Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

Hon’ble President of Kiribati,

Special Envoy of the Secretary General, Ms. Mary Robinson,

Distinguished panelists, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me applaud the Council for convening this discussion. Since the Council deliberated three years back, today’s discussion should afford us another opportunity to take a deeper look at Climate Change, its infinite impacts and how those affects enjoyment of human rights of individuals across countries and communities.

Our discussion is timely as the world witnesses growing climatic vulnerabilities and also continue working on wrapping up a robust, legally-binding outcome this December in Paris!

Now, why should climate change be so crucial from human rights point of view?

By now, evidence and analyses are more than adequate.

IPCC’s Fifth Assessment\(^1\) brings out the most compelling science and evidence, most eloquently. In 2013, UN Secretary General’s High level Global Panel identified ‘climate

\(^1\) IPCC Fifth Assessment Report finds high agreement that “Climate change over the 21st century is projected to increase displacement of people. Displacement risk increases when populations that lack the resources for planned migration experience higher exposure to extreme weather events, in both rural and urban areas, particularly in developing countries with low income. Expanding opportunities for mobility can reduce vulnerability for such populations. Changes in migration patterns can be responses to both extreme weather events and longer-term climate variability and change, and migration can also be an effective adaptation strategy.”
change’ as one of the five challenges that the world needed to address in making “transformative shifts” over the next decades.

At ‘micro’ level, in the everyday life of millions of our people in an active delta, climate change continues to affect peoples’ lives and livelihoods, significantly. These are not merely issues of ‘development’. These are grave issues of survival for over a billion people.

As we speak of full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, it would also be necessary for us to distinguish between the ‘climate-affected’ and ‘climate-victims’ in the climate vulnerable country situations on the ground. It would also be important to acknowledge that across countries, communities and people, the capacity and vulnerability of the affected are vary, often pretty widely. And this issue relates to the critical issue of ‘equity’ and the ways that we need to ensure that all people affected by climate change can draw on resources and support measures fairly, equitably and with dignity.

This is also a deeper and wider context which helped us secure a stand-alone SDG on Climate Change within the Post 2015 Agenda at the UNGA; and indeed the Resolution on Climate Change and Human Rights in 2013.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the contemporary world, the LDCs, SIDS and Africa are recognized to be facing unique circumstances and have special needs. Climate change lends most telling effects on the people in these countries. Majority of these populous countries are either along coasts or are located in the tropical or sub-tropical belts; and many have high population density. Majority population in these countries are in agrarian setting; and are from small and marginal households. Together, the millions at the ‘bottom of development pyramid’ in these countries are most exposed to climatic shocks in so many ways. Slow onset climate-induced disasters like river erosion, desertification, contamination of groundwater or salinity intrusion inland upstream may not make global headlines, yet these impact people’s living so much. Many are often compelled to move within and beyond borders as a result.

While much of these may be known to us, what we tend to miss out is their cumulative impacts on majority population, their complex vulnerabilities, lack of resilience and coping capacities and the corresponding external support measures that they may need.

The aggregate affect is not yet measured for all countries fully. Yet, Bangladesh, for instance, has estimated to loss 2 to 3 percent of its potential GDP owing to climate
impacts, under variable scenario. More importantly, much of the precious social and economic developmental gains run at risk. In an active delta as ours, millions already find their traditional livelihoods under threat, rivers and wetlands dying, aquatic species dwindling or getting extinct. It is now established that rising heat is affecting labour productivity; and new human, crop, aquatic, livestock diseases are emerging. These few illustrations should point to the wider complexities resulting from climate change.

Therefore, viewing the range of resulting complex physical and human phenomena through a human rights lens, clearly climate change related effects threaten the effective and full enjoyment of a range of human rights. For instance, Right to Life, Right to Food, adequate housing, safe and adequate water, access to health and education. As we speak of wider and inter-linked Right to Development, the case would be far more compelling.

It is therefore logical that human rights perspective should also bring into focus the fact that climate change hits the poorest of the countries, of peoples, of communities – the most; and thus affect their enjoyment of human rights as we envisage.

