Prepared Remarks

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Thank you to the Italian Mission and the other co-sponsors of today's Arria Formula meeting – Sweden, Morocco, UK, Netherlands, Peru, Japan, France, Maldives and Germany.

I'm honored to share my thoughts on the concept of a Responsibility to Prepare.

The stable climatic period geologists call the Holocene - a period which includes the advent of agriculture, the rise and fall of empires and monarchies, the birth of the nation-state, and the invention of rocket ships and computers - has ended, making way for a new epoch: The Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is characterized by human-induced changes to the climate that are unprecedented in our history of record. These changes include the melting of glaciers and polar icecaps, extreme rainfall variability, sea level rise and ocean acidification – are all changes that can disrupt the foundations of the social, political, economic and security institutions that undergird our civilization. Simply put, these changes affect the basic resources that support human livelihoods, nations and the global order those nations participate in. That's the bad news.

But there's good news. As distinct from past ages of social and political turmoil, today we have an extraordinary ability to harness scientific and technological tools to better predict and prepare for future risks. Particularly, climate change. Compared to many other drivers of global insecurity, climate change can be modeled with a relatively high degree of certainty. Consider, for instance, that the first accurate climate change model is from 1967, a half century ago, and for the most part, the climate is changing as the model predicted. Conversely, a political scientist from 1967 would have had a much more difficult time predicting the current contours of our geopolitical landscape. While uncertainties in predicting local and regional climatic changes remain, existing projections from climate models paint a fairly clear picture of what the future holds.

In other words, though we are facing "unprecedented risks" from climate change, we also possess "unprecedented foresight." This combination of unprecedented risk and unprecedented foresight is the foundation for a Responsibility to Prepare. If we can see these risks coming with such a high degree of certainty, being unprepared is not a viable excuse. Neither for ourselves, nor the publics we serve.

However, these predictive capacities do not, alone, enhance preparedness. A growing body of research demonstrates that climate change is

already impacting international security - increasing the likelihood of state fragility and conflict in the Middle East and Africa, exacerbating water insecurity in Central Asia, threating low-lying populations in the Asia-Pacific and Caribbean, and opening up new risks of confrontation in the Arctic and South China Sea. Intelligence projections and scenario exercises show a century wherein these threats to security increase significantly as the planet warms. In this context, foresight is meaningless without the capacity to act smartly and robustly to minimize the risks in advance. And while a robust international architecture for driving emissions reductions and climate-smart development exists in the form of the Paris Accord and other fora, it's equivalent in the security realm has yet to be built.

Hence, we propose the development and adoption of the "Responsibility to Prepare Agenda" with one, over-arching goal: the climate-proofing of security institutions at all levels of governance – national, regional and intergovernmental. We also propose that the specific components of this Agenda, which in essence could function as the "security" complement to the Sustainable Development Goals, be guided by six core principles: routinization, institutionalization, elevation, integration, rapid response and contingencies for unintended consequences.

- **Principle 1 Routinization**: Climate change is happening now, and affects nearly everything, but that reality is not reflected in the routine activities of institutions responsible for security. Routinizing climate in security institutions could range from providing regular intelligence briefings on the subject to decision-makers, to consistently holding dialogues and forums on the subject at international security fora (such as at Halifax and Munich and the Planetary Security Conference). At the UN Security Council (UNSC), for example, a commitment to regular Arria Formula dialogues on climate, like the one we are having today, more consistent measures for information flow and monitoring of critical climate and security hotspots (such a Resolution 2349 on the Lake Chad Basin), as well as more robust statements and resolutions that build on past actions on climate and security, would help ensure that the issue is resilient to changing political winds, and always on the UNSC radar.

