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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEW YORK - On Friday, October 24, 2008, a group of over 50 Member States of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly submitted a draft resolution calling on the UN Security Council to take urgent action on the security threats posed by climate change to peoples around the world. The resolution specifically entreats the Security Council to follow up on its thematic debate of 2007 on "Energy, Security and Climate" by considering and taking action to address the very real threats to international peace and security resulting from the negative impacts of climate change, including those associated with rising sea levels, increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, and declining access to food and fresh water. Both the Security Council and Secretary-General are urged in the resolution to update the General Assembly on progress toward these goals during the coming year. Originally sponsored by the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), this resolution is being co-sponsored by nations throughout the world who have recognized the gravity of the threats to international peace and security posed by climate change.

The submission of this resolution for consideration marks a critical step toward increasing awareness and promoting action against the pernicious security implications of climate change for human beings worldwide, implications that have by and large been ignored by the UN to date. Yet, as Ambassador Stuart Beck of Palau notes, "Climate change is not academic in the Pacific, where sea level rise is forcing relocation of citizens and threatening territorial integrity. The Pacific Small Island Developing States recognize that the Security Council is uniquely mandated by the international community to address these existential issues, and urges Council Members to do so urgently."

The success of the resolution is viewed by experts as crucial to efforts to stem the negative effects of climate change that have already begun to displace and undermine the means of survival for various populations. Countries in support of the resolution are now conducting bilateral and multilateral meetings to broaden the already wide support for it. The resolution will likely be voted on at the General Assembly in the latter part of November. If it passes, it is hoped that the Security Council will take up the issues raised by the resolution in the first half of 2009.

The people residing in small island states are among the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, which threatens their livelihoods, health, and, perhaps most importantly, the very existence of the islands that they inhabit. Many low-lying nations, such as Tuvalu, have little hope in the face of higher sea levels. Moreover, warmer global temperatures have an adverse impact on coral reefs, agriculture, and tourism. Standing on the front lines of this global effort, the PSIDS have played an instrumental role in drawing attention to these issues and will be vital to advancing the current resolution through the UN consideration process.

To learn more about or contribute to the work being done to support small island states in their efforts to address the threats of climate change, including the current UN resolution, please visit: www.islandsfirst.org or contact Leila Kazemi (leila.kazemi@islandsfirst.org).