



Conference at the Global Democracy and Development Foundation

**Fighting Climate Change Together:
The road towards stronger international action on climate change**

Santo Domingo, January 31, 2008

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Honourable Ministers, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address this audience on the issue of climate change. I would especially like to thank Minister Ramirez for his invitation.

I just arrived from a meeting of the major economies that the United States' government hosted in Hawaii, a picture-perfect paradise. Now I am here on your beautiful island, but as well an island that is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. If we do not act on climate change, beautiful islands such as yours might very well turn into a paradise lost.

We need to get our act together to prevent this. This requires concerted action on the international level. The Climate Change Conference in Bali at the end of last year set the wheels in motion for the strengthening of this international response

to climate change. It is my pleasure to share with you some of my thoughts and views on what is needed and how this strengthened international action can support and enable countries like you to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change and help you meet your development goals.

Science of climate change

First allow me to take you back in time for a moment; to last year. 2007 was an incredible year in climate change. Climate change moved to the very top of the world political agenda. More than 80 Heads of State or Government gathered in New York at the High Level Event of the SG and called for a breakthrough in Bali.

Above all, 2007 was the year of the science on climate change. The vast majority of world's climate change scientists united in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change came with a message that no one can fail to understand. The IPCC reports were applauded at every stage of finalization and crowned by the Nobel Peace Prize. The reports proof beyond doubt that climate change is happening and accelerating and that especially developing countries can already feel its impacts, that much of it caused by the continued and increasing emissions of greenhouse gasses from human activities and that it can seriously harm economies, societies and eco systems all over the world, and especially in developing countries.

Impacts in the Caribbean and Latin American area

The impacts of climate change can already be felt, also here in this region. Let me mention a couple of them: hurricanes are becoming more ferocious, damaging precious infrastructure, livestock, and ultimately people's livelihoods; rain fall patterns are changing, resulting in higher risk of floods and droughts; in the

Caribbean and Latin American region, a total of tens of millions of people are at risk of water shortages; and in many coastal areas the coral is bleaching.

The IPCC clearly indicates that impacts will intensify in the decades to come: as a small developing island state you will have to cope with more inundations as a result of the rising sea level; sea level rise will even wipe some small island states island off the map; more intense coastal storms, more droughts and floods can be expected; food security will become a problem, again especially on small island states, where sea level rises will lead to the salinization of fertile agricultural land. For the same reason, supplies of fresh drinking water will be at risk. In Caribbean and Latin America countries, one hundred million people will be at risk of water shortages and climate change will harm the fisheries, an important source of income for this region.

Need for concerted action

But luckily, science tells us good news as well. We can come to grips with climate change. We also know that this is possible at a reasonable price and without cutting off the road for further economic growth that developing countries need to alleviate their people from poverty and raise their standards of living. Concerted action NOW can avoid some of the most catastrophic projections. We have to move quickly to do so.

The Bali Road Map

The Climate Change Conference in Bali last December has taken us into a new era of international climate change abatement. Bali saw the launch of the Adaptation Fund and the establishment of the Adaptation Fund Board. Already this year a first set of adaptation projects might receive funding. Bali also generated new momentum for the issue of technology. Countries agreed to work

on a new strategic programme to scale up the level of investment for technology transfer. Furthermore, countries launched action on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, to enhance the support for national capacities and further methodological work.

Last but not least, agreement was reached to launch formal negotiations to craft an international agreement on stronger international action on climate change for the period beyond 2012. In that year the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires. Parties agreed on the agenda for these negotiations and also set the very ambitious deadline to bring these talks to a conclusion by the end of 2009. What is special about this decision is that it reflects a common understanding of the fact that climate change affects us all and that fighting it requires common efforts, by developed and developing countries. It is clear that industrialized countries should take the lead in combating climate change. But it is also clear that this fight can only be successful if developing countries will act on it as well.

Bali kicked off a new process with three main goals:

1. Define, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable way and nationally appropriate, emission limitation commitments for developed countries and mitigation actions for developing countries;
2. Determine essential actions to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change and to promote climate-resilient development; and
3. Mobilise the necessary finance and technology cooperation to support these action in a measurable, reportable and verifiable way.

