

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

“Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia”

High Level Segment, UNFCCC COP15,

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

We all gather here, at the biggest environmental meeting in history, for one reason: the threat we are facing is universal.

Global warming is a challenge for humankind as a whole and requires a response from a united humankind.

Even if there will obviously be disappointments, even if we cannot achieve all our goals this time, the Copenhagen summit is a major step towards this global response and I would like to commend world leaders from all sectors for participating in this conference.

As a Head of State, I know very well that political leaders and governments need civil society organizations to remind them that some challenges and causes are more important than their immediate political interests.

That is why I would like to thank all the NGO's, the scientists, and citizens who struggled and are still struggling - inside and outside this palace - so that the universal threat of global warming will be met by a universal response.

It has taken us much too long to realize and admit the environmental costs engendered by our practices and our ways of life but we are now united in the

conviction that something must be done, without delay, to confront the causes and the effects of climate change.

We all know that sheer recognition of the seriousness of our common problem is not enough.

We must act with resolve and determination, setting aside our short-term interests and taking concrete actions for our long-term good, for the good of the generations to come.

Every year, every month of delayed action increases the chance of exceeding 2 degrees of warming.

We are faced with accelerated melting of ice-sheets and glaciers, rapid arctic sea decline and other serious threats.

We need to act. And humankind is such that, in order to act, you need sometimes – unfortunately - constraints.

Not constraint in order to obey the rules imposed by somebody else.

But rather constraints in order to obey the rules that international community – the global community I prefer to say – would give to itself.

Everyone must be obliged by what everyone decides together. But those who have more must share with those who have less.

I am not speaking here only about money, but also about transfers of technology and expertise.

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Ladies and gentlemen, I come from Georgia, a country that has been invaded / a country that is now partially occupied by hostile foreign troops / a country that has suffered from ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

Nevertheless, all the tragic challenges my people faced in the past and continue to face while I am speaking here today, all these challenges do not prevent us from seeing and understanding this universal truth: global warming is threatening our planet.

My region, the South Caucasus already suffers from climate change with shrinking glaciers, sea level rise, reduction and redistribution of river flows, decreasing snowfall and an upward shift of the snowline.

More extreme weather events have also characterized the region throughout the last 10 years, with flooding, landslides, forest fires and coastal erosion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Georgia will stand among those many countries that take targeted, effective measures in fighting the effects of climate change.

My country is fully committed to the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol.

Many nations have already revealed new commitments and several important indications were made in recent weeks.

But we must do more.

Recent findings indicate a criterion, whereby in 2020, compared to 1990 levels, at least 30 percent emission reduction from developed countries and substantial deviation from baseline by advanced developing countries is expected.

But as of today, our joint response falls short of these targets.

Georgia is a small and occupied country, but it is making big efforts to address the problem of climate change.

Already Georgia is relying on hydropower production **for more than than 80% of its electricity production**, making Georgia one of greenest economies in Europe.

And we can do more by further developing this clean resource and sharing it with the neighbourhood.

We will spare no effort to further contribute to the efforts of fighting global warming.

We will take measures to:

- Consider development and adoption of NAMA (Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions), introduction of new technologies and financial mechanisms according to the principles of sustainable development and poverty reduction;

We will:

- Utilize the potential of CDM (Clean Development Mechanism);
- Reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;
- Support domestic application of low greenhouse emitting technologies, especially in renewable energy and energy efficiency areas;

We aim to:

- Facilitate practical implementation of adaptation of mechanisms and programmes, with agriculture, Black Sea Coastal Zone and water resources, as priority sectors;
- And last but not least, develop disaster management strategy.

Yet, I would like to underscore that there are man-made challenges to our climate that would be easy to stop and must not go disregarded.

I am referring here to the tragic situation of Georgia's currently occupied region of Abkhazia, where the Black Sea coast has been experiencing abrasion due to the devastating practices of the occupational power and its proxy regime, who distort the local coastline.

Mining of inert materials on the Gumista River is being carried out by the occupational power for construction of infrastructure for the Sochi Olympic Games.

Ladies and Gentleman, the Olympic Games are supposed to be a celebration of humanist and universal values. But what if they become a reason to destroy nature and durably change ecosystems?

The process of soil erosion has resulted in landslides and in microclimate change, thus significantly influencing the climate factors.

This is extremely alarming and what is most unfortunate is that we are unable to halt these disturbing practices due to the continuous occupation and violation of all cease-fire agreements.

I would like to remind those who – after having committed an **ecocide** in my country by bombing with napalm the forest of Borjomi – today occupy Georgia's territories that we live in a world where we all are obligated to take action, individually and collectively in order to save our common good, our planet.

This is a matter of urgency for every nation and this is where we must gear our efforts as opposed to artificially creating threats and mindfully damaging our climate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by expressing my hope that our gathering here will be significant, that it will be followed by actions, that it will be seen later as the first step taken by humankind eventually responsible and ready to save itself.

So let's do it. Together.

THANK YOU.