In this context, a key issue is the limited ‘capacity – resource endowment – capabilities’ in the developing world, particularly the countries in special needs.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The human rights regime and instruments conceive generalized templates for people across countries. Yet, actualization of individual and collective human rights in diverse climatic theatres increasingly proves difficult. Given the differences and challenges that climate-induced ‘real world’ poses in regard to realization of the RIGHTS, isn’t it necessary that we re-visit the special needs and protection from human rights point of view?

In the vulnerable situations – which often transcend borders – individuals suffer also because of poor resilience and inadequate response-ability to climate change. At the same time, there are countries or people who have much less coping capacities or resources. Consider the Maldives or those in the Pacific. For those countries and low-lying riparian countries like Bangladesh, climate change poses “existential threat”!

We must also acknowledge that climate change and its effects impact on ‘peace – stability – prosperity’ as much as violent conflict. Compared to anytime in the past, accomplishing a ‘world of dignity’, a ‘world of fairness’, a world of justice may remain far cry if we fail to factor in innovative ways to respond to provisioning human rights of the climate-affected people.
In this context, the 2009 OHCHR Study highlights a striking “climate injustice” faced by the LDCs, SIDS, low-income and climate-vulnerable countries. The Study underlined the disproportionate burden of climate change induced challenges that people in these countries bear while having contributed the least to global GHG emissions.

Therefore, from the perspectives of millions of ordinary farmers, fishermen, artisans, women, an interface of ‘climate change – human rights’ should ask us to re-look at the elements of injustice, dignity, wellbeing that forms the basis of UDHR.

At a macro or global level,

- how do we all respond resolutely to the growing vulnerabilities of the countries?

- how do global community move to break the cycle of low capacity - inadequate technology – lack of resources to effectively adapt to climate change?

- Equity remains an evergreen basis of global governance. But, how do we give effective voice to climate-vulnerable countries?

- Human rights is about every human person, across countries. then, how do we secure a balance among the expectation of climate change and consequent disenfranchisement of a farmer in Bangladesh vis-à-vis his peer in the developed world?

  o How do we secure an equal appreciation of that Bangladeshi farmer’s issues and needs in the developed world as climate and developmental policies are drawn up?

  o How best do we envision and balance increasingly diverse needs and circumstances of countries, communities, generations and their rights and responsibilities?

Such issues or questions are crucial in ensuring a fair and dignified climate and human rights discourse. These must be looked beyond the contours of climate change negotiations – indeed in the continuum of rights and entitlements of individuals and communities, and responsibilities and obligations of the States.

Climate change is a mixed and accumulated effect of our collective actions. Therefore, as we speak of inter-dependence of nations, effective mitigation can only be achieved if individual agents approach and pursue their individual interests, inter-dependently.
On the other hand, effectiveness of adaptation can be enhanced through complementary actions at all levels. Insufficient adaptation responses to emerging impacts are already eroding the basis for protecting and ensuring full and effective enjoyment of a wide range of human rights.

Common constraints arising from limited financial and human resources and uncertainties about future projections of mitigation and incapacities impede adaptation planning and implementation. Such scenario increases the likelihood of exceeding adaptation limits.

*Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

Before concluding, let me convey that though Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries, we have installed around four million Solar Home Systems, one and half million improved Cook Stoves, developed stress-tolerant crop varieties. Being an LDC, we have mobilized US$ 385 million from our own resources for adaptation and mitigation interventions. Out of our commitment to shared responsibility, back in 2012, Bangladesh Prime Minister pledged that Bangladesh will pursue a low-carbon growth path.

We remain actively engaged in the global climate negotiations as also in the Human Rights Council. Bangladesh has not only engaged actively with Philippines and other States to advance a focused discussion in the Council, we have also made a modest contribution of 5,000 US dollars to OHCHR for this purpose.

What we are doing is not as a matter of ‘choice’, but out of our commitment to ‘shared responsibility’ for ‘a shared prosperity’.

It is to raise voice of 160 million people.

It is our sincere hope that the international community would step up their commitments and actions resolutely, objectively, make a choice to let the collective conscience speak and let the silent millions fighting climate change, survive.

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