Challenges ahead

We have an incredibly busy time ahead of us. The challenge is huge: we have less than two years to craft an agreement on stronger international action on climate change, an agreement that measures up to what science tells us: stop the increase of global emissions of greenhouse gases in the next 10 to 15 years, and then dramatically cut back these emissions by the middle of the century

A very important part of these emissions have to do with the way we fuel our economic growth. Bearing that in mind we can say that climate change is about shaping the world's economic future. The challenge we are facing is steer the world's economic growth into the low carbon direction. If we fail to succeed, we will be looking at a wide-scale economic disruption on a scale never seen before.

Marshall Plan on Climate Change

How can a post-2012 climate change agreement bring about this change?

I think one of the main issues is to develop a set of financial and technical tools that will enable and support developing countries to put in place integrated policies and take further concrete action towards adaptation, to protect their people and make their economies climate resilient and spur green economic growth, so that they can meet their development goals and eradicate poverty. Fighting climate change and sustainable development go hand in hand

We need -what I have called- a Marshall Plan on Climate Change. This term refers to the huge investment operation that aided the European shattered economies after the Second World War. What we need is a similar investment plan for climate change, but then on the global level. The current resources for adaptation and mitigation are clearly insufficient in the light of what is needed.

Let me be clear. This is not about creating a big pot of subsidies. I am talking about a financial architecture consisting of variety of tools that can make financial resources flow through different channels: both public and private, both national and international.

Opportunities to seize

What does this all mean to you?

I know the Dominican Republic has already put in place some policies to adapt to climate change and to limit the growth of your emissions, so that you can develop in a more sustainable way and better protect your people and their properties.

I have been informed that you are starting a programme of spatial planning to avoid the location of human settlements in more vulnerable zones. This important adaptation measure could contribute to avoid the painful losses of lives and properties as those caused by the intense rains of the tropical depressions Olga and Noel and by several hurricanes or storms in last years.

You have also adopted regulation on renewable energy, including the target of a 10% share of renewables in the general energy by 2020. In this regard, let me mention the wind energy park El Guanillo , the largest CDM project in the Caribbean. I hope many others will follow this first and only CDM project in the Dominican Republic, such as the new park Jaspén in Punta Plata.

Furthermore, you started an intensive reforestation programme in 1996 with the aim of increasing the forest cover with 8-10%. This is an important mitigation action that also may increase your resilience to weather extremes and provide economical goods.

Other important work in progress is the start of the construction of the metro in Santo Domingo. This will substantially reduce GHG emissions; while at the

same time fight air pollution and its associated risk health. Besides, it is a quick way of getting from one place to another without being stuck in a traffic jam.

The actions towards a sound management of urban wastes have similar benefits.

It is clearly in your interest to take further steps in these policy areas. Not only for climate change reasons but also to make your economy more efficient, lower your energy bill by becoming less dependent on expensive energy imports from outside, and tackle problems of air quality and congestion.

A post-2012 agreement can provide you with support to shift into higher gear to reach your development goals:

Firstly, it will offer you the opportunity to reduce the risk of weather hazards while adapting to climate change. A strengthened international climate change agreement can help you attract the resources to expand your work on adaptation. It can for example enable you to further integrate adaptation concerns into your development plans and help you with the effective implementation of these policies and measures.

Secondly, it offers you the opportunity to unleash green growth while mitigating climate change. Strengthened international action can generate more money and technical support to make your economy more energy efficient, step up the share of renewables and stimulate the deployment of low-carbon technologies.

And thirdly, there is the opportunity for businesses to become part of the solution rather than part of the problem. They hold the key since they have to implement the technology, spur innovation and provide an important part of the investment capital to deal with climate change.

Closing remarks

A truly effective long-term climate change strategy must be comprehensive. To face the climate change challenge, there is a need for a radical change in the world's economic future. But this clearly involves changes that carry plenty of opportunity. For example, the opportunity to speed up your ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change; and the opportunity to speed up the achievement of your development goals. There is no time left that the world can lose. All efforts now have to focus on getting the negotiations on the climate deal off the ground to be ready by 2009. I am convinced it can be done, but only if all forces pull together.

Your input is indispensable on the road ahead. Together with the countries of the region you can make a positive contribution to a stronger international response to climate change. So I would very much invite you to make your voice be heard and give your views on the key issues. Thank you for your attention.