

Georgia

**21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21)
and the Ninth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as
the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 9)
Paris, France**

Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Irakli Garibashvili,
Prime Minister of Georgia**

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentleman,

Before I begin, I would like to say a few words to the Government and people of France who are hosting us these next few days at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The tragic events which shook Paris last month have had a profound impact on the world at large, including in Georgia, and there are few words to express how very deeply we sympathise with you as you mourn your losses. I have been truly touched these past few weeks to witness the outstanding calm, strength, and joie-de-vivre your people have shown even in such crushing circumstances.

I had the distinct fortune of attending the Sorbonne as a young student and have always considered Paris my home away from home. I know that this great city and this great nation will endure forever against these evil forces that seek to destroy all that we in this room have sought to build.

I assure you that I and all the Georgian people stand with you in these difficult times and will always be prepared to help in any way possible.

What truly strikes me today, as I look around this room, is that so many countries across the globe have chosen to be represented here in Paris in these crucial discussions on climate change. Let us reflect on what this means: some challenges can simply not be addressed by one country alone. Some challenges know no borders, and responses must consequently be global. Terrorism is a clear example of this. To those who seek to spread terror in our countries and take innocent lives, we must respond that the international community at large will work together, coordinate, exchange intelligence and stand united until the war on terror has been waged and won.

At this time when terrorists are trying to pull us apart – not just here in Paris, but also in Lebanon, Mali, Egypt, Nigeria, Turkey, Tunisia, and elsewhere, we must come together to protect the progress the world has made on so many issues. We must now work harder than ever to come together as one world and solve our challenges collectively.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the face of crippling challenges, we must not lose sight of our long-term goals. On the contrary, I am convinced that it is more important than ever to demonstrate our unity and commitment to working together towards a better future. Today, I sincerely hope we will be successful in achieving a meaningful and ambitious agreement on climate change.

If no action is taken, climate change will create widespread and unpredictable change around the world and jeopardizes the lives of millions of people. The time for action is now.

No country is immune to climate change. Georgia, due to its complex mountainous topography, is particularly prone to natural hazards, including floods, landslides and mudflows, the latest such example being the floods which hit our capital city in June, taking 19 human lives and devastating Tbilisi zoo.

In addition the rise of the sea level has caused a marked intensification of storms and coast erosion, resulting in the destruction of coastlines and infrastructure.

The adverse impact that climate change can have on our ecosystem and economy drives Georgia's commitment to sustainable, low emission development and motivates our increased efforts on adaptation.

Georgia sees itself as a true leader in addressing climate change, especially given our substantial use and export of clean energy.

We are committed to taking progressive action to mitigate climate change. In our INDC, we have formulated a mitigation target of 15-25% deviation from business as usual scenarios by 2030. A climate action plan 2021-2030, to be developed next year, will specify how this commitment will be implemented and what international support would be required to support us in achieving it.

Georgia is, in fact, already taking progressive action against climate change: the Low Emission Development Strategy which we are currently preparing will provide an integrated comprehensive pathway for long-term, sustainable development and will help us to meet our international climate change commitments.

In parallel, Georgia is working on its National Appropriate Mitigation Actions. With international support, concepts for NAMA in sustainable urban transport, Energy Efficiency in Public Buildings and Energy efficient wood stoves and solar collectors in rural areas have already been developed.

These mitigation actions are included in the Green Climate Fund readiness programme which is currently being developed along with adaptation actions and cross-cutting actions related to climate change. Obviously, the effectiveness of GCF funding will greatly affect the performance of developing nations in achieving their INDC targets.

Climate change is a cross-cutting issue.

With this in mind, Georgia is mainstreaming climate change into other national strategies:

- The National Forest Policy promotes sustainable forest management and afforestation, priorities which are included in an annex of our INDC.
- The new national agriculture strategy includes a chapter on 'climate smart' agriculture.
- Georgia's Ministry of Energy is currently working on a National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

Perhaps most importantly, Georgia, due to its massive hydropower potential, is using renewable energy to provide more than 80% of its electricity. Georgia has one of the greatest hydropower capacities in the world and one of the largest fresh water reserves. These natural resources do not just benefit Georgia, but we are working to share this clean energy source with the entire region.

We are already exporting electricity derived from hydropower projects to our neighbors and implementing plans to increase exports, as well as strengthen the regional power grid to make electricity distribution more efficient.

We are also exploring several projects to transport our abundant clean water to countries in need.

We attach great importance to the development of renewable energy sources in our energy mix and have launched a new strategy to this effect. These initiatives will be further strengthened in the context of our association with the EU, which includes commitments to enhance environmental standards in a series of other sectors.

However, national level decisions are only one part of the equation. I would like to stress the important role cities can and must play in effectively mitigating climate change. More than 80% of the urban population of Georgia lives in cities which have signed the European Covenant of Mayors, thereby voluntarily committing to EU climate targets on a local level. Our national government is committed to fully supporting these cities and municipalities and promoting vertical integration of local and national climate actions.

Let me conclude by expressing my hope that this conference will succeed in achieving a new international agreement on climate change that will be ambitious enough to ensure that global warming stays below a maximum of 2 degrees. I cannot underscore more the importance of reaching such an agreement. Failing to agree, in essence, would be agreeing to fail.

In closing, let me assure you that Georgia will continue to be a true leader and ambitious partner in building a sustainable future that protects our shared climate and environment.