

Arab Republic of Egypt

Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs

Madam Chair person ,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues

It is an honor and a special pleasure for me to address this distinguished gathering in this friendly and hospitable environment that Buenos Aires has so generously offered us since our arrival. On behalf of the Government of Egypt, I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to the Government of Argentina and its warm for attracting the world community to move forward, with single-minded determination, to complete our unfinished agenda on climate change.

About a year ago we met in Kyoto where we together took the first step towards realizing the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Kyoto sent a clear signal to the entire world, that problems of climate change cannot be wished away and must be taken by all very seriously, with renewed vigour and intensity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Climate change is not a North South issue. It is the greatest global environmental challenge that faces our life on earth as we embrace an unprecedented new millennium and one of the most transformative eras of human history. The call for action is loud and clear. We must not fail, nor hold back the tide.

Egypt, despite its demanding domestic development agenda, has been consistently committed to contributing to international efforts to address the complexity of the climate change.

The Second IPCC assessment report identified Egypt among the vulnerable countries to sea level rise as a result of global warming. We understandably have a natural interest in reaching practical and action-oriented sustainable solutions.

Please allow me to share with you some of our home-grown initiatives in this field:

We are working diligently to finalize a National Action Plan on Climate Change that outlines our strategies to mitigate and adapt to adverse impacts of climate change. A National Energy Efficiency Programme represents the core of this plan and is based on

three main interventions: improving energy efficiency, switching to less or zero carbon fuels and promoting the expanded use of new and renewable energy technologies.

To this end, the Government is implementing a number of forward-looking policy interventions to reduce green house gas emissions. Egypt's petroleum sector has succeeded in switching from the use of oil to natural gas in various consuming sectors. At present, natural gas represents 35% of Egypt's energy demand. 80% of the electricity produced thermally in Egypt is natural gas-based. This environment-friendly gas is now providing heat for about 1.5 million homes in Egypt. Compressed natural gas is being progressively used as a transport fuel to replace gasoline and diesel. About 15,000 vehicles are currently powered by natural gas in our bustling capital, Cairo, and other major cities.

The power sector plans to build 600 Mega Watt of grid-connected wind power up to the year 2017. It has also started a project, with the support of the Global Environment Facility, to establish the first solar thermal power plant with a 150 MW capacity.

More recently, Egypt has received Global Environment Facility support to assess the feasibility of demonstrating public transit buses powered by fuel cell technology, to curb both air pollutants and GHG emissions. This initiative offers very promising replicability potential in other megacities, many of which are located in developing countries. We shall, with pride, report all of these concerted efforts in our First National Communication, which will be submitted next July.

Madam Chairperson

Please allow me to share with you some of the principles that I believe should guide our future joint deliberations.

Since Kyoto represents a first step toward realizing the objectives of the Climate Change Convention, the Kyoto Protocol is by no means a substitute, but a complement to the ratified convention. The new mechanisms stipulated in the Kyoto Protocol should supplement domestic actions by Annex I countries to reduce GHG emissions. These reductions should be real, measurable and verifiable. We should genuinely avoid toddling with mathematical jargon in some uncertain areas such as land use and forestry, to create virtual GHG reductions.

The three mechanisms: joint implementation, emission trading and the clean development mechanisms, should be treated equally in terms of their effectiveness to reduce global GHG emissions. Part of the proceeds from these mechanisms should be mobilized to finance the transfer of adaptation technology for developing countries, particularly those demonstrating a high vulnerability potential.

Let me dwell for a few seconds on this important item. It is unfortunate that adaptation to climate change impacts has so far not received its due share of our negotiating time and attention. It seems to have become an almost chronically missing issue, despite its clear and pressing significance to developing countries, including Egypt.

We have also for many years done very little, other than pay lip service, to technology transfer, acquisition and cooperation, at a time when new technological advances are making old skills and practices obsolete. Is it not time to move from rhetoric to down-to-earth action on the ground? Without clean energy technologies and environment-friendly techniques, developing countries will continue to find it exceedingly difficult to play a meaningful role in reducing GHG emissions.

I would like to emphasize at this juncture that in Egypt, clean technology cooperation is indeed a priority within our national environmental policy guidelines. Equally important, is national capacity building, particularly for younger generations. We believe that capacity building is essential to activate the newly adopted mechanisms. For developing countries to become active partners in implementing the clean development mechanism, for example, a long-term process of capacity development should be launched to set the ground for project development, implementation, monitoring and follow up.

The private sector in developing countries should be sensitized to play a more active role in this process. So should non-governmental organizations, a force to be reckoned with, as they continue to gain credibility and recognition in the developing world, including Egypt. A transparent free flow of information should be secured at the global level with a concomitant need to simplify this information to the man and woman in the street. We strongly believe that public participation and a people centered approach is of the greatest value in addressing this daunting challenge.

Madam chairperson, honourable delegates, friends and colleagues

As always, Egypt stands ready to participate in any effort that would contribute to the success of this meeting and others to follow.

I leave you with our unwavering commitment to foster international cooperation in a spirit of friendship, mutual understanding and trust and a sense of shared responsibility for each other and our bruised planetary home.