

**Statement by Mr. Hussein Bagirov, Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources of
the Republic of Azerbaijan**

at

15th United Nations Climate Change Conference

Copenhagen, 16-18 December 2009

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17 years has elapsed since Kyoto. What were these years like? Were it years of only numerous statements, declarations or years of actions and sustainable development as well?

In the face of daunting prospects, consolidated efforts on elaboration of a common strategy are required in order to understand the true sense of the processes. There is a need for concrete actions of states individually and collectively; actions by every single sector, every single business, every single farmer and the international community as a whole.

We believe that Copenhagen represents historic opportunity to meet expectations of people around the world. Being a supporter of the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” enshrined in the Convention, Azerbaijan hopes that new decisions will adequately correspond to interests and development priorities of countries.

We understand that developed countries are agreed to lead and assume more responsibility, not only by promoting national progress, but also by contributing to regional and global efforts, including through promotion of transfer of technology and capacity building. In this regard, we support the principle of reduction of GHGs emissions’ growth rate through implementation of National Appropriate Mitigation Actions.

Azerbaijan at the same time supports the ongoing efforts of countries to bridge gap between positions of developed countries and non-Annex 1 countries, with a view of reaching agreement on long-term targets based on the Bali Road Map.

Mr. President,

We are non-Annex 1 country to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and measured against a base year of 1990, our share in global emissions constituted only 0.3%. Nowadays, as a result of continued targeted measures, our share equals to 0.1% and we achieved the GHGs reduction from annual 70 million to 45 million tons.

My Government attaches a high importance to the issues of transformation of the country’s entire economy to principles of sustainable development, while focusing on the protection of environment and mitigation of climate change effects. Looking back at years of our own participation in the Kyoto process, I keep on asking myself the same question whether these years have been the period of “*words without deeds*” or they have brought the changes triggered by concerns of politicians and painstaking efforts of whole nation.

The period afterwards Kyoto – and this period were not as smooth for us – the first 7-8 years were spent for the survival of the nation. Nevertheless, my country succeeded in reducing the GHGs emissions by more than 420 million tons since the Kyoto process started. This volume equals to the annual GHGs emission of some well developed large European countries. This is

our concrete contribution which is now the case. Therefore, I can unambiguously state that notwithstanding all hardships and deficiency of our capacities, the achieved result provides a clear answer to the question if these years were the years of words or deeds.

It should be noted that during these years the economy of the country grew by several times (5.2 billion USD in 2000 to 46.2 billion USD in 2008). One can argue that it is the result of the oil boom. But equally important is to take into account that in 2008, for example non-energy sector also featured 15,7% growth. You will ask how all it happened?

First: Lots of industries which did not meet both environmental and economic requirements were closed down. It was followed by development of new environmentally friendly industries.

Second: Intensive work was carried out towards the elimination of a heavy legacy in the form of associated gases, improperly decommissioned oil wells. All electric stations were shifted from a fuel- oil to natural gas base, which is less harmful for the air. Many similar actions were undertaken in this regard.

Third: Yes, we are an oil country. Nevertheless, a great project is now being launched under direct supervision of the President of country and this is the creation of a strong sector of renewable energy. In eight to ten years, the power generated by wind and solar energy in the country is supposed to be accounted in thousands of megawatts.

Fourth: Due to steady efforts, we have managed to expand the forest cover of the country by 0.4%, which means that CO2 emissions will be reduced by another 1 million tons a year within the next 10 years.

To give more power to the process of expanding a green cover in my country, the President has put forward a personal initiative to plant in the most drought areas of Azerbaijan 3 million trees by the end of 2010, and 10 million trees within next 3 years, while reusing treated water for irrigation.

Development of research in the field of climate change is also on our environmental agenda. To this end, Environmental Scientific Research Center was recently established in the Caucasus mountainous. Automated stations are set up at the highest points in the Azerbaijani Caucasus (at the altitude of 4200 m), which enable to obtain and study real-time data on a state of glaciers and snow cover. Naturally, these developments are operated by renewable solar energy.

Year by year increasingly more funds are allocated from the state budget for environmental projects under national environmental action plans and programmes.

Mr. President,

Actually, as a member of the Government with a long record of service, I have to acknowledge that when I look back I feel happy that we have succeeded at much; however when I look to the future, I realize with a greatest concern that much many times more is yet has to be done.

And, in our country there is a deep understanding of the seriousness of future tasks. It is therefore that the President has declared the year 2010 as the *Year of Environment in Azerbaijan for Green Earth*.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to all of you.