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Remarks by

Gerald Mitchell

Deputy Head of Office at the United Nations Office to the
African Union & Chief of Political Affairs,

on behalf of

Hanna S. Tetteh

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General &
Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union

at the

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Briefing on Climate Change and its Impact on Island States
in Africa**

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Check Against Delivery

**Chairperson of the African Union Peace and Security Council,
Distinguished Members of the Council,**

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this open session on ‘Climate Change and its Impact on Island States in Africa’. Considering the impact of Climate Change on Island States across the globe, it is not surprising to us that this issue is now on the Agendas of the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

The United Nations Secretary-General has repeatedly described climate change as the defining issue of our time, and an existential threat that is running faster than our efforts to address it. What we are dealing with is not merely an environmental issue, but a multidimensional one as well, which has social, economic and political implications.

More frequent and destructive natural disasters with the attendant destruction that brings misery to the life of thousands of people, intensified competition over scarce resources, depletion of livelihoods and forced displacement, are just a few of the many ways through which climate change can affect communities and lead to insecurity. We are all witness to the destruction caused in Mozambique and Zimbabwe by cyclone Idai, imagine what the situation would have been if it had made landfall in one of Africa’s southern island states.

Mr. Chairperson,

The United Nations recognizes that island nations face a particularly acute set of challenges. Several studies, including reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC), found robust evidence of the exceptional vulnerability of island states to climate change. Their geographical characteristics, isolation and exposure exacerbate the adverse impacts of climate change.

The rise in Sea Levels threatens the very existence of territories - a challenge unlike anything we have ever seen before. It also causes the loss of land, has implications for fishing rights, and affects maritime boundaries. It raises questions of sovereignty, state integrity, and national identity. Warming air and ocean temperatures and increasingly severe weather events, such as cyclones, impact water supplies and fisheries which are vital to livelihoods. Relocating coastal populations poses challenges regarding land tenure and ownership, among others.

Additionally, Island States are by no means a homogenous group. Their specific vulnerability and resilience to the impacts of climate change must be understood in terms of their geographical, climatic, social and political features as well as in terms of their economic development.

While contributing little to climate change in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, Island States are the most likely to suffer most from its adverse effects. Yet, despite the challenges, they have demonstrated global leadership and are at the forefront of advancing climate action. Let us take their commitment as an example.

Mr. Chairperson,

To effectively respond to the challenges faced, we need a process that considers the social, political, economic and demographic realities of individual Island States and works with national and local actors to address the specific threats that accompany

the rise in sea levels, and extreme weather events, and make available expertise on best practices in policy development and implementation to deal with these challenges while building national capacities for implementation

In October 2018, the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Environment Programme, jointly established an interagency initiative, termed the Climate Security Mechanism. With the backing of partners from across and beyond the UN system, this initiative is advancing work on more systematic risk assessments, a global evidence base for prevention and response strategies, and targeted advocacy.

The African Adaptation Initiative is another great example of promoting international cooperation and coherence, as well as African ownership, in addressing the adverse effects of climate change. The United Nations proudly supports the Initiative, through technical and policy advice as well as financial assistance.

Mr. Chairperson,

There is a real opportunity in strengthening partnerships to leverage existing capacities. The United Nations has enhanced its cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations. A strong African Union-United Nations partnership is especially important in this context.

The Secretary-General has called on the international community to respond collectively and urgently. The 2019 Climate Action Summit, planned for 23 September in New York, will provide the opportunity to accelerate action to combat

climate change and limit its impacts, including on peace and security. The Secretary-General has invited leaders to come to New York with concrete and realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020. He has made four demands ahead of the Summit, which are: to stop new funding or construction of coal facilities from the year 2020; to commit to carbon neutrality, i.e. net zero emissions, by 2050; to stop spending US \$ 4.7 trillion per year on fossil fuel subsidies; and to make polluters pay. Delivering on these demands, among other measures, will contribute to winning the race against climate change and addressing its adverse effects, including on Island States.

I look forward to joint accelerated action to tackle the enormous challenges before us.

Thank you for your kind attention.
