

## **Video Message to the Panel of Experts on Climate Leadership, on the eve of the Pacific Islands Forum, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2013**

**Mary Robinson, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice**

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Warm greetings to you all. I'm very sorry that I cannot be with you at this Panel of Experts on Climate Leadership, but I am thankful to its organisers and Minister de Brum for inviting me to contribute to this important discussion, and, in particular, to speak about the threats to security posed by the impacts of climate change.

When it comes to climate change, the people of the Pacific Islands are probably more acutely aware of its shocking effects than most. Your countries have suffered, and continue to suffer, from devastating droughts, rising sea levels and violent storms. Indeed the Marshall Islands are an example of how extreme the impacts of climate change can be – whether through the high tides that destroyed homes in Majuro in June, or the severe drought which residents of the northern islands have experienced this year, causing drastic shortages in food and water.

In addressing the panel I've been presented with two questions: 'Is there a link between climate security and equity?' and 'Will increasingly drawing attention to climate change as a security issue help to drive a more ambitious response to the problem?'

To be brief, the answer to both questions is 'yes'. But please allow me to elaborate.

My Foundation focusses on climate justice, which puts people at the centre of the climate debate.

Those at the forefront of climate shocks know all too well what it is like to have their human rights put at risk – their rights to food and water, to health and to housing, and their very right to survival. As a result, future development is undermined. As developed countries and emerging economies continue to grow, their carbon emissions threaten the security of our world's most vulnerable citizens. This is the injustice of climate change.

My Foundation realises this injustice. If we care about our global citizens, we must take equitable, ambitious action in order to avoid reaching a tipping point where people will no longer be able to adapt to the dramatic changes in climate.

Our global efforts must collectively reach the required targets of sufficiently reducing carbon emissions, while prioritising sustainable alternatives. For too long developed countries have waited to see how far others will go before acting on their own commitments. This is not acceptable.

That is why I support the idea of an equity tool or framework. This would enable countries to assess the adequacy and fairness of their own and other countries' contributions to tackle the climate crisis.

Different nations will have different priorities and will make different contributions to the global solution. These range from reducing emissions, to investing in sustainable energy and protecting citizens from the impacts of climate change. The overall goal should be for each country to make the

maximum contribution possible, cognisant of their different responsibilities, capabilities and priorities. Globally these contributions have to add up to enough to keep warming below 2 degrees – indeed, preferably below 1.5 degrees – and in so doing avoid dangerous climate change and the resulting impacts on human security.

Moving to the question ‘Will increasingly drawing attention to climate change as a security issue help to drive a more ambitious response to the problem?’

Climate change needs to be elevated to the highest levels of political decision making – in keeping with the magnitude of the challenge it poses. This is why I call upon the UN Security Council to further its work on climate change and provide a high level platform for leadership on climate justice.

No longer is climate change a sideline issue that can be compartmentalised into the work of designated bodies. The lives of too many people are at stake. That is why the Security Council must recognise the threat to human security and adopt a rights-based approach to tackling the crisis, before it is too late.

The Climate Change Leaders’ Summit which UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will host in 12 months’ time is a positive development. Leaders will need to be ready to act by then – and the UN Security Council can play a role in raising climate change up the political agenda and galvanising leadership for transformational action. Too much time has been spent in delaying climate action. We have no more time to waste.

My Foundation has partnered with the World Resources Institute to establish the Climate Justice Dialogue. The Dialogue is working to shape a new narrative which places people at the centre of discussions and decision making on climate change. In order to mobilize political will, leaders will need to be supported by constituencies and coalitions demanding climate action. Business people, trade unions, young people, women’s organisations, and faith based communities all have a role to play in demanding greater urgency and ambition from political leaders.

To conclude, I would like to wish the organisers of this year’s Pacific Islands Forum well over the next four days as they facilitate a hugely important discussion on climate change. I look forward to reading the outcomes from the forum in the Majuro Declaration on Climate Leadership which I am confident can set the tone and ambition needed for the leaders’ summit next year. I encourage you all to look out for the Declaration on Climate Justice prepared by the High Level Advisory Committee of the Climate Justice Dialogue, of which the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Judge Tuiloma Neroni Slade, is a member. This Declaration will be launched on the margins of the UN General Assembly later this month. It too is an expression of the need for transformational leadership to solve what I believe is the greatest human rights issue of our time.

Thank you.