PRESS RELEASE

Climate Action Imperative to 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

NEW YORK – 20 April 2016: A High-Level meeting of the Climate Vulnerable Forum at United Nations Headquarters today emphasized the need for urgent action on climate change ahead of the UN 21 April High-Level Debate on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the signature ceremony for the Paris Agreement.

"Climate change holds back the sustainable development of our vulnerable countries. Escaping poverty is becoming far harder for the poor, who are worst hit by climate impacts. Hunger is increasing as extreme weather and drought punish agriculture and threaten long-term food security. Diseases like the Zika virus and water-borne infections sensitive to changes in the climate are spreading and rolling back advances in health programs. Ecosystems, infrastructure, and cities are all in danger. The world cannot hope to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if it fails to keep temperatures from breaching the critical 1.5 degrees temperature threshold," said Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman of the Climate Change Commission of the Philippines. "On the other hand, fighting climate change will also improve health with less air pollution and extend energy access as renewables increasingly penetrate the off-grid world."

Senator Loren Legarda, Chair of the Philippine Senate permanent committee on climate change, UNISDR Global Champion for Resilience and Executive Board Member of the Women in Parliaments Global Forum added: "We cannot afford delays in carrying out our commitments because the more we stall action, the faster we reach the dangerous 2°C mark. Two days from now, representatives from our respective countries will formally sign the Paris
Agreement. Let us unite, let us rally our networks, organizations, civil society in ensuring that our governments also keep the promises we declared in Paris. The 1.5°C goal is enshrined in the Agreement.”

John Silke, Marshall Islands Minister of Foreign Affairs, highlighted threats of climate change to sovereignty, commenting: “Do we still retain our seats at the United Nations if we cease to exist as countries? Do we retain our rights to our natural resources? Who gives ownership to these? Assuming that we can arrest climate change with the 1.5 [degrees Celsius] target. But we have to begin discussing these long-term issues.”

Climate Vulnerable Forum delegates met to confer on plans and priorities for 2016, covering activities across a range of UN bodies, including the UN climate convention (UNFCCC), and areas of research, communications and policy. On Friday, member countries of the Forum, many of which have led on ratification of the Paris Agreement, with Fiji, Palau, Marshall Islands and Maldives the first nations to ratify, are also actively participating in the High-Level signing ceremony at UN Headquarters.

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The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) is a Member State led initiative. UNDP hosts a global support project to assist the CVF’s South-South cooperation activities.