

Mr. Otto (Palau):

We commend and thank Senegal, President of the Security Council for the month of November, for convening this meeting about a matter that is of great importance to all of us. I also thank the delegation of Senegal for the very useful concept note (S/2016/969, annex). We express our gratitude also for the briefings. The information shared by the briefers is both very important and useful in understanding the issues around water and the way forward in addressing relevant problems, especially those related to security and peace.

In March this year, my President declared a state of emergency in Palau owing to a drought caused by

El Niño, impacting the whole population. The potential negative impacts of the lack of water, many of which were elaborated this morning, make water a very important issue for all of us. That is true for practically all of the small island developing States, as we have already heard. Allow me to present five ideas for the Council's consideration.

First, we need more information of the impacts of the lack of water on our security and peace. We firmly believe that, in order to ensure sustainable peace, we must have security first. That is linked to article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under which everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Palau has fought for that basic principle in the Human Rights Council and will continue to do so. Regarding the much-needed information, there should be agreement among Member States on requests for the updating of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, because updated information is key to making our decisions.

Secondly, access to water is a human right. Our body is approximately 80 per cent water, and our health and well-being depend to very large extent on the availability of this most basic nutrient. Therefore, water cannot and should never be allowed to become a business. We recognize that both the innovation and drive of the private sector, on the one hand, and the public investment in genuine and durable partnerships, on the other hand, as expressed in the Samoa Pathway, are needed, including the 10X20 Initiative mentioned earlier. But the role of the United Nations is to ensure, together with national Governments and civil society, that access to drinkable and safe water is secured for all, especially the most vulnerable. Palau thanks non-governmental organizations for their drive on this point.

Thirdly, water is linked to the impacts of climate change. Climate change is a threat multiplier that impacts our security and peace. We therefore think that the contributions of the Department of Political Affairs and of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to addressing water challenges will be enhanced by having well-coordinated staff

and experts serving in the field. That is why we have called also for the nomination of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Climate Change and Security.

Special political missions, both current and future, have a very important role to play by reducing their climate footprint and improving their management of the environment, acting also as catalysts to bring partners to act together in addressing the challenge of climate change and water. Local populations should never have to compete with United Nations personnel for local resources, or suffer negative impacts caused by their presence. With its partners, Palau has pushed in the General Assembly's Fourth and Fifth Committees for the greening of the special political missions.

Fourthly, actions on water in the Security Council and the General Assembly have to be aligned. We believe that the delivery by the Security Council on the issues of water and climate change has to be significantly improved, not just as part of conflict prevention but also as part of the recipe for successful conflict resolution. During the debate on the Sahel and terrorism in this Chamber earlier this year (see S/PV. 7699), relevant questions were raised as to how can women stop their men from joining armed terrorists for cash if they are away from home searching for water, or how can girls be empowered through education if they cannot study either because their basic needs — including water — are not met, or because they are out looking for or fetching water.

Finally, it is urgent to take decisive action. The time period we have to transform the world as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda is very short. We cannot attain much without security and peace. We therefore believe that we should work together during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly on two parallel draft resolutions in the General Assembly and the Security Council on the impacts of water and climate change on security and peace, following the successful example of the review the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

We are hopeful that the Security Council and all Member States, working with the good offices of the new Secretary-General, will find success in taking action in the field on climate and water so that all of the “we the peoples” whom we serve will have their basic human rights, such as the rights to water, life, liberty and security, fulfilled.

Once again, we thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for bringing this very important issue to the fore by convening today's meeting.