

"Opportunity to Avoid Catastrophic Climate Change is in Your Hands," Secretary-General Tells World Leaders at Climate Summit, 22nd Sept 2009 United Nations New York)

(source: United Nations website)

Climate change, the pre-eminent geopolitical and economic issue of the twenty-first century, threatened to rewrite the global equation for development, peace and prosperity, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, as he pressed world leaders to cooperate on a just and scientifically sound solution that strengthened sustainable development and powered green growth for every country. "There is little time left. The opportunity and responsibility to avoid catastrophic climate change is in your hands," Mr. Ban said, closing the day-long Summit on Climate Change, which he convened to mobilize the highest-level political momentum to reach an equitable and ambitious global climate deal at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, this December. At that meeting, Governments will aim to reach a global climate framework to enter into force in 2012, when the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires. The Secretary-General said the Copenhagen Conference would offer a new path. "It can catalyse a global economy based on low-emissions growth that can strengthen sustainable development and lift billions out of poverty," he said, adding that success at that meeting would have positive ripple effects for global cooperation on trade, energy, security and health.

Today's event, which drew Heads of State and Government from over 100 countries, also featured eight interactive round-table discussions that focused on transforming economies to enable sustainable, low-emissions growth. They consisted of 25 participants each and were co-chaired by 16 Heads of State from developed and developing nations.

Summarizing the participants' discussions and recommendations, Mr. Ban said many leaders had spoken passionately and with grave concern about the devastating impacts of climate change their countries were experiencing. All supported the urgent need to step up action and raise the financial resources to make that happen.

The message from the Summit was clear -- any deal reached at Copenhagen must be comprehensive and ensure enhanced action to help the most vulnerable adapt to the impacts of climate change, he asserted. For industrialized nations, ambitious emissions reduction targets were needed, while for developing countries, nationally appropriate mitigation actions had to be undertaken, with necessary support. Leaders had called for significantly scaling up financial and technological resources and establishing an equitable governance structure.

Based on the participants' recommendations, the Secretary-General said he planned to set up a high-level panel after the Copenhagen Conference to advise on how to better integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into development. The United Nations would assist developing countries in implementing the Copenhagen deal. He was heartened to hear that a growing number of leaders were prepared to move beyond purely national perspectives to global leadership.

Handing his summary of the Summit to four young people, -- "representatives of the next generation" -- he noted that the document embodied the international community's collective effort to create a safer, cleaner, more liveable world "for you and your peers". Mr. Ban said: "We must unite in common cause and leave a legacy of hope and healing for you and for this planet, our only home."

Echoing that thought earlier in the day, R.K. Pachauri, Chairman of the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) underscored that science left no choice for inaction. Without efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, climate change would likely lead to the disappearance of sea ice by the end of the twenty-first century, an increased frequency of heat waves, among other weather events, and possible extinction of 20 to 30 per cent of the world's species assessed thus far. On the flip side, stabilizing the global temperature increase at 2.0 to 2.4 degrees Celsius would cost no more than 3 per cent of global domestic product in 2030.

While heartened that the Group of Eight (G-8) leaders had recognized the broad scientific view of limiting temperature increases to 2 degrees Celsius, he said adhering to that limit meant that global emissions had to peak no later than 2015 -- just six years from now. If the United Nations did not act in time, those gathered today would be failing in their sacred duty to protect the planet.

Broadly agreeing, Tilman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada, stressed that temperature increases of 2 degrees Celsius would cause the economies and ecosystems of many small island developing States (SIDS) to disappear. It was imperative that all countries adopt a low-carbon development path that ensured the survival of SIDS, their culture and their people.

Echoing the call for limiting temperature rise to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, he said global emissions should be cut by more than 85 per cent by 2050, and that "Annex I" emissions should drop by at least 45 per cent by 2020. Further, he called for new, additional and stable financing for adaptation, technology transfer and capacity-building at a level sufficient to cope with the scale of the problem.

In the search for solutions, United States President Barack Obama pointed out that developed nations had a responsibility to lead, and would do so by slashing emissions by 2020 and meeting the long-term 2050 goal. For too long, nations, including the United States, had been too slow to recognize the magnitude of the climate threat. However, it was a new day and a new era. "We cannot allow the old divisions that have characterized the climate debate for so many years to block our progress," he stressed. The United States had done more to promote clean energy and reduce carbon pollution in the last eight months than in any other point in its history, he continued. His Government also had engaged more allies and partners in finding solutions than ever before. In April, the United States had convened the first of what now had been six meetings of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, and was working through the World Bank to promote renewable energy projects and technologies in the developing world.

Taken together, such steps represented an historic recognition of the gravity of the climate threat.

At the same time, Yukio Hatoyama, Prime Minister of Japan, pointed out that financial assistance and technology transfer alone were not enough to help poor nations meet their financial needs. His Government was working with world leaders to create a mechanism that both ensured the effective use of public funds and facilitated the flow of private investments to developing countries. Offering a specific proposal, he said a "Hatoyama Initiative" would, among other things, underscore the need for developed countries' to contribute substantial new and additional public and private financing to assist developing nations, and emphasize the importance of establishing a framework to promote the transfer of low-carbon technologies in a way that ensured intellectual property rights protection.

