

## **COP 19/CMP 9, Warsaw, Poland**

### **High-Level Segment**

#### **Statement by Iceland**

President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here in Warsaw, we are reminded by science that climate change is real and that the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere continues to rise at an alarming rate. The latest findings by the IPCC give little reason for comfort. Some manifestations of climate change are obvious, even violent, like more frequent extreme weather events. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, said here in his opening statement of the High-Level Segment of COP 19 that climate change might turn Iceland into a land without ice. Indeed, it is true that Icelandic scientists predict that glaciers now covering some one-tenth of Iceland may largely disappear in the next one or two centuries if climate change is unabated. Other changes are less visible but no less alarming, like ocean acidification. Recent studies by the Arctic Council, the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment and the Arctic Ocean Acidification Assessment, suggest that climate change is the most serious threat to Arctic biodiversity and ecosystems. There is no known way to stop ocean acidification except by halting carbon emissions.

In Doha we took a small step by agreeing on a new Commitment Period of the Kyoto Protocol. Kyoto countries with quantified emissions commitments account for less than 15% of global emissions. This will not solve our global problem. Therefore we must get a firm mandate here in Warsaw to step up efforts in negotiating a truly global agreement to cut emissions, to be finalized by 2015.

Practical actions for climate mitigation must be intensified. Domestically, Iceland puts emphasis on actions where mitigation potential is highest. As stationary energy comes almost exclusively from renewables, emissions reductions must come largely from mobile sources. Iceland also has great potential to reclaim vegetation and forests on eroded lands, and soak up carbon from the atmosphere. Land use and forestry are most important sectors in a global climate context, as sources of carbon emissions and as sinks for CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. We should provide incentives in these sectors in climate agreements, so we can seize win-win opportunities, such as by conserving biodiversity-rich forests or reclaiming drained peatlands.

Internationally, Iceland's climate actions focus on areas where Iceland has special expertise in technology and know-how. Geothermal energy is a viable alternative for probably hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Iceland has a long-standing geothermal training programme for students from developing countries, and has recently stepped up efforts in this field, especially by its initiation and participation in a programme with the World Bank and other partners in Eastern and Southern Africa. The Icelandic Development Aid Agency recently signed an agreement with the Government of Ethiopia on research and capacity building in the field of geothermal development, a project which the World Bank is also involved in. The private sector has an important role to play in this regard; geothermal energy is commercially viable in many places, and private investment can advance its utilization, while development assistance can help build capacity and infrastructure.

Iceland welcomes the high profile that gender issues have had at COP 19. The climate challenge is vast, and solving it requires the involvement of all sectors of society. We will not succeed if we do not encourage women as well as men to engage in decisions and actions for adaptation and mitigation. We must continue to address gender and equality in our discussions at the UNFCCC, including in our work on the 2015 agreement, but we also need to act on decisions we have already made, and ensure active participation of women in climate-related projects, in both developed and developing countries.

Thank you,