

Opening Statement

of the Conference at its Sixth Session

The Hague, 13 November 2000

by

H.E. Jan Szyszko

President of COP 5

Your Majesty Queen Beatrix,
Distinguished Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers,
Delegation Chairmen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

You placed great confidence in me when you called on me to serve as President of COP5. That was a great challenge, all the more so since I regard that Convention as the world's greatest economic convention. I also regard it as an opportunity for the world to start developing in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. It is an opportunity for highly developed and developing nations alike. It is an opportunity for people's living standards in the former to continue growing and for people in the latter to quickly achieve the level of highly developed states. It is an opportunity for the world's further development not to be associated with a growth of threats to humanity. Both before and after being elected President I have repeated: everything is possible, time is our Master and troubles are my speciality. I can say the same today when I am richer by the experiences of the past year. It is possible to reach agreement and put the Kyoto Protocol into effect before the end of 2002, but the unrelenting factor in all this is time, and the problems to be resolved are many. When I assumed the presidency of this Convention I resolved to adhere to several principles. These were the following:

- Fulfilment of all imposed obligations whilst observing the principle of equal treatment of Member-States on all issues,
- Propagation of knowledge of the Convention's importance to sustainable world development,

- Tapping the wealth of experience amassed by my predecessors and co-operating with them,
- Co-operation with my presumed successor in the conviction that a stable, long-term policy is the best chance for the Convention's success,
- Close co-operation with the Secretariat, Bureau and the chairmen of the SBSTA and SBI, in acknowledgement of their great experience.

More than enough has been said about the importance of the Convention to all the world's States. Acceptance of the first principle stems from my profound conviction that the achievement of a common goal necessitates the co-operation of all States.

The second principle was motivated by the fact that as a scientist, ecologist and specialist in the regeneration of vital natural systems such as forests, I am fully convinced that:

1. Only the rational use of natural resources, both those difficult or -- according to some -- impossible to regenerate as well as the regenerable ones, provides chances of sustainable world development.
2. If man is able to destroy natural resources to achieve profits, then to achieve profits through economic activity he is also able to restore them.

There is no doubt that historically speaking every highly developed civilisation has suffered severe crises and eventual disintegration after exhausting its natural resources. I believe that can be a great warning both to the developed as well as the developing nations.

I have tapped the accumulated knowledge of my predecessors, the Secretariat and Bureau members, to inform my presumed successor, Minister Jan Pronk. Everywhere I have encountered kindness and help. Let me take this opportunity to thank my predecessors, Madame Minister Maria Julia Alsogaray, for introducing me to the problems of the Convention. I cordially thank all the Secretariat employees for the great job they have done, especially the Executive Secretary Michael Zammit Cutajar, Richard Kinley, Seth Osafo and Dennis Tirpak. I wish to express my particular gratitude to Mr Harald Dovland, the SBSTA Chairman, and to Mr John Ashe, the SBI chairman, for their excellent work and for keeping me informed of the progress of efforts to streamline

documents being prepared for COP6, which made me very happy. I also wish to thank Minister Pronk that he was always available whenever time permitted, no matter how far from the Hague a meeting happened to be taking place.

After analysing all the decisions taken at COP5, on 17 January 2000 we met in Warsaw. We conducted an analysis of both the decisions taken and the consultations carried out. And we drafted a skeletal plan of action for the entire year, dividing the duties between the Secretariat, the individual submitting this report and the president-designate, Minister Jan Pronk. It was established what necessary consultations were needed and with which States we had a chance of conducting direct talks in view of our possibilities, including our financial potential. I took part in an away session of the Secretariat at the Hague on 11-12 April, in deliberations of the High Level Committee and Bureau Session in New York on 28 April, and in the session of the leadership of the Bureau's Secretariat in Bonn on 14 June. On 19 June, I attended a seminar at London's Royal Institute of Learning devoted to 'The Kyoto Protocol -- the End of the Beginning', a High Level Committee session organised by me in Warsaw on 29 June, LULUCF workshops held in Poland on 10-15 July, the 13th Session of Subsidiary Bodies in Lyon on 10-13 September, the High Level Committee in Muiden on 4-5 October, and the sitting of the Second Committee at the 55th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I personally held a number of meetings outside Poland, availing myself of invitations as well as requesting some of the meetings. In response to invitations I visited Saudi Arabia on 5-7 March, Australia on 16-22 April, where I took part in workshops devoted to LULUCF and informal High Level Consultations, and the US from 29 April to 2 May. Deeming additional consultations necessary, I held talks in England on 9 February, in Japan on 3-7 April, in Brazil on 28-29 August, and in Belarus on 14-18 September. Unfortunately, I was unable to take planned trips to Kazakhstan, China, India and Nigeria, although I continue to regard consultative talks with those states as essential. In every country, I sought to familiarise myself on the spot with the main economic problems as well as opportunities to seek areas of compromise with a view to putting the Kyoto Protocol into effect before the end of 2002. At every meeting I also raised issues I had been personally involved in, such as striking out Turkey from the list of states in Annexe

I and II and introducing the entry of Kazakhstan to the list of Annexe I states. The trip to Belarus, preceded by earlier meetings in Poland, was devoted to the possibility of that country's ratification of the Convention. That mission also ended in success.