While acknowledging international action was indeed needed, Hu Jintao, President of China, said adherence to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was critical to keeping global cooperation on the right track. Developed nations' support for developing countries served their long-term interests, and achieving a "win-win" outcome should be the goal of global climate efforts.

He said China had adopted, and was implementing, a national programme that included mandatory targets for reducing energy intensity and increasing renewable energy use in the 2005-2010 period. In coming years, China would further integrate climate change actions into economic and development plans, work to cut carbon dioxide emissions by a “notable margin” over 2005 levels by 2020, increase forest coverage, enhance use of non-fossil fuels to 15 per cent by 2020, and broadly work to develop a low-carbon economy.

SECRETARY-GENERAL TELLS WORLD LEADERS AT SUMMIT'S CLOSING ' OPPORTUNITY, RESPONSIBILITY TO AVOID CATASTROPHIC CLIMATE CHANGE IS IN YOUR HANDS'”

(Climate Summit, 22nd Sept 2009 United Nations New York)
(source: United Nations website)

Following are Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's closing remarks at the high-level Summit on Climate Change, 22 September, in New York:

Climate change is a defining challenge of our time. Today's Summit signals the determination of world leaders to address this challenge and reach a substantive deal in Copenhagen.

Many leaders spoke passionately and with grave concern of the devastating impacts of climate change their countries are already experiencing. All of you support the urgent need to step up action and raise the financial resources needed to make this happen.

The message from this Summit is clear -- the Copenhagen deal must be comprehensive, and ensure:

- Enhanced action to assist the most vulnerable and the poorest to adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- Ambitious emission-reduction targets for industrialized countries;
- Nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries with the necessary support;
- Significantly scaled-up financial and technological resources; and
- An equitable governance structure.

Many leaders underlined that a climate change response should be placed in the broader context of sustainable development. They stressed the need to shift their economies onto a low-emissions path and build climate-resilient societies. I heard a clear recognition that action on climate change can be consistent with developing country priorities for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

I heard broad support for setting a long-term goal to keep the global temperature increase to a safe level. Many referred to the need for a 2 degree limit, while for the most vulnerable, a safe level means staying below 1.5 degrees centigrade. World leaders acknowledged the scientific imperative to cut global greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050 to meet this goal.

At the United Nations Leadership Forum on Climate Change lunch, global business leaders committed to make the radical transformations needed to address climate change, given regulatory certainty is provided by an international agreement.

Leaders emphasised that climate change threatens their economic viability, social development and even territorial integrity. Past progress and future hopes are jeopardized. The poorest and most vulnerable suffer most.

You acknowledge that current adaptation efforts are inadequate. Adaptation must be given higher priority. Adaptation actions should create synergies with development priorities, including food and water security and disaster risk reduction.

Many of you called for a significant increase in international funding for adaptation efforts, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.

All of you expressed a willingness to contribute your fair share to reducing global emissions, subject to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Developed country leaders acknowledged that they must lead. Many leaders referred to the need to reduce developed country emissions by 25 per cent to 40 per cent from the 1990 levels by 2020.

The 2020 targets currently proposed by developed countries are inadequate. Many indicated that they can do more in the context of an international agreement. I urge leaders of other developed countries to also raise their targets.

Many developing countries already have ambitious national plans to implement energy efficiency, renewable energy and other policies on their own initiative.

Leaders of developing countries expressed a willingness to undertake additional mitigation actions with requisite international technology and financial support. A Copenhagen deal must find an efficient and effective way to implement such arrangements.

There is clear agreement that protection of forests must be part of a Copenhagen deal.

Leaders noted that emissions by international aviation and shipping are growing rapidly and must be addressed in a Copenhagen deal.

Leaders recognize that finance is key to a Copenhagen deal. A substantial amount of finance will be needed to support adaptation and mitigation action in developing countries. These funds need to be new, predictable and additional to existing finance.

Many leaders called for a mechanism to ensure sustained streams of public funding at the required level. At the same time, leaders acknowledged that private sources of finance also need to be tapped, including through the carbon markets.

Leaders noted that technology, as well as capacity-building, are essential to address climate change. Only through significant advances in technology can the transformation to a climate-resilient, low-emissions future become a reality. I heard leaders call for a mechanism to ensure suitable technologies, both for mitigation and adaptation, are available to developing countries.

Developed country leaders stated they are ready to fast-track substantial funds in Copenhagen to developing countries for immediate adaptation action and for mitigation and adaptation planning.

Effective institutional arrangements must be part of the Copenhagen deal. Leaders stressed that these arrangements must be transparent, inclusive, efficient and effective.

Leaders also recognized the need for an equitable governance structure with balanced representation and respect for the priorities of developing countries.

Leaders recognize that international finance on the scale and pace required demands current institutional arrangements to be reformed to ensure transparency, efficient and effective disbursement.

Leaders want robust measurement, reporting and verification of the finance provided and the results achieved.

