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Speech by Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP at the Fourth Conference of the Parties to The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

**11 November, 1998
Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Madam President, Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues and Friends.

It is my outstanding pleasure and privilege to address the Fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in my capacity as the person responsible for the United Nations Environment Programme and for the Habitat Centre.

We are sincerely grateful to the government and people of Argentina, to the citizens of this great, dynamic city of Buenos Aires - especially to you Madam President for the generous hospitality, the perfect organization.

Madam President, your dedication and your commitment for a positive result of these important negotiations are a necessary and successful precondition to overcome bottlenecks and barriers - to decide on a clear timetable and action plan for the way to COP-5 and 6. A Buenos Aires Plan to coordinated action against climate change.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, is the environmental voice of the United Nations system. Together with Habitat, we are proud to be the only

organizations headquartered in the developing world in Nairobi, Kenya - in this great continent, Africa.

So, we learn day by day that the most toxic substance in the world, the most toxic substance for human society, and for the environment, is poverty.

To overcome, to eradicate poverty, in the process of sustainable development, is therefore the centre of our concern. That was, and is the most important message of Rio 1992 - the Earth Summit. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development process which led to Agenda 21 - the handbook for sustainable development - and to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

This Convention and the Kyoto Protocol are instruments of sustainable development that have the identical idea as all the other leading legally binding conventions - biodiversity, desertification, ozone layer, etc. The idea to fight in a new global culture of solidarity against the fact that we have a regionalisation of the advantages of technical progress and economic growth and a globalisation of the disadvantages, or their postponement to coming generations.

To decrease these externalities and the negative consequences of their distribution to regions and peoples around the world is a vital precondition to avoid tensions and conflicts. As is, to open new development opportunities for the developing world, and for coming generations, in a sustainable manner, and to combine economic growth urgently needed for the developing countries, with social equity and environmental stability.

Madam President,

The balance of evidence provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change clearly points to human interference with the climate system. This proves those externalities of our existing energy supply and demand.

This year, we have been brutally confronted with the vulnerability of mankind, especially the poorest from the developing countries, and of nature, to climate extremes.

El Nino and La Nina, worse than in the past, combined with a lot of man-made changes and land-use, have caused devastating floods and fires around the world.

The terrible devastation wrought by Hurricane Mitch last week is just the latest dramatic example of the vulnerability - thousands of people have lost loved ones, homes and all their possessions. Our deepest feeling and our solidarity are with these families, are with these people.

Yesterday, at the meeting of UNEP's High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, a decision was made after a passionate plea from the distinguished environment minister of Mexico, to identify within the emergency response programme of UNEP, and coordinated with all the other relevant agencies, the response, capacity and institutional strengthening needs for the Central American countries impacted by recent climate matters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNEP feels that the study of climate variability and vulnerability is an issue of paramount importance. As a partner in the World Climate Programme, charged with implementing Climate Impacts Assessments, our emphasis will be on catalyzing this research in developing countries to assist in arriving at an authoritative assessment as a starting point to developing mitigation and adaptation strategies.

As part of this effort, the Global Environmental Facility's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) - for which UNEP provides the secretariat - held a workshop here at COP-4 in collaboration with the IPCC and SBSTA on "Climate Change Impact, Assessment and Responses." It provided important scientific perspectives on the issue and we are determined to concentrate our efforts in this field.

We also delivered the study of Mitigation and Adaptation Cost Assessment Concepts, Methods and Appropriate Use by UNEP and RISO.

Madam President,

The Climate Change Convention and its Kyoto Protocol will only succeed if they are widely supported by the public and key constituencies and interest groups. Article 6

of the Convention - on awareness, education and training - is a key to the success of the Convention.

UNEP has extensive experience in raising environmental awareness and promoting implementation of conventions. In response to your guidance, we are ready to support national efforts to implement Article 6. We will be submitting a full project proposal on implementing the Climate Awareness Programme to the GEF in response to the request of the Executive Secretary addressed to UNEP.

UNEP also has the experience and capacity to develop a clearing-house of best practices and technologies to help policy-makers and business leaders craft their response to climate change, based on our successful experience with the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol.

Close co-operation with business and industry is critical to ensure the effective transfer of environment friendly technologies to developing countries, and the development of alternative renewable technologies.

In this regard, we are glad to co-operate with other agencies on this, especially with UNIDO.

We must stimulate new technologies to increase energy efficiency, and reach economies of scale in the use of renewable energies stimulated by the obligation to decrease greenhouse gases at home, especially in the developed countries.

Madam President,

Recognising the importance of an integrated approach to environmental problems, UNEP, jointly with the World Bank and National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA), has produced a report on the linkages between environmental issues, and the human needs of food, shelter, health and clean water. Those inter-linkages between the different conventions are of the highest importance.

The "Interlinkages Assessment Report," produced with the support of many scientists, policy-makers and technical specialists, suggests opportunities for strategic interventions at the policy level. It will be launched tomorrow, here in Buenos Aires.

Madam President,

Apart from the debate on the scientific issues underlying your discussions, we have to realise that the real importance of the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol lies in the fundamental implications that this environmental agreement has for the global economy.

We have to understand the uncertainties that face developing countries in the context of globalisation and the impact on their economies of the current volatility of global financial markets. We have to confront the spectre of mass unemployment, debt, stagnating development and extreme poverty if we are to address the problem in all its complexity.

The real implementation of the Convention is not restricted only to the Clean Development Mechanism and other mechanisms of the Protocol. Market based instruments are so important. We can reach the targets with the lowest cost and to use the CDM as a "no-regrets" strategy to bind the overcoming of poverty and development with environmental precaution.

There are a whole range of domestic and international policy and market distortions or failures that must be addressed as a priority. We need to develop methodologies to practically deal with the core issues as I see them of financial transfers, technology transfer, capacity building, market based incentives and public/private cooperative undertakings.

We need an operational and practical methodology to make sustainable development a reality. That I believe is also the outcome expected here.

These problems and the immense challenges facing developing countries became very clear to me when we had the honour to host the Special Consultation of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Nairobi last month. The meeting resulted in a unanimous decision on proactive African participation in implementation of the CDM emphasising the need for a comprehensive approach to sustainable development including

the absolute imperative of poverty eradication and sustainable economic growth. Also, of debt relief and bilateral and multilateral financial and technical co-operation.

We also linked our efforts with other organisations, with UNDP and UNIDO, UNCTAD and IEA. We are determined to co-ordinate all our efforts much more in the future.

Madam President, it will require a process and hard work to translate scientific findings into concrete policy relevant recommendations and options for the future implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.

There is intensive work to do with the NGO family and local authorities. I want to mention ICLEA, who are dedicated to implement Agenda 21 and decrease CO2 emissions in their cities.

In the meantime, and as a supplement to this, there is an imperative need to address the question of mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This requires a concerted effort to provide a serious capacity building programme and technology transfer and co-operation to developing countries, to single out the consequences and to take the appropriate measures.

Madam President, In UNEP we are prepared to assist in this effort.

Let me make clear that UNEP stands ready to respond to the expressed needs of governments in achieving the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol.

We are ready to be integrated into sustainable development.

Thank you very much.
