

EL SALVADOR
Statement by Herman Rosa Chávez
Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources
at the High Level Segment of COP18/MOP8
Doha, 6 December 2012

President, Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

El Salvador contributes 0.04% to the global emissions of greenhouse gases, but it is one of the countries that suffers most from extreme weather events.

Indeed, extreme weather events directly affecting El Salvador increased from one in the 1960's and 1970's, to eight in the first decade of this century. And before tropical cyclones came over from the Atlantic, but now they also come off the Pacific directly onto El Salvador.

Due to these changes, El Salvador has faced an increased number of major disasters, with three occurring between November 2009 and October 2011. The last one was particularly destructive with losses equivalent to 4% of GDP.

In the face of these rapidly increasing climate-related disasters the government of El Salvador decided that environmental management, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction had to become top priorities if the country was to reduce both short and long term costs.

So we established a new National Environmental Policy with two central goals - reverse environmental degradation and reduce vulnerability to climate change.

Within this framework, the government of El Salvador has moved decisively with three major initiatives:

First, during the last three years we put together what is one of the most comprehensive Climate Observation and Early Warning System in Latin America, becoming a key part of the country's efforts to strengthen the civil protection system, allowing us to reduce human loss and suffering in climate-related disasters.

Second, we designed an ambitious National Landscape and Ecosystem Restoration Program that aims at restoring degraded landscapes and ecosystems in one million hectares, half the country's territory.

If we manage to mobilize the necessary climate finance to support this program, landscape restoration at this scale will rapidly reduce our vulnerability to climate

change, improve livelihoods, protect biodiversity, while expanding our carbon sinks and stocks as we restore soil and permanent vegetation, thus enhancing our mitigation efforts.

This is what we call adaptation-based mitigation. And it is also the approach we are taking for our REDD+ Strategy, our third initiative and the first of its kind in the world that has adaptation as its entry point.

Mr President,

As you can see we are not remaining passive. We know what to do and we are forging ahead with our limited resources, but we need to do much more if we are going to have a chance in advancing towards a climate resilient and low carbon development.

And that will only be possible if our developed country partners also take seriously without excuses and further delay their commitments, particularly those regarding climate finance.

We have other challenges.

It is of the utmost urgency that we establish a mechanism to address loss and damage.

It is critical that all our previous decisions from Cancun and Durban are quickly implemented.

We must not leave loose ends from the Bali Action Plan as we move speedily on the Durban Platform.

Mister President

Our past inaction is costing us dearly already, and if we do not seriously rise to the climate change challenge, the coming costs will simply become catastrophic for us all. We have to act and we have to act now.

Thank you.