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Speech by Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström at the Berlin Climate and Security Conference on 4 June 2019
Roundtable III: Climate change impacts and state fragility

Thank you for inviting me, and for the opportunity to discuss these important issues with you. I am also pleased to be joined by friends from Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan and the Lake Chad region, who will take part in the discussions that follow.

Last year, Sweden experienced one of the warmest summers in post-industrial times – the fires that raged out of control, particularly in July, took some 250 square kilometers of our forests, an area roughly equivalent to half the size of either Stockholm, Kinshasa or Singapore. We had to draw on the resources of other EU Member States to manage the situation.

What might be a manageable effect of climate change in one geographical context might, in another context, contribute to a tense and potentially violent situation. Consider pastoralists in Kenya who, due to sustained droughts, have moved their cattle outside the traditional grazing lands in order to find enough grass for the animals to survive and, as a consequence, clash with farmers over the right to be on the land.

When I visited Lake Chad at the beginning of July 2018, together with UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, I met the women and men who are already dealing with the consequences that climate change is having on peace and security. I met migrants who are displaced by drought and floods. I met parents who can no longer feed their families because of more extreme weather patterns. This fuels tensions and mistrust, and prolongs the

conflict. And the conflict, in turn, makes it much more difficult to adapt to the challenges caused by more extreme weather patterns.

We know that the global population is still growing by the size of one Germany (approximately 80 million) every year. When climate change interacts with demographic pressure, the rapid loss of biodiversity and failing ecosystems, it makes for a dangerous cocktail.

People in countries with strong institutions and good governance are more resilient to some of these changes – the ability to cope with a new and extreme situation is naturally easier when you have a strong starting position. This is also why we should not underestimate, not even in the context of climate change, the force of a democratic, equal, and inclusive society, equipped with a strong and vibrant civil society, free press, good governance and human rights.

The world is also interconnected more than ever before. Climate change knows no borders, just as today's tensions and conflicts are prone to spread across borders and oceans. International trade connects almost all corners of the globe. Major disruptions in an interconnected world affect the balance and pose a security risk for everyone.

And we are indeed at a time in history when climate change must be rightfully recognised by all actors as a security risk. The UN Secretary-General has been very explicit about this, saying that: “we face a direct existential threat”. We need no clearer evidence to act. But even as we prepare to act swiftly, going through what needs to be done in each sector of society to curb emissions, we know that the negative impacts are already affecting us and will increasingly do so in the decades to come.

This is why it was very timely that, in 2017, the UN Security Council, during Sweden's term on the Council, adopted its first ever resolution¹ that emphasized the need for adequate climate-related risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the UN in relation to Lake Chad. But, I can tell you, this was not a given. I think what made the difference was that all the UNSC Ambassadors had personally been faced with the stark realities and stories of the people in the Lake Chad region when on a visit there earlier in 2017.

¹ S/RES/2349 (2017)

That resolution has been followed by other similar resolutions and statements. The UN has recently established a small mechanism in New York to enhance its capability to coordinate analysis and response in the field in relation to climate-related security risks. This is a good start, but much more needs to be done institutionally in the coming years, both in the UN and the EU, and in other multilateral organisations. Let me give you some examples of what needs to be done:

1. We need a proper institutional home for climate-related security risks in the UN. And something similar in the EEAS/EU.
2. We need better tools for early warning and early intervention in fragile contexts that are both climate-sensitive and conflict-sensitive.
3. We need to connect science with policy makers. Institutions like the UN Security Council simply need to be aware of the security risks that come with climate change in different geographical settings. In essence, we need climate-informed crisis management and prevention to sustain peace.

Working together to fight climate change is an effective way of building peace. Sweden's experience from last year's forest fires also showed that a crisis also presents an opportunity for cooperation and learning from one another. The consequences of climate change are already here and they will indeed become more apparent in the decades to come. We have to step up our action to address today's and tomorrow's climate-related security risks in an integrated manner. We have to make our institutions fit for that purpose. We have to listen carefully and understand what scientists are telling us. And we have to realise that by bankrupting nature, we are bankrupting our children's future. We can only solve this crisis if we work together.

Thank you.