

H.E Mohamed Aslam, Minister for Housing and Environment, Statement at COP17 High-level

Madam President,
Ministers,
Excellency's,
Ladies and Gentleman

Let me be very short and clear with my statement.

The Maldives and many of our friends from other small island developing states came here to this magnificent city of Durban with a very clear view on what we would like to achieve at this conference.

We went to Copenhagen seeking to conclude the talks of extending the commitments of Kyoto Protocol and completing the plan we got from Bali, with the ultimate aim of entering into a legally binding regime on climate change. When we realized it was not going to happen, we worked with others to keep the process alive and accepted the outcome of Copenhagen. Our intentions then and now are the same. We wanted a legally binding regime that would guarantee our survival. And we believe that a legally binding agreement is the only viable solution we have in tackling dangers of climate change.

At Cancun, our desire was to finalize the building blocks of a new climate regime, and we managed to achieve substantial amount of work in Cancun. We all were fully behind the Cancun outcome.

Madam President,

We cannot accept again in this conference to redefine what we have already concluded, and I do not believe that we should continue to unravel the agreements we already have. Redefining and reinventing building blocks would only delay the progress we achieved so far. Some of us may think time is on their side, but for my country, it is extremely important to take action today.

My delegation came to Durban promising ourselves that our focus is on the legally binding agreement. Madam President, we are not flattered by the talks of large amounts of money, 30 billion and a 100 billion dollars.

What we seek is a mandate for us to work on a binding agreement and for the parties to agree that we shall start the process now and reach that agreement as soon as possible but no later than 2015.

2015 is not an arbitrary date. The recent reports of International Energy Agency and the UNEP gap report states that we do not have much time left to take concrete actions. We are expecting the next IPCC report in 2014 and it may tell us we have already passed the tipping point.

What we are witnessing is that, report after report is proving acceleration in sea-level rise, increase in water insecurity, food scarcity, and negative impacts to our ecosystems and livelihoods.

Current pledges brought forward by parties are not consistent with pathways that can achieve the below 2 degree target agreed in Copenhagen and Cancun. Current emission reduction pledges have the world on a pathway for a temperature increase of at least 4°C or more, which will definitely wipe out my country and many small island states from the world map.

For vulnerable countries the urgency is now. It is time to act decisively. Parties need to go beyond

their long stated positions and kick-off negotiations towards a comprehensive, fair, ambitious agreement.

Let me be very clear, to delay action until 2020 is not acceptable to us. We have to say a simple NO to that.

We need to act decisively and agree to a 2012 work plan to close the 6 to 11 Gigatonne gap we have.

Madam President,

We must adopt a decision that establishes a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. I congratulate the European Union for the leadership and the flexibility they have demonstrated here yesterday. And I am hopeful what Commissioner Connie Hedegaard said yesterday in this hall is transmitted into negotiating rooms.

We agree that we cannot put all the developing countries in one basket. We should not attempt to weigh all of us on the same scale. Among the developing parties we have major emitters. Voluntary commitments do not give us long-term guarantee. We will have to differentiate major emitters and other developing countries. They must accept this reality and we should work on a path to make this distinction. A new legally binding agreement can and should make that happen.

We cannot be asked to compromise when our survival as a nation is at stake. Every concession we make is a physical concession rather than just a political one, because we concede our land and livelihoods to the worsening climate impacts.

We have every faith in South African Presidency to make this COP a success and my delegation will support you Madam President to make this COP the turning point for the climate negotiations.