

Chair's Summary

United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Event on Climate Change 24 September 2007

I am extremely encouraged by the fact that climate change was so directly and constructively discussed at the highest level for the first time in history. This Event has taken us into a new era: Today I heard a clear call from world leaders for a breakthrough on climate change in Bali. And I now believe we have a major political commitment to achieving that.

The science, the impacts and the need for swift action

I heard the world's leaders confirm that climate change is indeed happening and is largely caused by human activity. The accounts offered by leaders of the most vulnerable nations, especially Small Island Developing States, were particularly telling. They brought home loud and clear the message that economic and social development cannot be sustainable unless we deal decisively with this issue.

Action is possible now and it makes economic sense. The cost of inaction will far outweigh the cost of early action.

And I was heartened to hear by a speaker from a developing country that "We are one of the poorest nations in the world, but to achieve our [development] goals we will never compromise our environment" – indeed, it is not about choosing one of the two, as the only long-term sustainable way is to look after both.

Adaptation

Many of you cited examples from your countries of how you already face the challenge of adaptation. You expressed your solidarity with the most vulnerable among us, especially Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries, those who have contributed the least to what is happening, but are bearing the brunt of it. You pledged to support them in adapting to the inevitable consequences of climate change.

You demonstrated political will, and called for better national and international planning for sustainable development, more capacity building and additional funding. The National Adaptation Programmes for Action (NAPAs) were cited as a good starting point and should be used to address broader adaptation needs, not only urgent and immediate ones. Quoting one of you: "Development and adaptation efforts go hand in hand". Paraphrasing from what you said, the public and the private sector also need to go hand in hand, through public-private partnerships.

Many called for increased funding to be made available through mechanisms such as the Adaptation

Fund, which should become operational as quickly as possible. These resources need to be supplementary to those already committed to helping developing countries move out of poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

You also agreed that we need to reduce the risk of disasters and increase the resilience of communities to increasingly extreme weather phenomena through systematic planning and capacity building. This dimension should be integrated into all development planning that countries do and support should be provided to them by development agencies for doing so. To help leverage the synergies between the disaster risk reduction and climate change agendas, I am considering how to strengthen our disaster risk reduction capabilities.

Mitigation

There is a broad recognition of the need to tackle the root causes of the problem and reverse its effects through decisive action. The current level of effort will not suffice.

The concept of a long-term goal was mentioned, with many countries calling for legally binding targets. Frequent references were made to the need to halve emissions by 2050 and to limit temperature increase to 2°C [two degrees Celsius]. More discussion is needed and this issue will be prominent in the post-Bali negotiating agenda.

Any solution has of course to be equitable and based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and any action requirement has to be commensurate to the respective capabilities.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for much deeper emission reductions by industrialized countries, which must continue to take the lead in this respect. It was encouraging to hear many of the leaders from the industrialized countries themselves expressing their willingness to do so. Also many leaders from the developing world acknowledged that they need to take action to limit growth in emissions.

Developing countries understandably do not want to compromise their chances of achieving better standards of living for their peoples. They also accept that a more sustainable energy system with better energy efficiency and planning, for example, can allow for less emission intensive growth. Further incentives are needed to ensure the active engagement of these countries in a future climate change regime.

The importance of minimizing emissions from deforestation was stressed by several among you. You also pointed to the broader benefits that adequate land-use management would bring about. The need to offer incentives to developing countries in this regard was acknowledged by many.

Technology

Technology will play an essential role in our collective response to climate change. Clean technologies are at the heart of sustainable development and our response to climate change. As

one of you said: “The world needs a technological revolution”.

I heard you saying clearly that many technological solutions already exist for promoting the goals of both adaptation and mitigation. Effective policy frameworks and cooperation mechanisms can greatly accelerate the deployment of these solutions between and within the North and the South.

Deployment remains the key challenge, and sustained effort will be necessary to overcome technical, economic and policy barriers. Effective policy frameworks and cooperation mechanisms can greatly accelerate deployment. Current mechanisms for technology transfer and cooperation will need to be dramatically scaled up.

Further investment in research and development holds great promise for the future. But for this promise to be realized, many of you recognized that sustained and joint effort is necessary from governments and the private sector. As the developing country speakers reminded us, energy policies need to be supportive of developing countries’ efforts to eradicate poverty.

International cooperation needs to be scaled up urgently to assist developing countries with increasing energy needs to move in the direction of low carbon and renewable energy and cleaner fossil fuel technologies. And clean technology can be a major driver for economic growth.

As fossil fuels will remain essential for the foreseeable future, we must improve energy efficiency and advance the technical and economic feasibility of new and emerging technologies, such as carbon capture and storage.

Adaptation technologies are essential for increasing countries’ resilience to climate change impacts. Developing countries’ access to such technologies, particularly LDCs and SIDS, needs to be facilitated.

Financing

I believe that you all agreed that aggressive action on climate change is an integral part of the fundamental priority of sustained economic development and poverty eradication. As was made clear also by our business interlocutors, investment decisions taken today have long-term impacts on emissions for decades to come. As a business representative put it: “The international community must give a signal that is loud, long and legal”. The goal is a global low carbon economy, supporting both mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Many of you suggested that action on climate change need not threaten economic development. Developing countries should be provided with additional resources for investment and to develop their capacity to identify and implement the right mix of public policy instruments that will help them ensure sustainable growth.

As noted by some of you, an enhanced carbon market, based on ambitious emissions reductions in all developed countries, can provide flexibility that contributes to a cost-effective transition to a low-emission economy and mobilize resources needed to provide incentives to developing countries.

The Clean Development Mechanism should be strengthened. Speakers from both the South and the North stressed the importance of making protection of existing forests eligible for carbon finance under the post-2012 regime,

The way forward

This event was not meant as an occasion for negotiations. It was meant to express the political will of world leaders at the highest level to tackle the challenge of climate change through concerted action. You have stated once again that the only forum where this issue can be decided upon is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We need to ensure that such an agreement is in force by the end of 2012. The upcoming Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC should be the starting point for intense negotiations driven by an agreed agenda. These negotiations should be comprehensive and inclusive, and should lead to a single multilateral framework.

All other processes or initiatives should be compatible with the UNFCCC process and should feed into it, facilitating its successful conclusion.

We have come a long way in building understanding and a new consensus this year. More remains to be done but this event has sent a powerful political signal to the world, and to the Bali conference, that there is the will, and the determination, at the highest level, to break with the past and act decisively. Quoting one of today's speakers: "Our effort should entail commitment, creativity and strong leadership". In the negotiating process we should not lose the big picture, which is safeguarding our planet.