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PRESS RELEASE

UN Climate Chief Christiana Figueres: latest IPCC Findings Point to Extreme Climate Risk, Plethora of Opportunities for Climate Action

(Bonn, 31 March 2014) – The UN’s climate chief Christiana Figueres today said the latest government-approved science more clearly than ever points to the extreme risks posed by climate change, as well as the many opportunities to put the world on a safer and more resilient path.

On Monday, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the second installment of its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), on impacts and vulnerabilities.

The IPCC report makes clear that people around the world are already suffering from climate change, as it directly affects their livelihoods, reducing crops, destroying homes and raising food prices, and that this will accelerate if climate change is left unchecked. It provides a detailed assessment of regional aspects, which give a much clearer understanding of climate impacts in different regions.

Among other things, the report warns that climate change increases the risk of armed conflict around the world because it worsens poverty and economic shocks. Therefore, climate change is already becoming a determining factor in the national security policies of states.

“This report requires and requests that everyone accelerate and scale up efforts towards a low carbon world and manage the risks of climate change in order to spare the planet and its people from the sobering forecasts outlined today by the IPCC. Fortunately, there is a real, tangible and credible momentum for change happening across the globe and in countries, communities and corporate board rooms,” said Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The report also finds that societies and economies with the best chance to adapt to climate change are on a sustainable development trajectory that combines the best and smartest efforts to build climate resilience and curb emissions.

Prime examples of co-benefits of climate action include cost gains from improved energy efficiency and renewable energy sources that immediately reduce health risks from carbon pollution by curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

“This report is a tale of two futures - one of inaction and degradation of our environment, our economies, and our social fabric. The other, to seize the moment and the opportunities for managing climate change risks and making transformational change that catalyzes more adaptive and resilient societies where new technologies and ways of



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living open the door to a myriad of health, prosperity and job-generating benefits. The path of tomorrow is undoubtedly determined by our choices today. We must decide which path to follow,” added Ms. Figueres.

Early, coordinated action among governments at international, national, local and city level, businesses, communities and households everywhere is essential to achieve the best, sustainable results. Already, hundreds of cities, communities and companies around the world are taking action and many are planning to do more.

“This shows a clear determination to address climate change and is encouraging. But at the same time, a greater, concerted global effort is needed to rise to the challenge,” the UN’s top climate change official added.

The 2015 global climate change agreement currently under design is a key opportunity at international level to take such action. Governments are working to raise ambition before 2020, when the new agreement is set to enter into force.

In April, the IPCC will release the third installment that outlines options to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The final installment, an overall summary for policy makers, is due in October 2014, shortly before the UN Climate Change Conference in Lima, Peru. These reports give governments options that help design the architecture and content of the 2015 agreement.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has invited political, business and civil society leaders to a summit in New York in September this year, at which key stakeholders can demonstrate their commitment to confront the problem ahead of next year’s UN Climate Change Conference in Paris.

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About the UNFCCC

With 195 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 been ratified by 192 of the UNFCCC Parties. For the first commitment period of the Kyoto 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. In Doha in 2012, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, which establishes the second commitment period under the Protocol. 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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