

## **Closing Remarks**

- **This seminar has performed a valuable function in that it has enabled experts on the many different aspects of climate change to give us their views.**
- **Climate change is a complex subject and it is important that all of its dimensions are highlighted. I think that the past 2 days have brought many issues to our attention and I congratulate the organisers on ensuring high level participation.**
- **There is a gathering pace in the discussion of the impacts of climate change and the relationship with human rights. Seminars such as this are more frequent, resolutions on Climate Change and the Environment have been passed by the Human Rights Council.**
- **My sense is that there is now an acceptance that the subject is so serious that it must be the focus of sustained attention by both the human rights and environmental communities.**
- **We have heard from the rapporteurs so let me summarise now some of the themes which have emerged from this seminar and which are occupying the attention of those interested in climate change.**
- **The severity of the impacts of climate change was brought out by many speakers. We heard firsthand accounts of what it means to be on the receiving end of extreme weather events.**
- **It is clear that climate change is affecting a whole range of human rights – to food, to clean water, to life itself. I saw this when I visited the Horn of Africa last August... It is good that the UN has declared that famine is over in the Horn of Africa but 2.5 million people remain in dire need of help. And concerns about the whole Sahel region are now very strong.**
- **Some figures that came out of the discussion: the cost of dealing with the 2 hurricanes which hit the Phillipines in 2009 was \$2 billion. And that**

**was just the economic cost – the damage to the human beings affected was incalculable. Also the fact that in 2010 there were 350 natural disasters which affected 300 million people. Clearly the impact of extreme weather events is growing by the day.**

- **Also growing ever higher is the number of people being displaced by these extreme climate events – the so-called climate refugees. This phenomenon raises another area where human rights are deeply affected and which calls for urgent attention. 36 million displaced in 2008 alone.**
- **There is a strong feeling that the status quo in our approach to the challenges of climate change simply will not do. We must change our ways and that calls for political leadership. I am sorry to say that I feel this has been lacking. At Durban I saw no sense of urgency in the first weeks...**
- **The adoption of the Durban Platform has given us time, but that does not mean we should be holding back. Governments and International Organisations must engage quickly in the climate change issue before it is too late.**
- **A quote: Political leaders are sleepwalking us into a crisis of huge proportions. Another quote: Governments have been listening too long to the fossil fuel industry and too little to their own people.**
- **Technology transfer is essential to help developing countries build low carbon economies. Contrary to what some have claimed, a green technology approach does not have to slow growth. In fact, it can help developing countries to leapfrog into more sustainable economic growth.**
- **The need for more linkage and interaction between the human rights and environment communities has been stressed repeatedly. I fully support all efforts to have more joined up thinking between the 2 communities.**

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- **Turning to the activities of the Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice, I mentioned earlier that I see four themes as being of high priority now. They have featured in the discussions here and I would like to say a word about each of them...**
  
- **The question I would ask is how do we carry the consideration of these vital issues forward?**
  
- **The role to be played by the Human Rights Council is key. Discussion about a Special Mandate and what form this might take. It is for the member states of the HRC to decide on this. I would urge them to step up their consideration of the impact of climate change on human rights.**
  
- **Talk of a Special Rapporteur on Climate Change or on the Environment. Or for mainstreaming climate change throughout all the human rights mechanisms. (My own feeling is that the climate change issue is so serious that it requires specific attention by the Human Rights Council, in one form or another).**
  
- **And to the States primarily involved I would urge that you work towards a solution to the procedural aspect. It is evident that there is momentum and goodwill in this room and beyond and the opportunity to make progress should not be lost.**
  
- **The developed countries must take the lead. Yes the costs of both mitigation and adaptation will be very big. But the rich countries are the primary cause of the problem and they have a moral responsibility to act.**
  
- **OHCHR and UNEP preparing a paper on human rights and the environment. Look forward to seeing it.**

- **Rio+20 has power to make right to development a reality for the many rather than for a few.**
- **Climate Justice is the best approach...**