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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO THE TENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
Buenos Aires, 15 December 2004

*Delivered by Mr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director,
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With its nearly universal membership, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has helped to place climate change firmly on local, national and international agendas. It has also established the institutions and processes with which to address this quintessentially global challenge. As we mark the tenth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force, we can say with a sense of achievement that our "child", so to speak, is growing up. But much more needs to be done as it comes of age, so that we can feel confident that the problem is being adequately addressed.

Worrying signals continue to reach us about the impacts and risks of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has already showed us that the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events may increase. Its forthcoming assessment report will no doubt deepen the already compelling scientific case for urgent international action on both mitigation and adaptation.

As climate impacts become unavoidable, the development agenda will have to evolve to include measures to help societies adapt. Indeed, we must not allow the consequences of climate change to undermine our work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Next month will bring two major conferences linked to the adaptation agenda: the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action on Small Island Developing States in Mauritius, and the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan. I urge those attending these meetings to make the most of these opportunities.

Much attention is now justifiably turned toward the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol on 16 February next year. The Protocol's innovative use of market-based mechanisms to control greenhouse gas emissions will write a new and exciting chapter in the history of environmental agreements. The Protocol also sets up a solid system of support for sustainable development in developing countries, for example through the Clean Development Mechanism. These processes will be closely watched, and I urge you to make them work.

I urge you also to look ahead, beyond the Protocol, which takes us only to the year 2012. The longer-term challenge is to promote the use of low-carbon energy sources, low-greenhouse-gas technologies and renewable energy sources. In developed and developing countries alike, we need development strategies that are more climate-friendly. We will need closer partnerships with the finance and investment community, since its decisions, in particular on the energy systems that drive development, can make a major contribution to achieving our objectives. And we will need to do even more to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Indeed, without adequate mitigation, adaptation will become an insurmountable task.

The long effort to come to grips with climate change has now entered a new era. The eyes of the world are on you. People around the world want to know that you are working together, on a multilateral basis, to address this challenge with all your creativity and will. They want genuine signs that the days of delay and doubt are now behind us. I call on you to seize this moment. I assure you of the support of the entire United Nations system for this crucially important endeavour. Please accept my best wishes for the success of your deliberations.