



PRESS RELEASE

23 September 2019
For Immediate Release

Vulnerable Leaders Demand Further Action following UN Climate Summit: 2020 Deadline for Survival

United Nations, NEW YORK – 23 Sept 2019: Leaders of the Climate Vulnerable Forum today addressed the UN Climate Action Summit to credit progress achieved following announcements today by leaders and highlighting the urgency for more widespread action by 2020.

Hilda Heine, Hon. President of the Marshall Islands, which chairs the 48-member state* Climate Vulnerable Forum, said: “My country’s survival is threatened if action doesn’t materialize,” adding that “for atoll nations, there can be none of what some people are calling a ‘managed retreat’ – we simply don’t have such luxury. Our frontline is our last line-there is no fall back. We have to defend that last line. If the line falls that’s it for us.”

“Participation in the Summit has been strong, but there are notable absences among large emitting and wealthy nations,” said President Heine, adding “the international community, and the public, can judge the seriousness of action by whether or not countries are moving to upgrade their national efforts or NDCs under the Paris Agreement by next Spring. We fail to fathom why countries still hold back when so much is at stake and the benefits of climate action are so obvious.”

Carlos Alvarado, Hon. President of Costa Rica said: “Anything is possible. We need to keep up the momentum until every leader and nation can announce an enhanced national effort (NDC) by next Spring. Great progress has been made today, but we have far to go. The next step: UNFCCC pre-COP in San Jose next month. We are giving special emphasis to ambition in climate action, integration of human rights and gender. Count on Costa Rica to keep building momentum. Who said it is impossible?!”

President Heine also indicated that Climate Vulnerable Forum member states have been studying what more the UN’s human rights instruments could accomplish to help promote responses to the climatic emergency, including the need for a UN Special Rapporteur and a Commission of Inquiry on intergenerational climate justice “to grapple with issues brought by millions of protesting youth.”

Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, joined the Climate Vulnerable Forum Leaders briefing held at the UN, and commented: “The climate crisis poses an existential threat to the effective enjoyment of all human rights. Ambitious climate action is a human rights imperative. States must do more to protect the rights of those most affected by the climate crisis and prevent its deepening. The UN Human Rights Office is ready to support more expansive State-led efforts to address the human rights impacts of climate change. If we are to prevent the worst impacts of this crisis, we must act now, we must act urgently and we must deploy every tool at our disposal.”

Fady Jreissati, Lebanese Minister of the Environment stated: “Reducing vulnerability is making sure that climate change does not lead to displacement of people, and does not reduce political stability and security. This is also something Lebanon holds dear to its heart, which is why Lebanon’s proposal to host the academy for human encounters and dialogue to promote interchange between cultures and civilizations has been approved by the UN General Assembly. Lebanon is also doing all it can to act on climate change. Not only are we currently updating our NDC, but we are also working to establish a regional platform for non-state actors action on climate change for the Arab region.”

Patrick Verkooijen, CEO of the Global Center for Adaptation and Climate Vulnerable Forum Managing Partner, commented that: “The Global Commission on Adaptation has found that a ‘climate apartheid’ could prevail if action is not taken. That would mean a world where some countries are so extremely affected by climate change that they are locked into a different, vicious-cycle, degenerating development path. The countries of this Forum are precisely those countries falling victim to an emerging climate apartheid.”

Dr. Verkooijen also clarified that the urgency for increased ambition by 2020 relates to 2025 being the next Paris Agreement agreed timeframe for submitting national pledges of action or NDCs (National Determined Contributions), which is directly linked to risks run by those most vulnerable if countries delayed upgrading their national efforts for another more than five years.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

Climate Vulnerable Forum members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Haïti, Honduras, Kenya, Kiribati, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Palau, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Senegal, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Viet Nam and Yemen.

*UN non-member observer state

Contact: <press@thecvf.org>

Web: thecvf.org