I sensed a keen willingness by every leader to contribute to the successful conclusion of negotiations in Copenhagen. They also expressed readiness to commit their nations to reach an effective agreement that is fully subscribed to, and acted upon, by all.

Based on your recommendation, I intend to set up a high-level panel after the Copenhagen Conference to advise on how to better integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into development.

The United Nations system assists developing countries with implementation of the Copenhagen deal.

I was heartened to hear that a growing number of leaders are prepared to move beyond purely national perspectives to global leadership. You have undertaken to remain engaged until a deal has been sealed in Copenhagen. And you have agreed to give guidance to your negotiators to work towards an ambitious, effective and fair deal in Copenhagen.

Your words have been heard around the world. Let your actions now be seen. There is little time left. The opportunity and responsibility to avoid catastrophic climate change is in your hands

READOUT FOLLOWING SECRETARY-GENERAL'S CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT DINNER

(Climate Summit, 22nd Sept 2009 United Nations New York)

(source: United Nations website)

The following readout was issued after UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Climate Change dinner, in New York, 22 September:

Tonight the Secretary-General hosted a dinner for 23 leaders to discuss how to translate the political momentum from today's historic summit into concrete progress that will lead to success at Copenhagen in December.

The group was composed of leaders of the world's largest economies -- both industrialized and emerging -- as well as leaders of the most affected and vulnerable countries. (See [list of participants](#))

The conversation focused on five principal areas: 1) financing; 2) adaptation; 3) mitigation; 4) governance; and 5) possible ways to keep the process moving forward.

Financing

Financing drew extensive attention at the dinner. Indeed, it is clear that at long last leaders are focusing on the centrality of the financing issue. Financing is the key to make an agreement work. Leaders discussed the overall needs for financing mitigation and adaptation. Multiple leaders welcomed the proposal made earlier today to pursue an initial target of at least \$100 billion per year, from both public and private sources, for both adaptation and mitigation, during the next decade. Leaders agreed that both public and private financing will be needed. Many noted that the public financing will need to be new and additional to existing official development assistance (ODA) commitments. The role of private sector finance is of central importance and must be driven by expanding the global carbon market, including through linking trading schemes. In this regard, many leaders welcomed Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's proposal to create a national carbon market and to link it into a global market. Leaders also discussed the need for mechanisms to deliver the requisite financing, and that such mechanisms need to include equitable representation of both developed and developing countries.

Adaptation

The need for increased attention to adaptation was recognized by all at the dinner as essential for a successful outcome in Copenhagen. The proposal for a "fast-track funding" mechanism for adaptation to address the period 2010-2012 were discussed, and many welcomed the European Union's concrete proposals to contribute €5 billion to €7 billion to such a fund. The importance of disaster risk reduction was highlighted.

Mitigation

A number of participants in the dinner confirmed that they are prepared to go for ambitious domestic emissions reduction targets.

All agreed that developed countries must take the lead on mitigation. Today, and again tonight, many developing countries expressed their willingness to do more than what they are currently doing on mitigation. Some are prepared to agree to binding targets, provided that sufficient financial and technology support is provided by developed countries.

Governance

Various important ideas were tabled about improving governance through better using existing institutions and/or creating new ones.

We now need to focus on specific governance issues required for a successful Copenhagen deal -- such as ensuring balanced, equitable representation for countries in the institutions that provide resources for climate change.

The importance of agreeing on a system of monitoring, reporting and verifying was highlighted by multiple leaders. There were calls for a United Nations institution to ensure comparability and integrity of the figures and data from all countries.

It was also proposed that the United Nations establish a registry of national appropriate mitigation actions by countries not included in annex I to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Way Forward

We gained some important clarity during the day and tonight at the dinner on the way forward. Leaders agreed that they are pursuing an agreement in Copenhagen. As some said pointedly: "There is no Plan B."

Many leaders recognized that we are talking about a political deal that will require leaders' direct involvement.

Today Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said he was prepared to invite Heads of State and Government to Copenhagen. Tonight many Heads of State and Government expressed their willingness to attend if invited.

Prime Minister Rasmussen also offered to be in touch with Heads of State and Government on the major political elements discussed in the course of the day.

In addition, the proposal for an intermediate meeting at the political level was tabled and supported by various leaders. The Secretary-General will consult on this proposal and would be prepared to convene such a meeting in cooperation with the Danish Prime Minister before Copenhagen if desired.

Lastly, the Secretary-General expressed his intent to accept the proposal of the Commission on Climate Change and Development, supported by many leaders today, to appoint a high-level task force following Copenhagen to help us concretely develop a way forward on climate change and development after the framework is established in Copenhagen.

In conclusion, as multiple leaders noted tonight, there is a political consensus among the leaders. We know what must be done, and all leaders expressed their intent to get it done in Copenhagen. Leaders expressed their willingness to break the deadlock of trust among them, and noted that this would allow them to break the deadlock over specific issues. It was noted that many have been willing to do more than they have been willing to agree to. This means a deal is possible that could be implemented, to the benefit of all the peoples of the world.