

Speaking note for Mrs Beckett's intervention on the High Level Panel on
Impacts of climate change, adaptation measures and sustainable development

Speaking note

The more we learn about climate change and its effects, the more it is clear that we need to act urgently. Climate change is clearly affecting both the developed and the developing world. Average temperatures in Europe have increased by nearly 1 Degree C over the past 100 years and the summer of 2003 was the warmest on record. This event was unprecedented in its effects in modern times, leading to the premature deaths of some 26,000 people in Europe. By the middle of the century, such warm summers could occur every other year in Europe.

But it is not only Europe that is showing the signs of climate change. The less developed countries could face significant losses for even small increases in temperature, which could set development efforts back by many years, even decades.

We believe that there needs to be a global effort to equip developing countries with the tools and methods to adapt and to increase their resilience. Adaptation is needed to support national and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Factoring climate risks into poverty reduction strategies and national strategies for sustainable development is key to minimising developing countries' vulnerability. Today, I am pleased to announce on behalf of the UK Government the publication of a joint study on Africa's capability in climate science and observation which highlights gaps in knowledge and understanding. We look forward to working with partners internationally to develop a programme of work to fill these gaps.

Next year, the EU will start delivering on its part of the political commitment made at COP6bis, by commencing annual payments of \$369 million to assist Non-Annex I Parties in addressing climate change, including adaptation.

However, the impacts of climate change do not just arise due to local climate change. A recent major assessment of climate change in the Arctic reveals a worrying picture of rapidly rising temperatures, receding snow and ice. These changes do not only adversely affect wildlife and traditional lifestyles of indigenous peoples. With continuing temperature rise the Greenland ice sheet will begin to melt, perhaps by the middle of the century, accelerating rising sea levels which could eventually increase by 22 feet affecting millions in communities far from the Arctic.

We cannot adapt to all the impacts of climate change. We need to avoid levels of climate change which lead to widespread species loss, environmental damage and loss of life and disruption to society. We also need to avoid reaching so called tipping points in the climate system that could lead to rapid climate change and the collapse of the ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica.

Our climate change strategies must also include mitigation. All developed countries have a moral responsibility to take the lead in cutting their emissions. We all need to accelerate actions to tackle climate change under the Framework of the Convention to slow the rates of change so that we can avoid dangerous levels of climate change.

492 WORDS