- **Principle 2 Institutionalization**: How climate change impacts security is not deeply understood across governments. The issue therefore requires institutional centers to conduct analysis and inform decision-makers. Had the scattered reports of drought and mass displacement of peoples in Syria from 2007-2010 been fed into a credible institution committed to warning of these trends, the country's political instability might have been foreseen and, possibly, mitigated. At the international level, the

establishment of “Climate Security Crisis Watch Centers,” staffed by expert analysts watching for climate and security hotspots, and issuing regular recommendations for action to the UN Security Council, could ensure that the international community is prepared. These Centers could be replicated at the regional level (at institutions such as NATO, the African Union), and within national governments. This kind of institutional home builds on the proposals of many UN Members States including Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands.

- **Principle 3 Elevation**: In some cases, warnings related to nontraditional security risks are delivered to governments, but not at a high enough level. This is often based on a particular issue not being prioritized within a government or intergovernmental institution, or the issue not being presented in a fashion that appropriately contextualizes the risks as they pertain to core geostrategic priorities. Climate change, for example, tends to be housed in environmental departments and agencies who are left out of national security decision-making processes. Within the UN system, for example, the establishment of a senior Climate Change and Security position, reporting directly to the UN Secretary General and communicating regularly to the UN Security Council, would go a long way toward ensuring that these issues were heard at the highest levels. This

builds on long-held calls from Small Island States and other nations vulnerable to climate change.

- **Principle 4 Integration**: In order to ensure that climate and security issues are not treated as a niche concern, security institutions should fully integrate climate change trends into their analyses of *other* critical security priorities. This is the "just add climate" approach. For example, questions of how climate change intersects with health security, conflict, international terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and maritime security, are all critically important, but may be missed if such analysis sits solely in the aforementioned centers specializing in climate risk. Practically, this could involve embedding climate and security analysts across issue siloes within governments and intergovernmental institutions, or creating interagency and intergovernmental structures to facilitate such integration.

- **Principle 5 Rapid response**: Though the approaches above are designed to facilitate preventative solutions, there will undoubtedly be future cases of climate-exacerbated dynamics that demand immediate attention from the security community. Developing scaled warning systems that identify long, medium and short-term risks, and that include clear “triggers” for emergency action on climate and security, would help ensure that foreseeable events are acted upon with commensurate levels

of urgency. This is particularly important for anticipating low probability/high impact risks, and creating a governance capacity to prepare for the “unknown, unknowns” or “black swan” events.

- **Principle 6 Contingencies for unintended consequences**: Despite best efforts, unintended consequences of solutions to these risks may inevitably arise. Governments should seek to identify these potential eventualities and develop contingencies for addressing them. For example, the unilateral deployment of geoengineering solutions, particularly in the absence of international norms to regulate their use, could result in new and unpredictable disruptions to climate, water, food and energy systems. These are foreseeable possibilities that security institutions can identify and attempt to prevent sooner rather than later. Facilitating or institutionalizing cross-sectoral/ interagency coordination to hedge against these unintended consequences, as suggested in the “integration” principle, would be a good start.

These 6 principles, and perhaps others still to be decided upon, should inform all Responsibility to Prepare goals developed and agreed upon by governments.

In closing, given the rapid rate of climatic change and the increasing stress on global security that is likely to follow, the 21st century international order will have to adapt – and adapt quickly. The difference between today and past centuries of political, economic and environmental disruption, is that we have the ability to spot impending disasters earlier. Though the risks are unprecedented, our foresight is unprecedented as well. Technological developments have given us climate models and predictive tools that enhance our ability to anticipate and mitigate risks. We need to better utilize those tools, and better integrate them into international, regional and national security institutions in order to manage this new world.

But the window of opportunity is narrowing. Delayed actions may result in diminishing returns, and, in the worst-case scenarios, difficult and potentially inhumane choices in the face of continued strains on natural resources, political will and the capacities of governments to provide for their publics. If we act now - committing to develop and implement the goals of a Responsibility to Prepare - we can prevent this more unstable, and less humane, world.

We can no longer lean on the excuse that we did not see the threat coming. We do see it coming. That foresight makes a Responsibility to Prepare both a practical and moral imperative.