I must state that in every state I encountered a most cordial reception.

In every state I sensed a great will to put the Kyoto Protocol into effect as soon as possible, preferably before the end of 2002. In every state I was informed in a most candid manner of the existing economic difficulties and of threats to the economies of those states in the event the Kyoto Protocol were imprecisely introduced. I must admit that I know the difficulties that threaten or may threaten the economies of states dependent on a single economic sector (source of income). I know how difficult it is to change technologies in countries dominated by a single source of energy and how difficult it is to promote changes in the consumption habits of highly developed countries.

I also know how difficult it is to explain the importance of protecting natural resources, especially renewable ones, in developing countries which look to the living standards of economically developed states. How different is the situation in countries of the temperate climatic zone from that of tropical lands.

For my knowledge, I wish to cordially thank all those who gave me so much of their time. Permit me not to mention names and to express my thanks in the order that my meetings took place with government representatives of England, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia, the USA, Brazil and Belarus. Words of gratitude are also owed the delegations of those states which I did not actually visit, but with whom I met on numerous occasions. Those were representatives of Russia, the European Union, India, representatives of the G-77 States, Juscanz, Canada, Norway, Finland, Nigeria, China, Denmark, Iran, Ireland, Sri Lanka, the countries of Eastern Europe and numerous NGOs.

In particular I wish to thank Your Excellencies, the Ministers and Prime Ministers who have appreciated the Convention's importance, have become deeply involved in its efforts and in considerable numbers have attended meetings of the High Level Committee and working meetings.

I should like to especially emphasise the efforts of the Chairmen of the Convention's individual sections, their substantive and diplomatic preparation and every good co-

operation with the chairmen of government delegations, whom I should also like to thank at this point.

I thank all of you for your time, your involvement and your desire to achieve true consensus.

It is up to you to evaluate my performance. I should like to refer to those elements which have been achieved in the course of my term in office. I regard as an achievement the considerable narrowing of fields of discussion, the proof of which has been the streamlining of documents as exemplified by LULUCF. Only 10 pages have remained of an originally 600-page document, but the problem at hand was completely resolved nevertheless.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have entrusted me with an extremely responsible task and have made me duty-bound through the 1/CP.5 decision to intensify negotiations. I have tried to fulfil the task as far as possible under existing conditions. I leave it up to you to judge what the effects have been. In concluding, I should like you to consider several of my ideas which I believe require additional work.

The Kyoto Protocol will go into effect if it is ratified by the Convention's 55 Member-States. Among them are States of Annex I, whose summary emissions account for a minimum of 55% of the overall emissions of Annex I States. In view of such data, the only chance is to find a mutual area of understanding between the developed and developing countries. A bridge of understanding providing mutual benefits must be built. Such a chance appears to be the agreement to count as the reduction of developed countries a part of the emissions absorbed by sinks, and for the developing countries creation by those developed ones of effective and efficient financial assistance. As a scientist, I can state that an undeniable environmental effect is evident here. That would permit the developed countries to rebuild (regenerate their natural resources in accordance with the protection of biodiversity), and the developing countries to protect their natural resources, especially the renewable ones, thanks to new production technologies.

Such efforts have a chance of success in two instances. First of all, if we win public support and, secondly, if we create proper implementation programmes for sustainable regional development, especially in non-urbanised areas, taking into account natural, cultural and human resources. One such regional implementation topic might be: 'Sustainable human development and global change -- landscape management in rural areas and greenhouse gases'.

As far as public support is concerned, the ground is extremely receptive. My initiative to organise top-level news conferences on the same day in many different states on the threats posed by climate change and the role of the Convention in promoting sustainable world development was very warmly received, and more than 70 states responded. I should like to see that initiative perpetuated by having one 'public awareness' day set aside and devoted directly to the Climate Convention.

To conclude, I should like once again to thank everyone. Permit me to express particular words of gratitude to the Ministers of the group of Eastern European states. Thank you for supporting my candidature and for your fruitful co-operation. I should also like to thank the members of the Polish delegation for their assistance, especially the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Environment. As a representative of the Polish government I wish to most cordially invite you to visit my country. I invite you to Poland and personally to my home. I should like the tradition of planting a tree during meetings of the Convention to be continued, and the planting of oaks on my land will always remind me of you. More than 50 delegations planted oak trees on my property. This is their small contribution to increase carbon sinking. A lot of room remains, so I cordially invite you.