and addressing climate change, including its possible security implications. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on these possible security implications, based on the views of the Member States and relevant organizations, for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. The Republic of Seychelles herewith submits its national communication with respect to this matter.

Seychelles shares the view expressed by a large and growing number of UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations, States, leaders and military analysts that climate change poses a clear and present danger to our world and that present and future impacts of climate change constitute a threat to international peace and security requiring the immediate and concerted action of all relevant UN organs, including the Security Council.

***Human societies are more vulnerable to climate change than previously believed***

Since the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),<sup>2</sup> it has become evident that observed climate impacts are matching or exceeding the most pessimistic IPCC models in both their speed and severity. In April 2009, the University of Copenhagen convened a scientific congress to review the state of the science and bridge the growing gap between IPCC projections and real-world experience. The Synthesis Report from the Copenhagen Climate Congress,<sup>3</sup> released in June 2009, concludes that:

Many key climate indicators are already moving beyond the patterns of natural variability within which contemporary society and economy have developed and thrived. These indicators include global mean surface temperature, sea level rise, global ocean temperature, Arctic sea ice extent, ocean acidification, and extreme climatic events. With unabated emissions, many trends in climate will likely accelerate, leading to an increasing risk of abrupt or irreversible climatic shifts.<sup>4</sup>

The Synthesis Report observes that the risks of dangerous climate change “now appear at significantly lower levels of global average temperature rise in the more recent analysis” and reinforces the position of Seychelles and other islands states that the 2 degrees Celsius threshold is “now inadequate to avoid serious risks to many unique and

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<sup>1</sup> G.A. Res. 63/281, U.N. Doc. A/63/L.8/Rev.1.

<sup>2</sup> IPCC, 2007: Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 104 pp.

<sup>3</sup> University of Copenhagen, 2009: *Synthesis Report from Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions* [Core Writing Team, Richardson, K. (chair)]. Univ. Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark, 39 pp. available at <http://climatecongress.ku.dk/pdf/synthesisreport> (hereinafter “*Synthesis Report*”).

<sup>4</sup> Id. at 8.

threatened ecosystems and to avoid a large increase in the risks associated with extreme weather events.”<sup>5</sup>

Observational evidence also confirms that human societies and the ecosystems on which they depend “are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change, with poor nations and communities, ecosystem services and biodiversity particularly at risk.”<sup>6</sup> The growing intensity of tropical cyclones, droughts, extreme heat waves and floods projected in many regions will have profound impacts on human settlements through increased water stress, more frequent wildfires, heightened risks of flooding and catastrophic storm surges, threats to agriculture, and adverse health effects.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Climate Change will increase water scarcity***

With respect to freshwater, for example, IPCC Technical Paper VI (2008) concludes that “[o]bservational records and climate projections provide abundant evidence that freshwater resources are vulnerable and have the potential to be strongly impacted by climate change, with wide-ranging consequences for human societies and ecosystems.”<sup>8</sup> Declines in water supplies from montane glaciers and snow cover will reduce seasonal water availability to regions containing more than one billion people, representing one-sixth of the world’s population. In many areas, climate change will place a major new source of stress on water management systems unable to cope with even existing climate variability at a time when these systems must respond to the increasing demands of a growing population.<sup>9</sup>

Many small island developing States (SIDS) are already experiencing water stress due to a lack of natural resources, limited freshwater, and poor infrastructure. Based on these and other factors such as size, geology and topography, water resources in SIDS are extremely vulnerable to changes and climate variability. The Seychelles, in particular, is almost entirely dependent on surface water, and therefore is highly vulnerable to future changes in distribution of rainfall.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Id. at 16.

<sup>6</sup> Id. at 12.

<sup>7</sup> Joel B. Smith et al. “Assessing dangerous climate change through an update of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) “reasons for concern” in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (USA), vol. 106: 4133-4137, 4136.

<sup>8</sup> Bates, B.C., Z.W. Kundzewicz, S. Wu and J.P. Palutikof, Eds., 2008: Climate Change and Water. Technical Paper of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC Secretariat, Geneva, 210 pp, Exec. Summ. at 3.

