

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. JOHN EVANS ATTA MILLS,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA, AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF  
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE HELD IN  
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK, 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2009.**

**Mr. President,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Participants,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me from the outset express appreciation on behalf of the Ghanaian Delegation to the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark and the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat for successfully hosting this conference of the parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the facilities provided for the effective participation of delegations.

Mr. President, projections by the IPCC indicate that if emissions continue to rise at their current pace, the world will face a disastrous future.

Serious adverse impacts are associated with this scenario, including sea-level rise, shifts in growing seasons, loss of biodiversity, and an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather conditions such as heat waves, storms, floods and droughts.

In all these risks, developing countries, particularly those in Africa, and the poor generally are those most affected.

Some scientists believe that the planet is already on an irreversible journey to dangerous warming. However, a few climate change sceptics think the problem will correct itself. Such disagreements are common place in science, and sometimes politics and science make uncomfortable bedfellows.

Mr. President, in Ghana the population is experiencing the effects of changing rainfall pattern, which has become more erratic; drought has intensified; floods have become more frequent in unusual places and the impacts of sea-level rise on our coastal towns and villages have become more pronounced.

Mr. President, our people already live on the frontlines of poverty. This has the adverse impacts of climate change on key sectors of the economy such as human health, agriculture production, water resources, land degradation, fishery production and the forestry sector.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we know the extent to which climate change will affect segments of society; particularly women and children. We should therefore ensure that gender responsive considerations as well as challenges of vulnerable groups are appropriately taken care of within any agreed outcome.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Ghana is a net greenhouse gas remover and therefore has not contributed to the problem of climate change.

Again, we know that Ghana is extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

As a responsible Party to the UNFCCC, we continue work to ensure that our development is green.

Ghana will pursue low carbon development growth path even though our emissions currently are very insignificant.

My delegation is here to share ideas, exchange views, and to confront one of the greatest political challenges of this century and to chart a new course to sustainable development.

Mr. President, the core political issues we have to deal with include, among others, the following:

- Actions to assist the poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change:
- Ambitious mid-term mitigation targets by developed countries.
- Support for mitigation actions by developing countries that are both consistent with national development priorities and able to lead to substantial reduction in emissions.
- Predicable scaled-up financial and technological support.

Mr. President, if we have not made substantial progress in these areas at this stage in our deliberations, then we have not only disappointed, but failed the world.

It has been sufficiently reported that climate change has the potential to push many development countries back into the poverty trap and progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

With the need to adapt to a changing climate, development will be much more costly and many populations will suffer further severe stress.

And Africa's weak ability to adapt to these additional stresses further increases its vulnerability and heightens the risk of agricultural decline, chronic hunger, water shortage, deteriorating health, biodiversity loss, among others.

Hence, for Ghana, action on climate change and on development cannot be separated.

We urgently need an integrated policy response to climate change that is formed in the context of national sustainable development priorities.

This explains why Ghana and other countries in Africa have a vital interest in the strongest possible deal on climate change.

A strong global deal that insists on the leadership of developed countries on emission cuts.

One that promotes equity and recognises that Africa and other developing countries

will need financial support, adaptation, technology and capacity-building with the key objective of achieving growth and fighting poverty.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we need agreement on an ambitious midterm target, which is built on a long-term goal for emission reductions that is meaningful to all, including to those that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. So far, the mid-term targets for emissions reductions announced, particularly by developed countries do not seem ambitious enough to help us achieve the long-term goal and save our planet.

Ghana is a net green house remover as forests store carbon therefore reducing and forest degradation, as well as conserving and sustainably managing forest can provide immediate and substantial mitigation benefits.

However, a major concern of developing countries is that these mitigation actions should not divert much needed resources from poverty reduction and economic growth.

Additional financial resources and technological assistance will be required as an incentive for our forest to serve as a sink.

Mr. President, the current economic challenges should be no excuse to delay action on climate change.

Putting on hold actions on the climate change will be disastrous. The measured and timely response to the global financial crisis is testimony enough that we have the capacity to deal effectively with the climate change challenge.

Our experiences in dealing with different crises in the past inform us that postponing action is always dangerous, and the fear of the unknown is always defeated by the power of leadership and fortitude.

Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity and for your attention.

**Statement Delivered By H.E John Evans Atta-Mills, President Of The Republic  
Of Ghana, At The High Level Segment Of United Nations Conference On  
Climate Change Held In Copenhagen,  
Denmark , On 17th December 2009**

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