



**United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)
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**Statement by
Daniele Violetti, Chief of Staff
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Rio Conventions**

Mr Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Mr. Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biodiversity
Ambassador Lago

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the UNFCCC, I am delighted to address you on this happy occasion. My name is Daniele Violetti and I am addressing you on behalf of Christiana Figueres, who deeply regrets not being with us today. But her busy schedule and prior engagements have prevented her from travelling here.

Allow me to start off by saying “happy birthday” to all the Rio Conventions! All three conventions can take pride when looking back over the last 20 years, pride in our 20-year history, pride in our contributions and pride in our achievements.

And while I am sure that things haven’t always been easy over the past 20 years, one thing is for certain: all three conventions - each in its own way - have boosted sustainable development. They have initiated action in their respective areas to a level that would have been unthinkable 20 years ago.

The UNFCCC and the intergovernmental climate change negotiations have gone through many vibrant and colourful phases, with achievements and contributions in each of these.

To my mind, there have been a number of truly important achievements, which I will tell you about, next to many, many small achievements, which would take up too much time to be mentioned here. So allow me to merely mention a few great achievements.

When we started off, the science on climate change was far from certain. In fact, the scientific uncertainty was on everybody’s lips, so much so, that many people thought it was completely unnecessary to adopt and ratify the UNFCCC.

But tireless work by the IPCC and tireless work by the climate change negotiations changed the tide and drove home the seriousness of climate change and the consequent urgency for action. Today, awareness for this global problem has never been higher and although climate sceptics still pop up here and there, their heyday is, quite simply, history. This is a huge achievement - it is the very foundation on which decisions and actions can be built. For example, agreeing to keep average global temperature increases to below 2C is a decision that would not have been possible in a scenario with doubtful science.

The second truly great achievement of the negotiations lies in the adoption and entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and its market based mechanisms.

The legally binding targets of industrialised countries led to the development of climate change policies and plans at the national level, with a clear contribution to sustainable development.

But the protocol's clean development mechanism - the CDM - has also stimulated sustainable development by allowing industrialised country Parties to implement emission-reducing projects in developing countries.

- To date, more than 1/3 of all CDM projects have transferred clean technologies to developing countries.
- Furthermore, most CDM projects claim several sustainable development benefits such as employment creation, the reduction of noise and pollution, and the protection of natural resources.

At the most recent climate change conference in Durban, South Africa last year, countries agreed to extend the protocol for a second phase as of January 2013. The lessons learned in the first phase will no doubt provide valuable pointers for the future and will hopefully make an even stronger contribution to sustainable development going forward.

The third truly important achievement lies in the creation of institutions that will directly support developing countries in taking climate change action. These include:

- the Adaptation Committee, which will assist and coordinate actions that help countries adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change;
- the Technology Mechanism, which will boost clean technology cooperation around the world;
- and the Green Climate Fund, which will provide resources to developing countries both to reduce emissions and for adaptation.

These are all critically important elements of the evolving climate change regime. Yet overall, there is a clear realisation that more is needed to abate the problem. Countries have already set the direction towards that.

At the Durban conference, they decided to embark on a future legal framework that will cover all nations of the world, to be negotiated by 2015, and go into effect by 2020. This was a major breakthrough and clearly shows that:

- All countries are sincerely committed to fighting climate change;
- All countries see the future as low-carbon;
- And all countries continue to believe in the UNFCCC as the main vehicle for action.

This bodes well for the future and is testimony to the effectiveness of the UNFCCC. From our point of view, it is most certainly a birthday worth celebrating!

Thank you
