Event Title: Scaling up and mainstreaming anticipatory approaches through empowered locally led action

Date and time: Tuesday 21 June, 1.15- 2.45pm (New York time)

Sponsor: Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations

Organizers: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), Start Network, and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Objective:

Drawing upon the experience of key agencies and organizations working to address the humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis and bringing together government and humanitarian organizations’ representatives, this official ECOSOC HAS side event looked at the ways to further scale up and mainstream anticipatory action and provide forward-looking considerations in terms of next steps for anticipatory action.

The event explored solutions to address the humanitarian impacts of the climate crisis and determined the key actions required to scale up anticipatory action from the ECOSOC members and pave the way for translating global commitments to concrete actions.

The event also deliberated on some lessons learnt on anticipatory action and good practices in other contexts. It highlighted the importance and practice of working together and through coordinated actions to enable anticipatory action and pre-agreed ex-ante financing.

Panel Members: (names, titles, and organizations)

Moderator
Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Chief, Inter-Agency Services Branch and IASC secretariat, OCHA

Opening Remarks
H.E. Mr. Magnus Lennartsson, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

Case Study
Dr. Habilou Tsahiro, Regional Programme Coordinator for UNFPA in Niger

Video on The Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN) Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management

Panel Discussion
Mr. Rein Paulsen, Director of the Office of Emergencies and Resilience, FAO
Ms. Clare Harris, Head of Crisis Anticipation and Risk Financing, START Network
Ms. Alice Sequi, Chief Pooled Fund Management Branch, OCHA
Ms. Emma Flaherty, Thematic Lead-Implementation, Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP, hosted by IFRC)
Ms. Sibi Lawson-Marriott, Senior Regional Adviser, Regional Office for East Africa, WFP

Main points raised by each panelist:

Moderator
Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Chief, Inter-Agency Services Branch and IASC secretariat
At the outset, Ms. Shelbaya explained that the event was timely given the climate crisis, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, and conflict which called for the redoubling of efforts for a well-resourced and better equipped humanitarian system that puts people at the centre, especially women and women-led organizations.

She said that anticipatory action comprised a way to preserve hard won development gains by addressing humanitarian impacts before they unfold.

Opening Remarks
H.E. Mr. Magnus Lennartsson, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations
As a sponsor, Mr. Lennartsson expressed his gratitude to staff in the field for putting their lives at risk to offer humanitarian assistance. He said the most vulnerable populations are taking the heaviest toll. The humanitarian system is overstretched as needs are rising.

The increased gap between needs and funding propels all to seek innovative solutions. Anticipatory action is key to this transition from rapid response to acting ahead across actors and sectors. Flexible funding needs to be increased. Sweden is fully committed to this cause.

Case Study
Dr. Habilou Tsahiro, Regional Programme Coordinator for UNFPA in Niger
In a recorded video from Niger, Dr. Tsahiro, explained that anticipatory action in Niger is in response to drought, using a protection framework and engaging with the local community, traditional leaders, families, and adolescent girls. This action is aimed at keeping girls in school to protect them from child marriage, which is a life-changing event for the girls and for the nation in terms of increased capacity and skilled human resources. It is also a gain for women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality.

Video on The Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN) Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management
The ASEAN video highlighted the importance of anticipatory action to the most disaster prone region and the launching of a framework to take this work forward at the regional level in a coherent and coordinated manner.

Panel Discussion
Mr. Rein Paulsen, Director of the Office of Emergencies and Resilience, FAO
Mr. Paulsen spoke about hotspots of food insecurity and recommendations for anticipatory action given rising hunger and the need to safeguard livelihoods and strengthen resilience to save lives ahead of forecast shocks in the coming months. Anticipatory action is an urgent instrument to help curb acute food insecurity trends, with 193 million people who faced acute hunger in 2021, an 80% increase from 2016. FAO and partners have recently started anticipatory actions in several countries where shocks are expected in the coming months: examples include Sri Lanka where cash is being provided to smallholder farmers, and the Sahel with support to livelihoods ahead of the risk of localized flooding.

He highlighted six challenges and opportunities: 1) Anticipatory action approach should be fully embedded in humanitarian programming cycle; 2) Anticipatory action cannot solely be conceived as proactive response measure, it must be linked to disaster risk reduction and climate action as an opportunity to operationalize the humanitarian-
development-peace nexus; 3). Scaling up anticipatory action has to do with government ownership; 4). Affected communities must be at centre of the anticipatory programme cycle; 5). Pre-arranged unearmarked funds are needed to act ahead of shocks; and 6). Enhanced capacities and modalities of coordination are needed with all partners to move forward.

Ms. Clare Harris, Head of Crisis Anticipation and Risk Financing, START Network
Ms. Harris said localized action was central as civil society needed to be included, working with the UN and the Government, and this needs to be strengthened moving forward. Interagency coordination also needs to be strengthened. The Start Network’s action is tailored to risks and engagement with local communities, which is foundational. Prepositioned financing is necessary for success. In several cases including Madagascar, the Start Ready tool was activated. Anticipatory action is not a silver bullet, but it is an important tool that needs to be further strengthened through ongoing partnership.