<sup>9</sup> Id.

<sup>10</sup> UNFCCC, *Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in Small Island Developing States*, available at [http://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/adverse\\_effects\\_and\\_response\\_measures\\_art\\_48/application/pdf/200702\\_sids\\_adaptation\\_bg.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/adverse_effects_and_response_measures_art_48/application/pdf/200702_sids_adaptation_bg.pdf).

***Heightened storm surges will expose millions to catastrophic flooding***

In addition to its direct impact on coastal lands and water supplies, sea level rise will dramatically increase exposure to storm surges among coastal populations. In 2008, the World Bank's Development Research Group assessed the likely impact of sea level rise on storm surge vulnerability in 84 coastal developing States across five regions.<sup>11</sup> They found that storm surge exposure due to global warming would result in "large, globally pervasive potential impacts."<sup>12</sup> A 10% increase in storm surge intensity would subject more than 25% of the territory assessed, and 52 million additional people, to the risk of inundation. The additional 125,000 km<sup>2</sup> at risk of flooding includes more than 29,000 km<sup>2</sup> of agricultural land and nearly 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> in urban areas,<sup>13</sup> with a striking concentration of impacts on "highly vulnerable large cities at the low end of the international income distribution."<sup>14</sup>

Notably, the conclusions of the World Bank report are exclusive of impacts on the small island developing States most profoundly threatened by sea level rise.<sup>15</sup> For SIDS in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, sea level rise, catastrophic flooding and storm surges present a serious threat to their very existence. Outlying islands in some nations are already being evacuated; according to IPCC projections, many of these island nations are likely to disappear by the end of 21st century.

***Climate change will lead to greater food insecurity and potential supply shocks***

Through these and other mechanisms, climate change poses profound risks to food security in many regions. Projected population and economic growth will double food demand by 2050, increasing the threat of food insecurity, even in the absence of climate change, with many developing countries experiencing serious poverty and food insecurity due to localized high population growth rates, poor socio-economic capacity and continued natural resource degradation.<sup>16</sup> As the FAO reported to the High Level Conference (HLC) on World Food Security in June 2008:

Climate change will superimpose itself on these existing trends, significantly increasing production risk and rural vulnerability, particularly in regions that already suffer from chronic soil and water resource

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<sup>11</sup> Dasgupta, S., Laplante, B., Murray, S., Wheeler, D., 2008: Sea Level Rise and Storm Surges: A Comparative Analysis of Impacts in Developing Countries. Policy Research Working Paper 4901, World Bank, Washington, DC, 43 pp.

<sup>12</sup> Id. at 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. at 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. at 34.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. at 6.

<sup>16</sup> FAO, 2008: Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation: Challenges and Opportunities for Developing Countries, Doc. No. FAO/HLC08/Inf 2, at 1. Prepared for the High Level Conference on World Food Security (Rome, 3 – 5 June 2008) (hereinafter HLCWFS).

scarcity, high exposure to climatic extremes including droughts and flooding, poverty and hunger.<sup>17</sup>

Speaking to that conference, the Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group II observed that, while not yet the primary cause, climate change is already a factor in current food shortages, with some recent droughts possibly attributable to rising greenhouse gas concentrations. In coming years, climate change will increase drought in important food-producing regions and is likely to reduce food production potential, especially in some already food-short areas.<sup>18</sup> In so doing, climate change could amplify an already “unprecedented level of risk” of global supply shocks.<sup>19</sup>

In his statement to the HLC, President James Aix Michel communicated the gravity of this issue for Seychelles and other island nations that import the majority of their food:

Combined with the scarcity of land and the effects of climate change such as land degradation, land salinization from sea level rise and extended droughts, agriculture on small islands has also suffered serious setbacks, worsening an already heavy reliance on food imports. . . .

