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### Event

**Twenty-second session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York from 27 to 31 March 2023**

**Climate change is one of the most significant environmental challenges of our time, and a key strand of the triple planetary crisis, alongside biodiversity loss and pollution.** Climate change may not always be a direct cause of conflict, but it can multiply and amplify existing risks to peace and development.

Climate change can obstruct access to water, food, health, and housing. People who are already in vulnerable situations including those living in poverty or in situations of conflict may experience impacts more acutely because they have less capacity for coping and fewer resources with which to build resilience.

Climate change contributes to slow-onset and extreme weather events, requiring state institutions to redirect their attention and resources. Meanwhile, the decrease in livelihood opportunities caused by a changing climate can expose household and community-level vulnerabilities, impact livelihoods, compound economic inequality and erode social structures that would normally offer support and protection.

Rising seas pose “unthinkable” risks to billions around the world, with profound implications for security, international law, human rights, and the very fabric of societies. In February, the Secretary-General warned that the impact of rising seas is already creating new sources of instability and conflict.

This was at the Security Council’s first-ever meeting on Sea-level rise and its implications for international peace and security. The Secretary-General noted that some nations’ coastlines have already seen triple the average rate of sea level rise.

Countries were called to action on several fronts, including broadening the global community’s understanding of the root causes of insecurity, and addressing the impacts of rising seas across legal and human rights frameworks.

The clarion call remains, in March, that “there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all”. Worldwide climate resilient development action is more urgent than ever.

Governments must act, together with civil society and the private sectors, to enable and accelerate shifts in development pathways towards sustainability and climate-

resilient development. Governments must act to secure the enabling conditions for climate action, including coordinated policies, social and international cooperation, and inclusive governance.

**Fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict often face significant environmental challenges. From natural resource depletion to environmental degradation, and the impacts of climate change.** Responding to the effects of climate change in institution-building efforts in fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict requires a strong focus on environmental rule of law.

The environmental rule of law calls upon countries to uphold the rule of law for environmental protection. By strengthening environmental rule of law, governments can promote sustainable natural resource management and address environmental challenges in these contexts. This can help to reduce the drivers of conflict, promote stability, and support sustainable development.

Institution-building efforts can focus on developing and strengthening legal frameworks and institutions to support environmental rule of law, as well as building the capacity of government agencies and civil society to implement and enforce environmental law. This can involve developing mechanisms for public participation and access to information, as well as establishing systems for monitoring and reporting on environmental issues.

Responding to the effects of climate change in fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict requires innovative solutions that take into account the unique environmental and social contexts of these countries. This can involve promoting sustainable natural resource management practices, supporting the development of renewable energy systems, and building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Failure to uphold the environmental rule of law can drive and sustain displacement. This can, in turn, complicate efforts to maintain environmental rule of law.

Environmental rule of law is needed to ensure that limited resources are used efficiently in development. It can also strengthen relationships between the peace and security, and the environment. It is therefore important to adopt rights-based and gender-smart approaches in tackling climate action in fragile countries.

**Application of the United Nations principles of effective governance for sustainable development for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, can help to promote good governance practices that support sustainable natural resource management and help to address environmental degradation.** The Principles of Effective Governance can also help to address environmental degradation by promoting good governance practices that can support sustainable natural resource management.

The principles of transparency and accountability, governments can ensure that environmental regulations are enforced and that polluters are held responsible for the

damage they cause to the environment. Climate litigation remains a central feature of ongoing efforts to promote climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Climate litigation can promote transparency and accountability for private actors and contribute to identifying areas for action by countries to meet their obligations under the international climate legal framework. The number and variety of climate change cases continue to increase, as does the geographical range in which climate litigation takes place.

Participation and inclusiveness can also play a key role in ensuring that all stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous peoples, are involved in decision-making processes related to environmental management. Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including faith-based actors, is essential to strengthening environmental Governance at the global, regional, and national levels.

Faith actors are in many instances the first responders in crisis and peacebuilding. Faith actors own more than 50% of educational institutions and health services making them key players. Faith actors have been engaging with leaders during Climate Change and Biodiversity Conferences of the Parties with powerful messages at the highest level.

At the Climate COP 26, forty-two Faith leaders including Pope Francis and Imam Al-Azhar and 12 other religions signed an Interfaith Statement, highlighting the observed need to engage stakeholders, including faith actors, in climate action.

Efficiency and effectiveness can help to ensure that natural resources are used in a sustainable manner and that policies and regulations related to environmental management are implemented in a timely and effective manner.

The environmental rule of law can also provide a framework for protecting the environment and ensuring that natural resources are managed in a fair and sustainable manner. A safe climate is one of the key components of the right to a healthy environment.

Fulfilling the obligations to respect, protect, and promote human rights could potentially drive the transformative changes needed to address the pressing climate crisis, and help all countries including those that are fragile and emerging from conflict.

The right to a healthy environment is essential for the greater protection of people and the planet in all situations, including fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict. A clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water, and sanitation, and a healthy environment depends on the exercise of human rights. The right is recognized by over 155 States at the national and regional levels and it has been recently recognized by historic UN General Assembly resolution 76/300.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme, supports countries on legal and institutional measures on climate. For example, UNEP provides guidance to countries including through the global climate litigation report.

UNEP has collaborated with Member States to strengthen the capacity of countries and international partners to identify environment and climate-related security risks at global, national and community levels, and to programme suitable risk reduction and response measures.

UNEP has also contributed to strengthening the evidence base on the gender dimensions of climate change and security, recognizing that climate-related security risks do not impact everyone equally. In June 2020, UNEP together with UN Women, UNDP, and DPPA launched the policy report [Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change](#).

As the UN scales up global action to build resilience to climate security challenges, the results and lessons learned from these initiatives provide guidance, practical tools, and concrete examples to support future planning and increased programming in different regions of the world.