ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment High-Level Panel on “Humanitarian action and climate change: advancing anticipatory approaches, strengthening resilience and enhancing collaboration in response to the climate crisis”

Thursday 24 June, 15:00 – 17:00, Geneva, Hybrid format

Opening Remarks for H.E. Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and Vice-President of ECOSOC

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this, the third of our high-level panels at this year’s Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

It bears repeating that global humanitarian needs are rising: Some 238 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2021, a 40 per cent increase on last year. Fragility, conflict, COVID-19 and disasters are driving these increasing needs, which are further exacerbated by climate change.

The climate crisis is already leading to rising levels of hunger. We already discussed that issue during our Transition Event. Without adequate action, disease and infectious diseases will spread more easily. The number of heat-related deaths will soar, especially among older persons. Water disputes will become more frequent, as will displacement by the most vulnerable people seeking water, food and livelihoods.

The Institute for Economics and Peace predicts that on our current trajectory, over a third of countries will experience high or extreme levels of water stress by 2040, while almost a quarter of countries will face catastrophic food insecurity.
In order to limit the negative impacts of climate change, especially on the most vulnerable, and prevent a climate-related doomsday scenario of immense humanitarian needs we must urgently accelerate global action to mitigate climate change, and to help communities around the world adapt to its effects. Making the requisite progress on both these fronts requires working together to find innovative solutions. We must help support those people who are least responsible for climate change but most vulnerable to its impacts.

Today’s panel will explore concrete actions for the humanitarian system to better prepare for and respond to escalating climate risks and disaster impacts, in a much more timely, effective, and cost-efficient manner.

Member States and donors are increasingly generous, yet the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available to meet them is growing. There is thus a strong imperative for the humanitarian system to be more effective and efficient with the resources received.

Anticipatory approaches are one way to achieve that increased effectiveness and efficiency and I look forward to our panelists’ views on identifying critical actions required to scale up anticipatory action and advance the system-wide shift, including solutions for planning, operations and financing.

In addition, the United Nations and with it the international community can only succeed if it’s different parts work hand in hand. So, we invited the panelists to point out opportunities for the humanitarian system to strengthen collaboration and complementarity with development, disaster risk reduction, climate and peacebuilding actors in addressing climate risks and impacts. This is a very good example of what we call “the nexus”.

Finally, it will be valuable to hear from our panelists how the essential role and leadership of local actors, especially women and young women can maximize community resilience, preparedness and response efforts.