I would ask the Task Force to consider the special case of small island states when proposing solutions to this crisis. I would ask them to take into consideration our vulnerabilities. The price of food in Seychelles and other small islands is escalating beyond the means of island people, essentially forcing many of us back into poverty. We have implemented various measures to alleviate the hardship brought about by the global increase in food prices, but we are slowly running out of options. This is why we cannot procrastinate. We need to agree today on a series of concrete measures to address the global food crisis and avert a catastrophe.<sup>20</sup>

Further, food security in SIDS is being affected by changing patterns of food production and threats to biodiversity and coral reef systems, which will reduce these livelihood resources and undermine economic performance.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. at 2.

<sup>18</sup> IPCC, 2008: “Climate Change and World Food Security.” Presentation of Martin Parry (Co-Chair, WGII of the IPCC) to HLCWFS (June 4, 2008), available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/graphics/speeches/parry-rome-june-2008.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> FAO, 2008: Climate Change, Water and Food Security: Technical Background Document from the Expert Consultation Held on 26 to 28 February 2008. Doc. No. FAO/HLC08/BAK/2, at 11.

<sup>20</sup> Statement of Mr. James Alix Michel President of the Republic of Seychelles to HLCWFS (June 3, 2008), available at [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/foodclimate/statements/syc\\_michel.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/foodclimate/statements/syc_michel.pdf).

***Climate change will displace populations on a massive scale***

There is nearly universal recognition that the impacts of climate change will lead to migrations on an unprecedented scale, and that these migrations represent one of the most significant consequences of climate change. While estimates of the populations affected range from several tens to many hundreds of millions,<sup>21</sup> the diversity of these estimates cannot obscure their central, simple truth—“that on current trends the ‘carrying capacity’ of large parts of the world, i.e. the ability of different ecosystems to provide food, water and shelter for human populations, will be compromised by climate change.”<sup>22</sup> The consequence will be large and often unpredictable flows of populations both within individual States and across international borders.

As stated by Tonga’s Prime Minister Feleti Vaka’uta Sevele in his address to the UN General Assembly’s General Debate on September 26, 2008, the prospect of displaced peoples in island states is “no longer a prospect but a reality, with relocations of communities due to sea level rise already taking place. Urgent action must be taken now.”<sup>23</sup>

***Climate change poses a threat to national sovereignty***

The impacts of climate change, particularly sea level rise, will threaten the very existence of some small island states and thus national sovereignty. As low-lying island states become submerged or otherwise uninhabitable, the displaced peoples and communities must, of necessity, be relocated to other territories. Such peoples will find themselves in the unprecedented situation of being citizens of a state that no longer has a territory. Many questions remain as to what will happen when an island state disappears due to climate change, such as whether the state (as well as citizenship of the state and the sovereign rights of its citizens over the natural resources of its continental shelf and exclusive economic zone) will simply cease to exist or whether its statehood will continue to be recognized in some form.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Brown, Oli, 2008: The numbers game. *Forced Migration Review* 31 (October 2008) at 8.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, Oli, 2007: Climate change and forced migration: observations, projections and implications. UNDP Human Development Report Office, Occasional Paper 2007/17, at 10.

<sup>23</sup> Statement of Hon. Dr. Feleti Vaka’uta Sevele, Prime Minister of Tonga, at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly (Sept. 26, 2008), available at [http://www.un.org/ga/63/generaldebate/pdf/tonga\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/63/generaldebate/pdf/tonga_en.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Expanded working paper by Françoise Hampson on the human rights situation of indigenous peoples in States and other territories threatened with extinction for environmental reasons, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/28 (June 16, 2005).

### ***Climate change and its impacts undermine human rights***

Climate change also has direct implications for the protection and enjoyment of human rights. As the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme observed in 2001:

*Human rights cannot be secured in a degraded or polluted environment... Environmental conditions clearly help to determine the extent to which people enjoy their basic rights to life, health, adequate food and housing, and traditional livelihood and culture. It is time to recognize that those who pollute or destroy the natural environment are not just committing a crime against nature, but are violating human rights as well.*<sup>25</sup>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international human rights instruments recognize and protect the fundamental human rights to life and security,<sup>26</sup> water,<sup>27</sup> food<sup>28</sup> and property,<sup>29</sup> among others. The UDHR provides that “[e]veryone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.”<sup>30</sup> However, as described above, climate change and its impacts, including water scarcity, catastrophic flooding, food insecurity and population displacement, seriously threaten this social and international order.