Ms. Alice Sequi, Chief Pooled Fund Management Branch, OCHA
Ms. Sequi explained that OCHA has facilitated and coordinated effective anticipatory action through pooled based funds to invest in humanitarian action. The first anticipatory action was Bangladesh funded through CERF. Since July 2020, many people have been reached. In the Horn of Africa, Somalia and Ethiopia, anticipatory action was triggered in late 2020 in response to failed rainy seasons and drought and kept people out of acute food insecurity. OCHA has also triggered new frameworks in several countries reaching 3 million people and funding was provided. Anticipatory action work has prompted OCHA to integrate this approach in its DNA. OCHA is looking into how to be more flexible and agile in its approach, building on the frameworks. OCHA is building capacity, and working to strengthen local engagement, financing and coordinated action.

Ms. Emma Flaherty, Thematic Lead-Implementation, Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP, hosted by IFRC)
Ms. Emma Flaherty, REAP hosted by IFRC, said that coordination is key to effective anticipatory action and financing remains an issue. It is very difficult to track pledges and spending. There are positive indications that anticipatory action financing is growing, but it is nowhere near the funding amounts that are needed in response to climate change. Speaking about REAP’s recent report “Finance for Early Action: Tracking Commitments, Trends, Challenges and Opportunities”, she cited the need to reposition anticipatory action and early action as not just a responsibility of humanitarian actors but also a responsibility of development and climate actors to become engaged with investments across the board. Governments need to be engaged from the start and bringing in the private sector can boost efforts. More coherence is needed across the division of labour and across the humanitarian development peace nexus, climate funds and humanitarian funding. Flexible predicted funding is needed to be faster and more effective.

Ms. Sibi Lawson-Marriott, Senior Regional Adviser, Regional Office for East Africa, WFP
Ms. Lawson-Marriott stressed that the hunger caseload is doubling far faster than we can respond. Anticipatory action is urgent and droughts, famines are on an accelerated timeline. We have all elements in place, from fiduciary arrangements to partnerships to frameworks to do this work. Anticipatory action has enabled livestock protection, food, cash, and keeping girls in school, so there is a lot of great work being done and this approach needs to be fast-tracked by all actors. WFP is already making the adjustments in central emergency funding mechanism to ring fence funds for anticipatory action to reach people quickly. We need to take the work to scale as we know how this works now. We are grateful to donors for supporting this work and the proof of concept, which is now ready to go to scale. Let us do this together.

Key messages of the side event:
- This year’s report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes for the first time that the climate crisis is a humanitarian crisis. Climate change will increase the frequency, intensity and severity of
droughts, floods and heatwaves, and continued sea level rise will increase risks to food security in vulnerable regions and drive displacement.

- Due to the climate crisis, along with other compounding crises, like the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, and now a global food and energy crisis, have called for the redoubling of efforts for a well-resourced and better equipped humanitarian system that puts people at the centre, especially women and women-led organizations.

- Currently, the humanitarian system is over stretched as needs are rising. He said the most vulnerable populations are taking the heaviest toll.

- A key solution for protecting people and preventing loss and damage is to anticipate predictable disasters and crises and act ahead of time through anticipatory action, which shifts the focus from a traditional reactive response to a more proactive humanitarian response.

- Anticipatory action should be fully embedded into humanitarian programming and be linked to climate action and disaster risk reduction measures. It requires planning ahead, reliable early warning information, and pre-arranged, predictable, timely and unearmarked financing from different sources, including humanitarian, development, and climate budgets.

- Anticipatory action requires a localized approach and civil society need to be included, working with the government and UN.

- Anticipatory action is especially important as the hunger caseload has doubled. It’s necessary to predict famines and droughts and to enable cash, food, livestock protection, and to keep children, particularly girls, in school.

Main points raised during the discussion with participants:

- Governments is the room emphasized that the side event shows how far anticipatory action has come as an approach in the past few years. A government partner expressed their commitment to anticipatory action from both a humanitarian and development perspective and hears the call for flexible funding.

- A stakeholder in the room echoed the UN Secretary-General’s pledge for 100% early warning systems and stressed the need to translate early warning into early action and the importance of empowering local communities and partners.

- A stakeholder said that anticipatory action is urgently needed to address today’s challenges like rising floods, droughts, famine, all of which are displacing the most vulnerable, especially in the Horn of Africa. This region especially needs early warning, action, and funding.

Outcomes of the side event:

- There was widespread consensus from all participants, Member States, UN agencies, and national and international NGOs on the importance of scaling up anticipatory action, and need for scaling up of timely and flexible funding.

- There was increased awareness among Member States and participants of the effectiveness of anticipatory action, the extent of local ownership and local decision making and improved understanding of local capacity building that is central to all anticipatory action.

- The side event was a key opportunity to further the anticipatory action agenda and accelerate high-level advocacy and action.
- It provided a platform for voices from frontline responders to share their insights and experiences on the positive impacts of anticipatory actions.
- The preparations of the event created an opportunity for further collaboration between UN and NGO partners on this common goal of scaling up anticipatory action.