

*Intervention of Minister Margaretha de Boer,
Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of The Netherlands*

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Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Destabilisation of the global climate is the horror-scenario we are here to prevent. We have to fight the enhanced greenhouse effect. At the end of this conference we will be judged by the people of the world.

Did we act responsibly?

Did we establish the first concrete follow-up to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, in order to preserve one of the most precious gifts of nature, the climate that enables us to live?

Many are the differences that divide the people of this Earth.

Yet, they have one thing in common: the Earth itself, covered by its frail atmosphere. The threat of climate change is real.

So we have to act.

Not later, not the day after tomorrow, not even tomorrow, but today. Here in Kyoto.

Therefore people everywhere are scrutinising what we are doing here.

They want us to do the right thing.

People in the industrialised world and in the developing countries alike are concerned about the potential changes in the climate. They worry, not only about themselves and their livelihood, but also about the future of their children. They are looking to us for solutions. We must not fail them. In the words of the Tanzanian Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, just a few weeks ago, "it is time for us to get the ball rolling".

It is good to see so many young faces here showing a keen interest in our agenda. We have to listen to them. After all their lives and the lives of the next generations are at stake. We are proud to have youth representatives on our own delegation.

My colleague from Luxembourg has, on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, described very clearly how Europe wants to contribute to the process. Within that Community, The Netherlands is fully prepared to play its role and shoulder its responsibilities.

And we know that others will follow in due course - but only if we are seen to really commit ourselves to legally binding targets, targets that will be used to assess our performance. And that assessment will need to be embedded in a strong, effective and binding compliance regime.

It goes without saying that it is not sufficient to just speak about targets. Targets are crucial, but so are the means one has to employ in order to meet them. Therefore we firmly believe in the necessity of defining international policies and measures. That is the only way to make sure that the targets will be met.

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In this connection I would like to mention the introduction of an international aviation fuel taxation through the International Civil Aviation Organisation, a good example of a measure that can not be taken within the jurisdiction of any single country.

Over the last few days a lot has been said about commitments of developing countries. Let me make it very clear that The Netherlands acknowledges the priority that developing countries have to give to sustainable economic and social development. This is in line with Agenda 21, the Climate Change Convention and the Berlin Mandate. These countries participate very actively in the debate on climate change issues - not because they want to avoid taking action, but because they quite rightly expect the industrialised countries to take the lead in combating climate change.

This is where the United States of America, together with the European Union, Japan and the other industrialised nations has to take on its role of environmental leadership. We in The Netherlands are already doing our best, at great initial cost. But we all have to put our money where our mouth is, in the interest of the children of our world.

Thank you, Mr. President.