



**Eighth International Conference on Community-Based Adaptation
Kathmandu, 30 April 2014**

**Remarks by
Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Government of Nepal for hosting this important event.

And the co-sponsors including USAID, WWF, CARE, the National Trust for Nature Conservation and the Federation of Community Forest Users.

Thanks too to the many other conference partners and organizers and above all you, the people on the ground making a difference to lives of your communities now and for the future.

I address you here today as a United Nations official charged with the task and the sacred mission of bringing over 190 governments into common cause on the most overarching challenge facing every one of us – namely climate change.

I will come to the task in hand in a moment, not least in addressing the urgency of greater and more focused funding.

But let me add that my journey to my current day job was inspired in part by my life growing up in a small developing country called Costa Rica.

In my early 20s I was shocked to find that a glorious amphibian and something of a magnet for tourism, the Golden Toad, had disappeared from the cloud forests of Monte Verde – with the disappearance linked to a fungus encouraged by the drying out of the air.

Today, as a result of climate change it is not just species but also people that are suffering and will increasingly suffer unless defining and decisive action is taken.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My journey also has taken me to the Pacific island of Samoa as a newly qualified anthropologist.

Here I learnt of the value of conserving nutritional native plants in terms of food security for local people.

And my journey has also taken me to Fiji: Here communities have been forced to adapt in perhaps the harshest and most heart breaking way of all – by abandoning their homes as a result of flooding and moving to higher ground.

My journey has also taken me this week to an organic composting project here in the Nepalese capital.

Biocomp is recycling waste into a soil improver while cutting methane emissions from landfills and generating jobs.

The project was recognized as a Lighthouse Project in 2012 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Momentum for Change initiative.

The process to find winners in 2014 is underway and I would urge all of you to submit your project to the jury.

There is momentum for change and a great deal of this happening at the community level.

So my respect and my admiration go out to the community and grass roots leaders at this conference, representing as you do the frontline and the real world.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues,

The UNFCCC where I am privileged to be the Executive Secretary may seem remote from the day to day realities you all face.

But I am deeply concerned about your struggle and deeply committed to assisting you realize a better, safer and more equitable world.

Let me perhaps address why I believe you have a stake in what we do too.

International Climate Change Policy – Your Agenda

Climate change is many things. But at its core are two imperatives:

- Steering countries, cities, companies and communities onto a low carbon pathway.
- Building resilience to the climatic changes happening now and into the future.

Greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere are at the highest for 800,000 years.

On current trajectories we are facing a global temperature rise this century of perhaps 3 degrees Celsius, 4 degrees C or even higher when science tells us we need to stay under a 2 degrees C rise.

I am sure I do not have to tell many of you in this room what is already occurring – be you a small-holder farmer in East Africa where the cycle of droughts and floods have become more frequent and intense.

Or whether you are living in the Himalayas where, as a result of melting glaciers we are seeing the buildup of sometimes deadly glacial lakes in places where lakes never existed before.

Nepal is estimated to be losing one per cent of its GDP to floods and landslides – a figure that will only rise everywhere unless global emissions are cut and local resilience enhanced.

Momentum for Change

It is not all bad news. Many countries are moving. Take clean energy as an example.

In 2013 a record 39 GW of solar power was installed world-wide according to the just released Global trends in Renewable Energy Investment – overall around \$214 billion was invested in new renewables world-wide last year.

But it is not enough. It is estimated that \$1 trillion a year is needed to assist towards that low carbon path.

Cities and companies are moving and so are pension fund and legislators. Many more sectors of society are raising their voices from faith groups and security experts to youth, women and trades unions – I could go on.

But to date this momentum for change is only taking us part of the way.

One central reason why we need governments to deliver on their promise to ink a universal and meaningful agreement in Paris at the UN Climate Change Conference meeting in late 2015.

The key word is meaningful – meaningful in terms of putting in place the policies to peak global emissions in around ten years and realize carbon neutrality in the second half of the century.

Meaningful too in respect to scaling-up the support for adaptation nationally and in communities like yours.

The UNFCCC has Catalyzed Progress

Governments through the UNFCCC have achieved progress over the past 20 years since the UN climate treaty came into force.

In respect to adaptation, the process has catalyzed an array of funds and projects by the UN, the World Bank, the regional development banks, bilateral donors and others.

They range from those linked directly to the UNFCCC like the Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund to those provided by the Global Environment Facility and others such as the Climate Investment Funds generated through the World Bank.

These funds, representing over \$1.3 billion, are serving to support countries' National Adaptation Programmes of Action or NAPAs and the now longer-term focused National Adaptation Plans or NAPs.

Examples of projects include climate proofing infrastructure in countries such as Bangladesh to improved weather and hydrological forecasting in Mozambique.

Or building resilience to climate-related hazards in Nepal and improved weather early warning in Niger.

I would urge all relevant countries to accelerate the development of their various plans in order to maximize the deployment of all these various funds – for example the Adaptation Fund has total funding of just over \$220 million of which only \$78 million has been disbursed.

But even if all these funds are deployed, is it enough? Africa is thought to be already facing a climate adaptation bill of \$7 to \$15 billion a year by 2020.

Even if nations keep a temperature rise within 2 degrees C, the costs of adaptation are set to rise well beyond the current levels of available finance.

Where will the funding come from?

Green Climate Fund

Firstly it is in the interests of developing countries to put support behind the capitalization of the newly established Green Climate Fund.

Sufficient funding for this Fund can assist in catalyzing the increased investments needed to cut emissions and increase those much needed flows of adaptation finance.

Sustained capitalization of the Green Climate Fund can also be the lever to unlock the trillions of dollars held in pension and other privately-held funds – trillions of dollars that is waiting from the right kind of incontrovertible, long-term policy signals from governments, not least through an agreement in Paris.

Creative Insurance

Insurance, including micro-insurance, should also be kept on our collective radar – some actions to build resilience such as climate proofing coastlines have a high rate of return but others such as storm-proofing buildings may be better left to insurance.

Countries and communities need advice and guidance on where to spend finance to the maximum effect.

Fuel Subsidies

Cutting the estimated \$800 billion-worth of fossil fuel subsidies could also liberate funds for adaptation will cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Even without the challenges of climate change, it is clear that in a world of what will be over nine billion people by 2050 and in a world of dwindling natural resources humanity needs to urgently adapt.

Climate change adds an additional layer of stark and sobering urgency to that reality – everyone is vulnerable and everyone needs to play their part in order to place every man, woman and child onto a sustainable path.

A new and universal climate agreement is about ensuring equity and about fostering responsibility to act in concert and in common cause.

This is needed to bend down the emissions curve in order to safeguard our atmosphere and minimize adverse impacts on the world and its people.

A new universal climate agreement is also the best guarantee that the most vulnerable and marginalized have a say.

And that they are not left behind but have justice and access to the finance they need and at a level that can really make a difference.

Finance and the capacity to continue and to scale up the excellent work so many of you are doing.

Beyond Communities – Your Global Role

Many of you here today may see your work as purely community-based, that is true, but your efforts and accomplishments resonate far beyond your settlements, farms, villages and towns.

Because what you are doing within your communities is also assisting your nations and regions – and indeed the world at large – to rediscover old ways while finding new and inspiring pathways to move forward to the ultimate goal of a sustainable century.

Ways and pathways that can assist everyone everywhere live and prosper in a rapidly changing globe full of challenges but rich also in opportunities for generations to come.

Thank you.
