



UNEP

Remarks

by

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Recently, the IPCC concluded that "the balance of evidence suggests a discernable human influence on global climate". Their report also emphasized the uncertainties surrounding the science supporting this conclusion. We should feel proud of the IPCC. It has been forthright and clear in its message to us. It has not prevaricated nor hidden its message in ambiguities and compromise. We have witnessed a triumph of scientific analysis that confirms the anxieties expressed at Villach in 1980 and in 1985 in the making of the first international assessments of the role of radiative gases in the atmosphere.

If we have pride in scientific endeavour we must also recognise the implications of our new understanding. Previously our pollution has been dispersed unwittingly; now, as a consequence of the IPCC we have the knowledge that all further anthropogenic emissions of radiatively-active gases will be deliberate acts of pollution which we are ethically bound to control within limits that will not allow dangerous interference with the climate system. Eventually the IPCC will be able to define those limits, until then, a precautionary approach must be embraced.

There are those, few in number, who still deny the possibility of climate change, and there are those who advocate a wait and see policy citing the many acknowledged uncertainties related to the nature of climate change and of the range and location of possible impacts. But surely we have not forgotten one of the firmly held convictions about which there was consensus at UNCED - lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing precautionary measures.

In a time-span of little more than decades, people have altered the atmosphere that supports all life on this planet. If there are many uncertainties surrounding the science of climate change there are none relating to the changing atmosphere. The quantity of trace gases that controls the exchange of radiation between the earth and surrounding space will be greater tomorrow than today, as yesterday the mix differed from the day before. The change will continue inexorably until we choose to control our emissions to the atmosphere of greenhouse gases, in addition to controls already in place on ozone layer depleting substances and acidifying particulates.

We have already agreed to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of trace gases at levels that will prevent serious interference with the climate system. We have enshrined it in the Convention we have adopted and it is the underlying reason we are meeting in Geneva today. We have acknowledged that the climate is at risk and that we are the cause. We even know some of the solutions. Have we the will to implement them?

It is time to set meaningful targets for emission reduction and a vigorous timetable for its achievement and I trust this Conference will not shirk this responsibility. We should not be satisfied with less than the achievement of a reduced rate of carbon accumulation in the atmosphere brought about by an initial cap on developed country emissions at no greater than 1990 levels. We must also seek at the earliest possible time, a global emission cap and a possible date for its realization. For this we will need the voluntary participation of developing countries in emission reduction measures. To accomplish this, they must be given prompt and unfettered access to international financial mechanisms and appropriate technology free of political conditionality, involving new and additional resources to those presently available for development aid. This is the first barrier that must be dismantled for movement forward in implementing this Convention. They must also be given a clear example to follow by the industrialized countries who must agree to reduce their carbon emissions post 2000 to the very limit of their capacity to do so.

A second barrier to concerted action is access to reliable information by decision makers in business and governments. The IPCC assessments are not easy to digest by non-scientists and Media reports are selective and not always appropriate. UNEP, through our Information Unit on Climate Change, is committed to working with the IPCC and your secretariat to initiate a targeted information programme that will inform rather than confuse those anxious for reliable, accessible information on all relevant topics essential for making policy choices. Enhanced public awareness will surely influence and strengthen the resolve of our decision makers.

There are also opportunities on the horizon. First, there are significant benefits to be found in integrated and sustainable resource management. Energy conservation and efficiency improvements are available to achieve cleaner and higher quality energy services while mitigating

adverse environmental impacts. High priority must be given to the introduction of renewable energy sources and the exchange of experience in their development and application.

Second: although steps have already been taken to coordinate scientific research, observations and monitoring, more must be done to ensure rationality in atmospheric protection measures and actions that protect the environment. Actions taken to combat a particular environmental threat should not exacerbate another because of a failure to assess the full implications of the measures chosen before their application.

There should be no need to create new institutional mechanisms for this purpose but we will have to strengthen coordination and dialogue among existing structures, not only at the international level but at national and regional levels also. In this respect, in response to the 2nd meeting of the COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UNEP will be convening an open-ended Intergovernmental Workshop on Cooperation between CBD and other International Conventions on related issues. In a related activity, UNEP will also develop a policy paper on interlinkages that involve action to protect climate, the ozone layer and biodiversity. This is a beginning of evolving an integrating mechanism at the international level.

We have an obligation to demonstrate our commitment to climate protection without delay. That people are deeply concerned is self-evident. A third opportunity we must not ignore is to engage the private sector and civil society. If we needed a barometer of that concern, then the presence of the Insurance Industry and representatives of a variety of business interests at our deliberations is a graphic indication of how seriously climate change is viewed. It may not have been climate change that recently induced a seemingly unprecedented number of tropical storms making expensive landfall, but rather, a perverse result of natural climate variability. Nevertheless, we may not be far from climate-change induced disaster for which we are not prepared, most definitely warranting the Insurance Industry's concern.

It is my observation that there are many in business and industry, particularly those involved in the use and supply of energy, who are aware of the dangers and probability of climate change. Their constructive participation in the climate debate is most welcome. The

opportunities for anticipatory and mitigative action will be greatest for those best prepared and able to exploit their traditionally innovative capacity, not only for the profit of their own industry, but also through technology development and sharing for the benefit of us all.

Continuing attention must be given to the transport section. There are further opportunities for energy efficiency improvements, alternative and non-polluting fuel exploitation and traffic regulation. At COP 1, I spoke of the effective way municipal governments had begun to address local pollution and transport problems that would be beneficial not only to the community but also advantageous to meeting national and regional emission standards. Grassroot enthusiasm for environmental action has not waned in the intervening year and local leaders, particularly the mayors of major cities, can demonstrate success stories that more must emulate and we must encourage.

A fourth opportunity lies in the analyses of market and non-market instruments to determine how they can be used to promote efficient energy end-use. Taxes and tax exemptions, subsidies, fees, tradeable permits and legal and institutional regulations are measures to be explored and where found worthy, applied. We need internationally agreed targets and timetables implemented by national policies and measures.

This meeting will consider the first results of the many Activities-Implemented-Jointly (AIJ) programmes that are underway as part of the pilot phase. It is my conviction that Activities Implemented Jointly (AIJ) can contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emission reduction and carbon reservoir enhancement. I am well aware of the suspicions with which some countries view this process and their concerns over the potential acquisition of emission credits by donors as a reward for AIJ project initiation in less developed countries. AIJ should not necessarily imply the imposition of emission limits nor the imposition of mandatory commitments in developing countries, nor that there will be excess carbon capacity for sale, contrary to existing Convention Articles. The historical responsibility for greenhouse gas accumulation in the atmosphere is clearly acknowledged but common sense tells us that atmospheric carbon removal at a rate sufficient to prevent climate change and the accompanying adverse impacts, will not be achieved without developing country cooperation in emission control.

Further dialogue is essential. In October of this year, UNEP in collaboration with the Earth Council and the Government of Costa Rica will provide a non-confrontational setting for a discussion. Success in AIJ projects will be described as will difficulties be explored. Opportunities will be identified and constraints discussed. The meeting will not seek conclusions nor will it make recommendations. These are the prerogative of the Parties to the Convention. UNEP seeks only a forum for dialogue to be approached with open minds.

The countdown to climate change is well underway. We have put ourselves in harm's way. We will need a collectively agreed and applied rescue operation. UNEP is a willing and committed partner. UNEP through direct injection of staff into the UNFCCC Secretariat and through targeted programmes both in countries and at the international level has the capacity to serve as an honest broker in the debate. In the end however, the choice of what we do is yours to make. The implications of that choice will be for all of us to bear.