With respect to the fundamental right to life and security, observed and projected climate impacts will pose direct and indirect threats to human lives. The increasing frequency and intensity of heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts will result in deaths, disease and injury. These events may lead to the displacement of entire communities and ultimately States, resulting in additional deaths as well as widespread conflict and violence.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Statement to the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Human Rights

<sup>26</sup> UDHR, Art. 3.

<sup>27</sup> UDHR, Art. 25 (guaranteeing every person the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family); Constitution of the World Health Organization (1946), New York, NY, United Nations (available on the internet at [http://www.who.int/rarebooks/official\\_records/constitution.pdf](http://www.who.int/rarebooks/official_records/constitution.pdf)); Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (2002). *Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, General Comment No. 15 (on the right to water) (Geneva).

<sup>28</sup> UNDR, Art. 25 (“everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food [...]”; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 11(1) & 11(2) (recognizing right of every person to “adequate food” and “freedom from hunger”); Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999), General Comment No. 12 (\*\*\*)

<sup>29</sup> UNDR, Art. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. Res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810 (1948) at 72, art. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Norman Myers, *Environmental Refugees: An Emergent Security Issue* at 3.

The right to water is also at risk. In Asia alone, the loss of glaciers and reductions in snow cover are projected to negatively affect water availability in regions containing one-sixth of the world's population. Climate impacts, such as drought and flooding, will "thus exacerbate existing stresses on water resources and compound the problem of access to safe drinking water, currently denied to an estimated 1.1 billion people globally."<sup>32</sup>

The right to food is threatened by increasing temperatures, extreme weather patterns and water shortages. Crop productivity is projected to decrease at lower latitudes, thereby increasing hunger and food insecurity in the poorer regions of the world. In Asia, climate change is expected to put close to 50 million more people at risk of hunger by 2020, increasing to an additional 132 million and 266 million by 2050 and 2080 respectively.<sup>33</sup>

Individuals and communities will also be deprived of the right to property as land becomes flooded and eventually submerged due to climate change. Other human rights are likely implicated, such as the right to health, right to subsistence, right to culture, right to privacy and family life, and right to self-determination. In every case, the threat to the full enjoyment of these rights is profound and immediate within Seychelles and other SIDS.

### ***Climate change and its impacts threaten international peace and security***

The climate impacts and resulting human rights violations described above will lead to economic destabilization, social unrest, resource competition, and population displacement that are sources or root causes of conflict both within and among States. As stated in a 2007 assessment by senior military analysts, "[e]conomic and environmental conditions in already fragile areas will further erode as food production declines, diseases increase, clean water becomes increasingly scarce, and large populations move in search of resources. Weakened and failing governments, with an already thin margin for survival, foster the conditions for internal conflicts, extremism, and movement toward increased authoritarianism and radical ideologies."<sup>34</sup>

In response to these destabilizing impacts, an emerging consensus of military analysts, government leaders and intergovernmental organizations are recognizing climate change as a serious threat to international peace and security.

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<sup>32</sup> Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights, H.R.C. Report 10/61, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/10/61 (Jan. 15, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> IPCC, *Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Chapter 10, available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-chapter10.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> The CNA Corporation, *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change* (2007) (hereinafter "Zinni Report"), at 6, available at <http://securityandclimate.cna.org/report/National%20Security%20and%20the%20Threat%20of%20Climate%20Change.pdf>.

