**FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE - Secretariat**

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# PRESS RELEASE

## Accra UN Climate Change Talks Kick off With Warning That "Clock Is Ticking Down" to New International Climate Change Deal in Copenhagen

(Accra, 21  August 2008) – The latest round of UN-sponsored global climate change negotiations got underway Thursday in Accra, Ghana. More than 1600 participants, including government delegates from 160 countries and representatives from business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions are attending the one-week meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The "UN Climate Change Talks - Accra, 2008" constitute the third major UNFCCC negotiating session this year to get to an agreement on strengthened long-term cooperative action on  climate change.  The deal is to be clinched in December 2009 in Copenhagen.

The Accra talks were opened by the President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor, who pointed to the fact that the northern part of his country in particular has been witnessing both serious drought and flooding in recent times. In Ghana, rainfall has decreased by 20% over the past 30 years, whilst up to 1,000km2 of land may be lost in the Volta Delta due to sea-level rise and inundation should greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at the current pace. "There is a real need for strengthening the capacity of countries, particularly in Africa, in coping with such climate shocks," the President said. "I would therefore like to call for an international deal or "compact", in which developing countries commit to plan for climate resilient development. In return the international community should commit to provide adequate, predictable, long-term funding and support in terms of technology transfer and capacity building," he added.

The Ghanaian President warned that time was running out to negotiate the crucial international climate change deal that would not only drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but generate the "billions of dollars" poor countries needed to adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change. "The clock is ticking," he said. "We need to be pragmatic and move beyond rhetoric to make progress as we move towards Copenhagen".

In Accra, talks on further commitments for Parties to the Kyoto Protocol will continue. The objective of these negotiations is to clarify the tools and rules available to industrialized countries to reach emission reduction targets beyond 2012, when the first phase of the Protocol expires, along with identifying options to enhance their effectiveness and contribution to sustainable development. This part of the negotiations must be concluded before the group can move on to the issue of determining emission reduction ranges for developed countries at its next meeting in December.

"Parties meeting under the Kyoto Protocol must swiftly reach agreement on the rules and tools that will be available to developed countries to meet future emission reduction targets," said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer. "This is essential because the toolbox will in turn determine the level of ambition of developed countries when setting their new targets," he added.

In the context of the negotiation process on strengthened long-term cooperative action against climate change, a workshop will be held in Accra on sectoral approaches and sector-specific actions. The Kyoto Protocol's clean development mechanism presently only allows emission reductions from projects to be credited. This and other mechanisms could be expanded to engage important sectors of the economy, for example the steel, cement or power-generating sectors. A second workshop will deal with policy approaches and positive incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. Emissions from deforestation accounts for about 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, for the first time in the negotiations leading up to Copenhagen, there will be a joint discussion on both the finance and technology needed to limit emissions and adapt to climate change. This will create an interlinked discussion on a number of elements of the Copenhagen agreement. "Parties will look not only at what is needed in terms of funding, but also at how funding should be generated in the context of a new international deal, and precisely what technologies are required," the UN's top climate change official said. "The debate will also give an indication of the infrastructure needed to implement a shared vision in the areas of finance, technology and capacity building," de Boer added.

The Accra gathering is the last UN-sponsored global climate change meeting before the UN Climate Change Conference in Poznań, Poland (1 to 12 December). A further series of major UNFCCC negotiating sessions are planned for 2009, culminating in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.

## About the UNFCCC

With 192 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has to date 182 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

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