## H.E. PRESIDENT HILDA C. HEINE Panel discussion on women’s rights and climate change: climate action, good practices and lessons learned Human Rights Council – 41st session

**Geneva, Friday, 28 June 2019**

**TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO STATEMENT**

* Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, *Iakwe.*
* I am very pleased to join you by video for this important Council panel on women’s rights and climate change.
* As you know, women and girls are very often worst affected by climate change while also being important agents of change in the fight against climate threats.
* These two facets are often intertwined:
* In an example from my country: In the Marshallese language, women are referred to as “*jined kibed”*. Literally, this means that a mother (“*jined”*) is the rudder (“*kibed”*) or steering force of a family. It is a recognition of the central role of women for the well-being of their families, especially for children and older persons.
* But that role often means a women’s well-being is sacrificed first.
* In 2015 and 2016 the Marshall Islands declared a state of disaster during a period of extraordinarily severe drought.
* Malnutrition rose among children as well as adult women in our outer islands. Food and water was so scarce that great efforts were needed to secure enough for families to get by. With little spare time, the production of local handicrafts fell, reducing an important source of income for women in these areas. Short on funds, and supporting their families through the crisis, women were very often those worst off.
* As climate change increases the prevalence of such challenges, women will increasingly suffer similar effects–unless we act.
* That is why I very much welcome the new Analytical Study on gender-responsive climate action. We need sound data and analysis to understand the complex interactions at play. Knowledge is an invaluable resource for designing effective policies going forwards.
* But states can already act: a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach is integrated throughout our mitigation and adaptation policies, planning and implementation. This includes our 2050 Strategy, our new Nationally Determined Contribution and Electricity Roadmap, and our forthcoming National Adaptation Plan. If we can do it, I believe all nations can.
* We are also chairing the Climate Vulnerable Forum. Last year, Leaders of our 48 member countries highlighted the special leadership and engagement of women in tackling climate change, including through an all-women group of “Summit Champions” appointed in conjunction with our Virtual Summit.
* There are already so many striking examples of women’s leadership and still so much potential could be unlocked if we invested more to empower women. A first step is to ensure strong participation and representation in policy-making. I am proud that our delegation to the UNFCCC is consistently staffed by a number of talented women. Women are also strongly involved in our policy consultations, our climate-related planning committees and in the work of our key implementing agencies. Again, if we can do it, so can others.
* Finally, raising ambition in climate action is perhaps the best way to lessen future consequences on women and girls, and people everywhere. COP24 reaffirmed the need for all nations to come with enhanced national contributions or NDCs by 2020. We need that to keep the 1.5 degrees goal within reach and strengthen resilience, safeguarding our fundamental human rights.
* To close: the Marshall Islands has put forward its candidacy for election to the UN Human Rights Council. You have my government’s commitment to prioritize this agenda. I am also pleased to announce the opening of a Permanent Mission here in Geneva headed by Doreen De Brum whom all of you can count on to work hard for progress in this area.
* I wish you well for the debate and would like to thank the High Commissioner’s Office, as well as Bangladesh, Philippines and Viet Nam for their efforts to address this critical facet of the climate challenge.
* *Kommol Tata.*