In one of the most widely-referenced studies, eleven retired military leaders led by Ret. General (USA) Anthony Charles Zinni concluded that climate change is a “threat multiplier” that will “exacerbate already marginal living standards” in many regions, resulting in “widespread political instability and the likelihood of failed states” around the world.<sup>35</sup>

This and similar conclusions have been echoed in statements by many leaders and public officials. In 2007, during the Security Council’s open debate on climate change and security, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the UK Margaret Beckett stated that the impacts of climate change “go far beyond the environmental” and “reach to the very heart of the security agenda.”<sup>36</sup> In the same debate, Ambassador of the Marshall Islands H.E. Alfred Capelle warned of the foreseeable loss of his nation’s islands, the creation of a new class of environmental refugees, and the “struggle to redefine [the] Marshalllese identity and homeland,” all of which compound existing political and social stresses.<sup>37</sup> Speaking on behalf of Congo, H.E. Basile Ikouebe called on the international community to recognize the “need for and the urgency of appropriate responses to a major risk of international peace and security.”<sup>38</sup> United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in her remarks to the Major Economies Forum earlier this year, declared that “[c]limate change is a clear and present danger to our world that demands immediate attention.”<sup>39</sup>

This growing awareness of the relationship between climate change and security at both the national and international levels has already placed the issue onto the agenda of some intergovernmental organizations.

In 2007, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly adopted Resolution 367 on Reinforcing the Global Response to Climate Change, in which it recognized that the “effects of climate change will also have geopolitical ramifications and may generate instability and conflicts in regions that are the most affected.”<sup>40</sup> NATO is also considering the potential security implications of climate change in Afghanistan, where water scarcity and food insecurity will exacerbate conditions that breed extremism and terrorism.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Zinni Report at 6. See also Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence, *Statement for the Record: Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, Feb. 12, 2009, at [http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20090212\\_testimony.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20090212_testimony.pdf); and see generally *Climate Change and Global Security: Challenges, Threats and Diplomatic Opportunities*, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> Sess. (July 21, 2009), available at <http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2009/hrg090721p.html>.

<sup>36</sup> S.C. P.V. 5663, U.N. Doc. S/RV/5663 (Apr. 17, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> Remarks made by Hillary Rodham Clinton at the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, Washington, DC (Apr. 27, 2009), available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/04/122240.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> NATO Res. 367 (Oct. 9, 2007), available at <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.Asp?SHORTCUT=1319>.

<sup>41</sup> Wouter Veening, Institute for Environmental Security, *Recent European and NATO Developments on Climate Change & Security*, available at [http://www.envirosecurity.org/CCSC/wveening\\_notes.pdf](http://www.envirosecurity.org/CCSC/wveening_notes.pdf).

The European Union has recognized climate change as a threat to its own security interests. Upon request, the High Representative and European Commission presented a joint report to the European Council in March 2008, stating that “[c]limate change is best viewed as a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability.” The report further states that “climate change threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and conflict prone. It is important to recognise that the risks are not just of a humanitarian nature; they also include political and security risks...”<sup>42</sup>

***Climate change is a threat to peace and security under Chapter VII of the UN Charter***

Under Article 39 of the UN Charter, the Security Council must “determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” and must take necessary measures to safeguard international peace and security. In doing so, the Council has agreed to address the sources or root causes of conflict and humanitarian crises in a comprehensive manner.<sup>43</sup>

The Council has long recognized non-military sources of conflict, including massive flows of displaced peoples and refugees, as threats to international peace and security. In 1992, the President of the Council noted that the “absence of war and military conflicts amongst States does not in itself ensure international peace and security. The non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to peace and security.”<sup>44</sup>

This practice is reflected in the decisions of the Security Council to maintain international peace and stability under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. With respect to displaced peoples and refugees, in 1993, the Council determined that the humanitarian crisis in Haiti “contributes to a climate of fear of persecution and economic dislocation which could increase the number of Haitians seeking refuge in neighboring Member States,” and that “continuation of this situation threatens international peace and security in the region.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in 1991, the Council found that a “massive flow of refugees towards and across international frontiers and to cross-border incursions” caused by repression of the Iraqi civilian population threatens international peace and security.<sup>46</sup> In 1996, the Council made similar findings with respect to the situation in Afghanistan, where

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<sup>42</sup> European Council Doc. 7249/08 Annex, Climate Change and International Security, Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council (March 2008), at [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/reports/99387.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/reports/99387.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> S.C. Res. 1625, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1625 (Sept. 14, 2005); *see also* Statement by the President of the Security Council, U.N. Doc. S/PRST/2005/30 (July 12, 2005) (“The Security Council acknowledges the importance of helping to prevent future conflicts through addressing their root causes in a fair and legitimate manner.”).

