

Keynote speech by  
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General  
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Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to have the privilege of addressing this important event on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. I would like to thank the European Commission and the High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and Environment for their kind invitation.

Climate change has emerged as a major issue that will determine the future of our planet and the wellbeing of humanity, especially the generations to come. The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that warming is 'unequivocal'. The scientists tell us that they know with 90 percent certainty that the warming is due to human activities. In other words, the scientific consensus has hardened to the point where the most pertinent question is not whether climate change is real, but rather what to do about it.

The planet is warming up and the adverse impacts of climate change are already beginning to be felt around the globe. The accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is the main reason. If the concentration of these gases is not stabilized, the world's climate system will be further destabilized.

Climate change is a matter of utmost importance and urgency, a major challenge to humanity for which sustained efforts are needed over a long period of time to effectively address it. Serious commitment to action is necessary at all levels of government, the private sector and civil society, and even from each and every individual.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations realized the importance of this issue for mankind very early in his tenure and made the response to climate change a top priority of his. He sees this as a global challenge that cannot be addressed without global mobilization through the United Nations, the world body established to coordinate the actions of nations for exactly this kind of problems.

The United Nations has already been involved in a multitude of ways in identifying and helping address this major challenge. Let me now present to you what the United Nations has been doing on climate change, and how we see the way forward.

First of all, the United Nations has provided the authoritative scientific conclusion that climate change is happening and is largely due to human activity. There is now overwhelming consensus around this, thanks to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Panel has spoken of the impacts of climate change, especially on the most vulnerable, and on the options available to policy makers to address those impacts as well as the root causes. The final part of its Fourth Assessment Report, known as the “Synthesis Report”, was released ten days ago in Valencia, Spain. I would strongly advise all here to pay close attention to the Panel’s recommendations. Moreover, the award of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize to the IPCC and Mr. Al Gore is a clear recognition of the groundbreaking work of the Panel and demonstrates that climate change impacts a very wide range of issues, including peace and security.

Of course, the primary consequences of climate change are felt on the efforts to achieve sustainable development, including poverty eradication, around the world. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), not easy to start with, especially for the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, is now becoming even more difficult due to the adverse consequences of climate change. Rising sea levels, extreme weather phenomena, advancing desertification, are some of the manifestations of this increasingly alarming situation. We have to act and we have to act now if we want to stop and reverse this. As authoritative studies have indicated, the cost, material and human, of acting now will be far less than if we procrastinate or we get entangled in endless debates with no concrete results.

As you know, the United Nations through its Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) provides the central forum where climate change

negotiations are conducted and agreements reached. The Convention itself and its Kyoto Protocol are the pillars of the international climate change regime that is currently in effect. It is a good start but we now realize that it is not enough. We need a more comprehensive and ambitious set of agreements for the period after 2012, when the current commitments under the Kyoto Protocol expire. To get to that, we need to launch robust negotiations under a limited time frame, so that any new regime is universally ratified and in force by 2012.

On 3 December 2007 the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC will start its 13<sup>th</sup> session in Bali, Indonesia. The parties to the Kyoto Protocol will also be meeting at the same time. These are crucial meetings that will shape the future negotiations for a post-2012 regime. A breakthrough is needed, a brave departure from “business as usual”, in order to launch the negotiations on a solid footing and within a specified time frame.

To build political momentum for the Bali meetings and to contribute to their success, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened on 24 September of this year a High-level Event on Climate Change. World leaders responded to the call by the Secretary-General and converged in large numbers on the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In their speeches the leaders expressed the political will to tackle climate change through concerted action, and made a strong call for negotiations to begin on a future comprehensive multilateral framework beyond 2012.

In addition, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has made an effort to witness first-hand the effects of climate change in order to raise awareness. In Antarctica he saw the continent’s glaciers receding and melting – factor which could lead to a catastrophic rise in the earth’s sea levels. In Punta Arenas, Chile near the center of the famous ozone hole in the earth’s atmosphere, children wear protective clothing against ultraviolet radiation. Finally, in the Amazon – often referred to as the “lungs of the earth” – he observed Brazil’s efforts in fighting deforestation and promoting sustainable forest management. But here as well, the threats of climate change are real, threatening to transform much of the Amazon rainforest into savannah.

The international community must now live up to this political commitment by its leaders. The UNFCCC Conference in Bali in December 2007 must 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 that is commensurate with the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The broad parameters for such a framework are clear: we need an enhanced global response to climate change, involving large-scale adaptation, substantive mitigation, classical and innovative sources of financing, and an unprecedented push for developing and disseminating climate-friendly technologies. Developed countries should take the lead with increased commitments, while incentives should be offered to enable developing countries to do their part too.

A global agreement, on which negotiations are expected to be launched in Bali, would have to address all this and provide for specific mechanisms and measures under the four building blocks or pillars of adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing. Of course, this will be a framework, a set of rules under which the response to climate change will be organized. But actual implementation will require the mobilization of all available resources, both of the public and the private sector, from Governments, civil society and business, down to the level of the individual and the adjustments we all need to make in our lifestyles.

If climate is the challenge, partnership is the tool to address it, like most other challenges, in decisive and coordinated way. We all have to do our part, to the best of our abilities. And to do that first of all we need to break free of the "old paradigm" that presumed an inevitable trade-off between economic growth and environmental responsibility. We can deal with climate change in a positive way that will also enhance the prospects for sustainable growth and poverty eradication around the world.

Governments and international organizations need to deliver a clear and long-term legal framework for action on climate change. This will in turn enable the private sector to plan ahead and make its own significant contributions towards a global low carbon economy. I am glad to see that the business world is being mobilized and demanding such a clear framework.

The role of business is really central. Your ability to determine investment flows and drive prosperity gives you great influence over the pace of innovation, technological change and adaptation. In fact, it is estimated that by 2030 up to 86 per cent of all financial flows will originate in the private sector. Very large amounts are expected to go into the energy sector, especially in fast-growing developing countries. It is crucial that such investments are directed towards climate- and environment-friendly

technologies. This means a lot of power, and a lot of responsibility for those making such decisions and managing these sums. There are opportunities combined with risks, but far-sighted leaders in business, as in every other field, realize that the associated benefits outweigh the costs in the long term.

One point of entry for business that have not yet fully explored the climate change factor is to subscribe to the “Caring for Climate” Platform developed by the UN Global Compact. Established in 1999, now with over 4,000 businesses as members, the Compact challenges world business leaders to “embrace and enact” a set of universal principles within their sphere of influence in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and fair competition. Subscribing to the Platform can be a first step towards a more responsible corporate citizenship.

Although the climate and weather are public goods, innovative market mechanisms can play a major role in stimulating action towards addressing climate change. The carbon market is a major economic tool, one that has tripled in value to \$30 billion in just the past year alone. An expanded and improved carbon market is an essential part of the solution, providing an opportunity to be rewarded and recognized for doing the environmentally sound thing.

The challenge of climate change can only be addressed if all the creative forces of humanity are mobilized. If that happens, the only outcome can be good and welcome. In the process, of course, we should not forget notions of equity and justice, together with efficiency and effectiveness, which should guide us throughout. This is a struggle against a common enemy, and we need to pursue it with fearlessness and determination, building on the foundation of what has been achieved in human civilization, of which responsibility and solidarity are core values.

The Secretary-General and the United Nations are committed to doing our part, to the best of our ability, towards addressing climate change, and we have started to do so. Government representatives are expected to deliver at the Bali conference and there after, with the entire world watching. Let the private sector also join, wholeheartedly, in this major effort.

Thank you very much for your attention.