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Speaker: Khalida Bouzar, Director of the Near East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia Division,
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome, Italy

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“Climate Change and Migrations: Drivers or Effects of Fragility?”

Organized by SAIS Europe Student Government

Climate change is a driver of both migration and fragility, which is of increasing concern to organizations such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a UN specialized agency and International Financial Institution (IFI). Its focus is on agriculture and rural development, with a specific mandate to reduce poverty, particularly amongst the smallest holders and poorest of the poor. The organization currently has 210 ongoing programs and projects in about 100 countries that amount to \$15 billion. Climate change is one of IFAD’s key priorities, with a target to increase the share of their investments related to climate change to one quarter by 2021 and provide greater resilience to climate change for 24 million people.

Dr. Khalida Bouzar begins by defining fragility and its key drivers. She clarifies that IFAD has adopted a definition tailored to rural conditions by including vulnerability to both natural and manmade shocks. The key drivers of fragility at the individual and household level comprise poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, poor access to natural resources, and conflict and violence. There are additionally many interlinkages between these various drivers. One such interlinkage is between poverty and food security: poverty is often the main driver of food insecurity and malnutrition, but hunger and malnutrition also result in the inability of poor people to move out of poverty.

Climate change exacerbates these drivers of fragility. Levels of hunger are much higher in countries with agricultural systems that are very sensitive to rainfall and temperature variability. A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the connection between climate change and poverty also indicates that high-impactful climate change will produce more poverty than weak climate change. Severe drought, for example, can lead to reduced production and higher food prices, resulting in both increased hunger and poverty. World hunger is currently on the rise: according to the FAO, the number of undernourished people has increased from 804 million people in 2016 to 821 million in 2017. Furthermore, a recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicated that if temperatures rise by 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, approximately 122 million additional people will experience extreme poverty by 2030.

Dr. Bouzar next turns to migration. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 68 million people are currently forcibly displaced, 40 million of which are internally displaced and 25 million of which are refugees. While we have the tendency to think of migration as primarily caused by conflict and violence, UNHCR data show that the majority of migrants today migrate because of disasters: 39% of all new displacement in 2017 was triggered by conflict and violence and 61% by disasters. At the same

time, while still below the amount displaced by disasters, the number of people that migrated due to conflict doubled in 2016 from 7 million to 12 million, primarily due to conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Climate change also plays a role in these numbers, as it can contribute to conflict through greater resource scarcity and increased risk of natural disasters.

Migration can have both positive and negative consequences for both the sending and receiving countries. For example, it can have a negative impact on agriculture in the sending country due to a reduced workforce. However, it can also provide better employment opportunities to those who migrate and result in the inflow of resources back into the sending country through remittances. In 2016, \$445 billion were sent back to 144 countries. In this way, migration can in fact be a form of adaptation to fragility and a source of opportunities.

Dr. Bouzar explains that for many poor countries, it is a paradigm shift to think of investing in climate change measures as a necessity instead of a luxury. For this reason, IFAD has created the Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Program (ASAP). To date, the program has mobilized \$720 million in grants, reaching 2 million smallholders in over 40 countries, sequestering 30 million tones of carbon dioxide-equivalent, and reducing the climate risk of 100K households. Through the program, countries have been able to witness the benefits of addressing climate change, prompting them to take out loans to further invest in climate change projects. As an example, Dr. Bouzar points to a project in Sudan where IFAD has fostered community dialogue on natural resources management and increased agricultural productivity through environmentally sustainable practices and the distribution of improved seeds. As a result, people such as Aishaa Adam Mohammed have been able to increase their household's food security and resilience to climate change.