



**UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR
L'ENVIRONNEMENT**



**Address by
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of the
United Nations Environment Programme
to the
High Level Segment of the
Third Conference of the Parties to the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
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It was the gradual climb in global average temperatures by just 4 degrees Celsius, over the course of several thousand years, that brought the last ice age to an end. What can we expect from a comparable change in temperature within just the next 50 to 100 years?

The IPCC was established expressly to answer this question, to provide the scientific foundation for decision-making. Its findings are based on the peer-reviewed research of the world's leading climate scientists.

In its most recent assessment, the IPCC tells us that climate change is already upon us. And, while no mortal efforts to see the future can ever be nearly perfect, we have been given a clear picture of where current trends are very likely to lead.

As the IPCC's chairman emeritus, Professor Bolin, reminded us last week, there is an enormous gap between what is on the table for discussion here at Kyoto and the immediate 60 per cent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions required to stabilize atmospheric gases at roughly current levels. Even the most optimistic view of what this meeting could hope to agree is in the range of 5 to 15% reductions from 1990 levels by 2010, plus or minus a few years. In these terms, our collective response to this issue is clearly vastly insufficient.

Five years ago the Framework Convention on Climate Change was agreed in Rio. As modest a first step as that represented, it was still thought to be a good beginning upon which we could improve over time.

But as we gather here in Kyoto, are we prepared to build on that agreement? Many of us are here not having fulfilled our commitments under the Convention. Many of us are here arguing that action is possible only if it comes with no costs or inconvenience. Many of us are here arguing for a pace of response that will represent a significant backsliding from even that very modest undertaking of five years ago.

This is not what we have been sent here to do. This is not what is expected of us - we who have a responsibility for protecting the health of this planet. This can not be all that we are capable of achieving.

There is no doubt that climate change presents an enormous challenge. Climate change is about how humans use energy. Fundamentally, it is about our economies, our security and our ways of life. No one should imagine that change will come easily.

But change must come. The people of this planet give us the mandate. This tailor-made multilateral institution gives us the means. As

individuals we all come here with the highest of motivations. Yet progress remains elusive. And it is imperative that we understand why. What is preventing us from reaching the agreements we all know will be required to protect the integrity of this world's climate?

From UNEP's perspective, we would offer the following observations for your consideration:

For this negotiation to proceed in good faith, it must have a just foundation. It is simply a fact that the problem of climate change is overwhelmingly the result of several centuries of fossil fuel-based development in the industrialized countries. Those countries clearly have the primary responsibility. And they have the wealth and technological capability to act, also a consequence of their high degree of development. Correctly, the Framework Convention established that the industrialized countries would take the lead, and that the developing countries would follow. Any demand that this premise be abandoned would be entirely without legitimacy.

We have all heard the arguments that there can be no progress if there are costs or inconveniences attached. Or that this is not the right time, economically, for real action on climate change. Certainly, we must do our utmost to find the least expensive and least disruptive responses possible. Energy efficiency, tradeable permits, activities implemented jointly, carbon sinks, among other 'no regrets' options, offer indispensable opportunities for progress. But we must also be prepared to tackle the problem head on, to make cuts at home even if it hurts in the short term, if we are called upon to do so in the long-term interests of the global climate and the quality of human life on this Earth for centuries to come.

For governments to be in a position to agree in negotiations such as these to specific targets and timetables, they must know that there is a reasonable prospect for political support

at home. And this is evidently far from the case. We can not expect to make real headway in addressing the climate problem until there is much greater public understanding of its importance, and a much greater public preparedness to be part of a solution. Bringing this about will require a concerted and sustained effort on a global scale.

And when the will to agree on significant action is found, it is clear from the experience of the past five years that the voluntary approach is an insufficient means of ensuring compliance. In this intensely competitive global economy in which we all now live, no company or country can afford to risk compromising their competitive position relative to others who may not comply. It is clear that from this point forward we must now accept nothing short of a legally binding agreement backed up by penalties sufficient to prevent any company or country from gaining competitive advantage through non-compliance.

Overcoming the obstacles to real progress at these negotiations and beyond will require leadership of a sort that has so far been scarce. Amid the din of vigorous defences of national interests, very few voices offering leadership, much less self-sacrifice, in the name of collective well-being can be heard. There is an urgent need for the world's statesmen and stateswomen to take up this issue and see it through.

The world will take its cue from this meeting as to how serious we are about climate change. It is now entirely within your hands, the representatives of the governments of the world, to decide what signal you wish to send.