

STATEMENT BY NGOS TO THE PLENARY - COP1, BERLIN, 30 March 1995.

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Thank you Mr Chairman for giving me the opportunity to address this committee on behalf of the NGOs committed to achieving the ultimate objective of the convention. This address is the united view of NGOs from South and North, East and West.

Mr Chairman,

My fellow NGOs have allowed me to convey my personal concerns on this issue, with their full support and endorsement.

"We have an ethical duty to pay attention, be honest with one another and accept responsibility for what we do. The faith that is so essential to restore the balance now missing in our relationship to the earth is the faith that we do have a future..."

The words were those of the current Vice President of USA Gore, in his book in 1992.

Why do I begin with words from Gore?

It is because here is a world leader who gave me hope and faith to believe that we, the people living on Small Island Developing States, or SIDS, do have a hopes for our future. It was his suggested "Global Marshall Plan", that inspired me to continue to participate in these climate negotiations. My aims, like many of the people of SIDS, is to safeguard the future of our vulnerable islands that are our home, together with the lagoons and oceans that has for centuries provided the foundation of our culture and traditions.

But what has become of us since these negotiations began in 1990? Do we, in SIDS, have hopes for the future? Do we, in SIDS, feel a sense of security and optimism for that future?

I'm afraid not, if these negotiations to date are used as a gauge to measure our hopes. While these negotiations continue, the

evidence of climate destabilisation becomes more apparent and the effects continue to impact us;

cyclones, droughts, floods, rising sea levels;
warmer waters, dying coral reefs,
no insurance cover, no investors, no faith....simply no hope!

This is our reality, Mr Chairman. This is our future!

Mr Chairman, upon returning home last December after our NGO preparatory meeting for this conference, I came across an article in one of the airline magazines by a female journalist, explaining why she believes "cynics are cowards".

"Cynicism", she wrote, "is cowardice turned inwards. The coward is not the person who has fears, but the person who gives in to those fears. The coward goes with the flow, never takes risks and never stands on his principles. The coward is never a leader in the true sense of the word because he knows he's a coward. He becomes cynical in a vain attempt to hide his cowardice from the public".

When I look back on my involvement with the climate negotiations since the Second World Climate Conference in 1990, I recall many unpleasant experiences with cynicism. My efforts, and those of many of my people, have failed to awake the sleeping giants of industrialized countries, who have refused to listen to their own climate scientists, and to the voices of those who will suffer the most pain because of their actions.

In that sense, Mr Chairman, I believe, the climate negotiations are indeed riddled with cynics! At every session of the INC meetings, we are warned by the great majority of climate scientists under the IPCC of the ever increasing CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere, and what it means for us all.

But this warning only seems to transform some people, including some influential negotiators, to become more creative in the exercise of language manipulation, cynicism, hypocrisy and even worse, betrayal, so that business-as-usual rules at the end of the day.

"Who cares about coral reefs?" I often heard in the corridors of the UN buildings in Geneva and New York, when the red wines seeps into the head, reality sets in and diplomacy is no longer in full play.

I care. I listen to the cries of millions of polyps that makes up the corals. Why, because there is much more at stake for us all than just the death of polyps and corals.

What is causing corals to die lies at the core of the way we humans live, especially in OECD countries. Dead corals are the victims of the injustices we continue to ignore, of greed, of selfishness and of the abdication of moral and ethical responsibility. It is an act of genocide against the corals and so against species who depend on them, including ultimately, humans.

The coral polyps's own world mirrors the human experience - the cries for freedom from foreign debt, poverty, starvation, the cries to change lifestyles, not the climate, the cries to stop burning fossil fuels! To ignore the death of coral reefs is, I believe, to ignore the cries of many of the world's people of today, at the peril of our future generations and our planet.

It is for this reason, Mr Chairman, that time and time again, we have urged the international community to hear the cries of the corals as well as our own.

In demonstrations of our responsibility, our governments, under AOSIS, tried throughout the negotiations, to include strict targets and timetables in reducing CO2 and other ghgs in line with the precautionary principle and the 1990 IPCC recommendations of at least 60 to 80% cuts; this was rejected. The agreed Framework is only riddled with carefully selected language that makes it legally non-binding and open to many interpretations!

We once fought to include reference to an insurance compensation pool in the Framework Convention, similar to the oil spill and nuclear compensation schemes now recognized internationally, but major players from OECD countries were So Unmoved and Rejected in Vain, our Insurance scheme Via their selfish Action that may Lead

us to extinction in the future. In effect, a rejection of our efforts to ensure our "SURVIVAL".

But the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 signalled new hopes for us. Promise of a new global partnership of working together, promise of financial support, transfer of environmentally friendly technologies, promise of protecting the climate system for our common future. It is these promises that bring us to Berlin today.

But what substance do we bring to Berlin since Rio? Not even a mandate to agree to negotiate reduction protocols. Not even concrete recognition of the IPCC's scientific arguments for strengthening current commitments. Not even a consensus from industrialized countries to support the AOSIS protocol. Not even signs of heeding the chilling warnings of the ice bergs breaking away in the Antarctica, the recent floods and storms in Europe and North America, the cries of the insurance industry, and indeed the cries of the coral polyps!

Perhaps all of us here today should be reminded that we need much more than the true spirit of Rio to guide the discussions here in Berlin. There should be no place for the cynics, those who claim the moral high ground in rhetoric only, here in Berlin. We need negotiators who have the courage, dedication and true vision to confront the climate change problem head on.

Mr Chairman:

COP1 must seek to re-capture the political leadership amongst Annex I countries desperately needed to resolve difficult issues now polarizing the climate negotiations.

The adequacy of reduction commitments by Annex I countries to meet and strengthen their current commitments, and the protocol negotiations must be the overriding issues on the Berlin agenda. Annex I countries must commit themselves to adopt the AOSIS protocol and commit themselves to a process of implementation here in Berlin, as a first step towards meeting the ultimate objective of the convention.

Science tells us that even stabilization of global emissions now will not lead to stabilisations of CO2 concentrations for several centuries!. This implies that current commitments are completely inadequate. And yet, nearly all OECD countries have failed to demonstrate so far that they are willing to bring emissions back to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Some OECD countries are pushing for developing countries to take action before they themselves do anything at home. This is hypocritical and in contrary to the spirit of "common but differentiated responsibly" already agreed upon.

There must be no room for OECD countries to take a "wait and see what others do" approach here in Berlin. OECD countries must act first to demonstrate to developing countries that they are serious and willing to take the leadership role expected of them in addressing the issue. OECD countries need to act now.

There must be no room for OECD countries to transfer the burden of their emissions to non-OECD countries while continuing to pursue business-as-usual practices in maintaining the growth of CO2 emissions at home, or try to lump all sources and sinks of ghgs together.

These negotiation determines our future survival. It is for this simple reason that we will not rest in our efforts to remind these negotiations over and over again of our peril.

Mr Chairman, I will not fail in my duty in again reminding this gathering about the plight of the coral polyps. What happens to them now will happen to all of us. What will be good for them will be good for all of us. The corals, Our children, Our grand children, all have a right to live!

Are we courageous enough to tear down another wall here in Berlin? The wall of cynicism, of shifting responsibility and hyprocisy, that has been the barrier to real commitments in the climate negotiations process? I urge you to have that courage!

I thank you Mr Chairman.