

Opening of the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14)

Poznan, 1 December 2008

Statement by Maciej Nowicki

Minister of the Environment of Poland and President of COP 14

Dear Prime Ministers, Mr. Executive Secretary, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you very much for your confidence and entrusting me with this honourable, but also very difficult and responsible role of chairing this UN Conference on climate change, which we have just begun.

I would in particular like to thank Minister Witoelar for his leadership over the past year and for his role in achieving the historic Bali breakthrough.

Truly, the conference is taking place in a very peculiar time, when the world community is more and more aware that humankind in its activities reached the limits of a closed system of the planet Earth. Further expansion in the same manner will generate global threats of really great intensity. Huge droughts and floods, cyclones with increasingly more destructive power, pandemics of tropical disease, a dramatic decline of biodiversity – all these can cause social or even armed conflicts and migrations of the population at an unprecedented scale.

Such a dramatic scenario for humankind in the 21st century is not a science fiction story – it can come true if we still follow our current road, if we still ignore voices of scientists, voices of non-governmental organisations and voices of countries that are most exposed to the effects of climate change.

Representatives of 190 countries of the world, so, we can say – the whole global community, is gathered here in Poznań to debate on how to turn back from our present road, how to develop a new common path to development and cooperation, avoiding such threats.

However, the climate change summit in Poznań is not an isolated event – it is rather a milestone in the process initiated by the United Nations at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

A year ago in Bali, at the thirteenth annual conference under the Convention on Climate Change, a two-year Action Plan was adopted, which should pave the way for a new, global agreement on the climate protection for next few decades. We all hope, that this new agreement will be signed at COP 15, in Copenhagen next year.

Now we are on the half way between Bali and Copenhagen. At the present conference we should lay solid foundations for this agreement in order to finish the entire work in one year. Thus, the main topic for discussion in Poznań will be so called shared vision – vision of short and long term engagements for reduction of emission of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, vision of effective adaptation to the climate change, vision of increasing much more money for mitigation and adaptation measures and for development and transfer of technologies. All these issues are equally important because all of them are elements of comprehensive and coherent shared vision.

For acceleration discussion on this topic I have decided to organize an informal Ministerial Round Table at the high level segment. I think, such gremium of ministers will give a strong contribution to the negotiations and smooth path to the common goal.

I do hope that we will find good consensus in creation of concrete shape of our common vision for good future for all countries in the world.

Honourable delegates! Today, we are starting two-week, difficult work. I am asking you to always bear in mind the great importance of our joint work for all humankind. Do not let particularistic interests obscure the ultimate objective, which is the need to change the present direction taken by humanity.

During these two weeks, let us be stimulated by the spirit of compromise and a conviction that no one is more or less important, because we all are equal, we all are children of our Mother Earth.

If we do so, if our thoughts and actions head in the same direction – we will achieve success. I promise you to do all I can to make considerable headway towards goals related to climate change. But this progress will be possible only through concerted actions of all of us.

I do believe that this will happen.

Thank you.