<sup>44</sup> Note by the President of the Security Council, U.N. Doc. 23500 (Jan. 31, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> S.C. Res. 841, U.N. Doc. S/RES/841 (June 16, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> S.C. Res 688, U.N. Doc. S/RES/688 (Apr. 5, 1991).

increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons “seriously endanger the stability and peaceful development of the region.”<sup>47</sup>

As previously noted, Council held its first debate on climate change and security in 2007. During that debate, several UN members expressed their concerns for the security implications of climate change. Many argued that the threats caused or exacerbated by climate change clearly fall within the scope of the Council’s mandate. As the President of the Security Council stated in her opening remarks, “[o]ur responsibility in the Council is to maintain international peace and security, including the prevention of conflict. An unstable climate will exacerbate some of the core drivers of conflict, such as migratory pressures and competition for resources.”<sup>48</sup>

Seychelles shares that position.

For small island states, such as the Seychelles, the security implications of climate change are not an issue of economic or political concern, but rather a matter of the inherent right to survival. H.E. Mr. Aisi, speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Small Island Developing States, addressed the unique security concerns of the island states in this regard:

The dangers that small islands and their populations face are no less serious than those faced by nations and peoples threatened by guns and bombs. The effects on our populations are as likely to cause massive dislocations of people as past and present wars.<sup>49</sup>

This is the case for Seychelles. Sea level rise and storm surges will have significant impacts on the coastal population, which accounts for approximately 85% of human settlement and infrastructure in the Seychelles. Rising sea levels will result in the displacement of a large proportion of the population as well as the disappearance of low-lying islands and cays. Storm surges will cause damaging flood conditions in coastal and low-lying areas, likely resulting in severe loss of lives and livelihoods.<sup>50</sup> Changes in hydrological cycles affecting rainfall pattern, evaporation, river runoff, groundwater recharge and water quality will have significant impacts on our water resources. Such impacts are already inundating low-lying lands, eroding wetlands and beaches, exacerbating storm surges and flooding, and increasing the salinity of coastal estuaries and aquifers, thus threatening freshwater resources and valuable coastal agricultural land.

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<sup>47</sup> S.C. Res. 1076, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1076 (Oct. 22, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> S.C. P.V. 5663, U.N. Doc. S/RV/5663 (Apr. 17, 2007).

<sup>49</sup> Id.

<sup>50</sup> World Bank, *Sea-Level Rise and Storm Surges: A Comparative Analysis of Impacts in Developing Countries*, Public Research Working Paper 4901 (April 2009), available at [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2009/04/14/000158349\\_20090414102048/Rended/PDF/WPS4901.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2009/04/14/000158349_20090414102048/Rended/PDF/WPS4901.pdf).

These situations pose a significant threat to the inalienable right to survival and existence of the people of the Seychelles. In light of its national circumstances, Seychelles agrees with the statement of H.E. Menon of Singapore at the conclusion of the 2007 debate that “it seems obvious to all but the willfully blind that climate change must, if not now, eventually have some impact on international peace and security.”<sup>51</sup>

This impact brings the matter of climate change within the competence and cognizance of the Security Council, and creates in the Council a responsibility to take responsive measures to mitigate these security risks and safeguard international peace and stability.

### **Conclusion**

The Republic of Seychelles acknowledges the key role of the UNFCCC on issues pertaining to climate change. However, the Republic of Seychelles also recognizes the urgent need for engagement by all of the UN organs and specifically the Security Council. For the reasons discussed above, climate change and its security implications fall within the scope of the Security Council’s mandate and thus require further discussion and immediate action by the Council.

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<sup>51</sup> S.C. P.V. 5663 (Resumption 1), U.N. Doc. S/RV/5663 (Resumption 1) (Apr. 17, 2007).