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**Second Session of the Conference of the Parties to the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Geneva, 8 to 19 July 1996

Opening Address

by the President of the Conference of the Parties at its First Session

Dr. Angela Merkel

Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

8 July 1996

Ladies and Gentlemen,
distinguished delegates,

I am very pleased to welcome you today to the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Well over a year has passed since we met in Berlin for our first conference. Today we have come together again for an interim evaluation of how the Convention has been implemented and of how far the negotiating process initiated in Berlin has progressed. Here in Geneva we have to set clear political signals in order to overcome existing difficulties and to ensure that the Convention is both implemented and carried further ahead.

What is our common point of departure?

As a result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro we have all become aware of one crucial challenge for humanity: the urgent necessity to change our behaviour along the lines of sustainable development. This was our conviction when we signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 in order to tackle a global problem jeopardising our planet earth - global warming caused by the greenhouse effect. We are committed to an ambitious goal: the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. We will only be able to accomplish this task for securing a world worth living in for present and future generations if we work together in an atmosphere of global trust and partnership. We must be guided in this by our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Therefore, all Parties to the Convention have committed themselves in particular to national programmes containing measures to mitigate climate change. In addition, the developed countries have to adopt, as a first step, policies and measures in order to return their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. This specific commitment of the developed countries was the subject of close review during the first session of the Conference of the Parties. The outcome was the Berlin Mandate, i.e. the obligation to negotiate a protocol or another legal instrument in order to strengthen this commitment. For the Annex I Parties quantified limitation and reduction objectives for time horizons such as 2005, 2010 and 2020 are to be set and obligations concerning policies and measures are to be elaborated. In addition, the implementation of existing Convention commitments has to be advanced without introducing new commitments for the developing countries.

The time-frames specified by the Berlin Mandate are very ambitious: we have to prepare a protocol or another legal instrument which can be adopted during the third session of the Conference of the Parties in late 1997. Already, half of the time available has passed and it gives me great concern to see that a convergence of views on central issues is not yet in sight. Still there are wide gaps in the positions held by different countries and groups of countries.

However, scientific findings which are becoming more and more evident compel us to take consistent precautionary action. The Second Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) adopted in December under the leadership of Prof. Bolin is alarming: The global climate is undergoing changes due to human activities. Already today climate changes are discernible. If we do not act now, we will have to expect a rise in temperature between 1 and 3.5 degrees Celsius. The mean sea level would rise by 15 to 95 cm. The disastrous effects on many regions of the world and the threat this would involve for the very existence of small island states are well known to all of us.

At the same time the IPCC has presented evidence that clear reductions of greenhouse gases are technically possible and economically feasible in all sectors. In many countries there is a considerable potential for no-regret measures so that it is possible, for example, to step up energy efficiency by 10 to 30% over the next two or three decades without a negative to zero net cost.

Given their high energy and resource consumption and their high greenhouse gas emissions climate change is a challenge to which first of all the developed countries have to respond. We have to take on our specific responsibility for the protection of the global climate.

The results of the review of the first national communications of Annex I Parties are therefore a matter of great concern to me. Fifteen developed countries with 55% of the greenhouse gas emissions of this group currently expect their emission levels by the year 2000 to be higher than those of 1990, while so far only 16 states with 42% of emissions expect a return of their emissions to 1990 levels or even a decrease. We therefore have to reaffirm during this Conference our commitment to implement the commitments of the Convention and to call for additional efforts to be made.

Also, we must make every effort to press ahead with the negotiations for the Berlin Mandate in order to initiate the next steps necessary to achieve significant emission reductions. This requires far-reaching changes in almost all areas of economic activities and every-day life. I am well aware that such changes of economic structures and consumption

patterns, in particular in the field of energy supply and energy consumption, cannot be completed overnight but need to be achieved during a continuous adaptation process. And it is today that we have to give the impetus for this process. Therefore, we need ambitious reduction objectives in the short and medium term towards which we can gear our policy. Such objectives will stimulate innovation, promote the development of new technologies, products and processes. They are at the same time a reliable framework for investment decisions of trade and industry and of consumers. In addition, effective climate protection requires policies and measures to be laid down at an international level - also with a view to increasing global competition. The economic links between countries are so tight that unilateral measures are very often not effective or not economically reasonable. Therefore, the negotiations on a protocol also present an opportunity to harmonise the necessary policies and measures in order to avoid potential distortions of competition.

This is why the Berlin Mandate quite rightly calls for the agreement of limitation and reduction objectives as well as policies and measures for developed countries.

However, global climate protection can only be successful if we also act on a worldwide level - the findings of the IPCC are quite categorical about this. We all know that within the framework of the Berlin Mandate it cannot be a matter of introducing new commitments for developing countries. But we should consider what we can do together in order to advance the implementation of the existing objectives. I believe it is a necessary first step to decide on the guidelines for the national communications of non-Annex I countries at this Conference. Increased cooperation between all parties, particularly in the field of climate protection technologies, the pilot phase for activities implemented jointly and stronger involvement of the private sector also seem to me to be practical approaches.

We must find a solution for these central problems. The credibility of all of us is at stake here. This is why these issues will also be at the heart of the ministerial segment of the Conference on 17 and 18 July. We must make clear statements on the urgency of further action in the light of the IPCC findings, on further efforts regarding the implementation of the existing convention commitments and on the intensification of negotiations to flesh out the Berlin Mandate. A ministerial declaration in this vein would be an important signal of our joint willingness for action.

Today, I end my period in office as President and will hand over to my successor, the designated President Chen Chimutengwende, Minister for the Environment and Tourism of Zimbabwe.

There is one issue - namely the Rules of Procedure - which I have tackled since the Berlin Conference at various bilateral and multilateral meetings - and only recently, last night, in informal consultations with a large number of Parties. In spite of the efforts made by all participants involved, it was not possible to come to a final solution. Although this is a very complex and difficult matter, related to the core issues of the Convention, I once again call upon and urge all delegations to consider this issue further and work towards an agreement.

At the end of my term of office, I owe great thanks to many people. Without the constant support from my colleagues in the Bureau, I would not have been able to manage the wide-ranging difficult tasks as President. The untiring commitment of all the Secretariat's staff and the friendly and reliable assistance from our Executive Secretary, Michael Zammit Cutajar, have helped me over all hurdles. I am very pleased that the move of the Secretariat to Bonn in the next few weeks will allow me to keep up these contacts. Finally, I would like to thank you all very much indeed for the excellent cooperation in Berlin and ever since. This was a very important phase for the Convention. We have made progress. But shared commitment, trust and close cooperation are still indispensable if we want to face the global challenges of climate protection and sustainable development. In this spirit I hope that you will also give my successor your full support.

Thank you very much for your attention.