

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY – CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**OPENING REMARKS AT UNFCCC COP15 HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
Copenhagen, 15 December 2009**

Prime Minister Rasmussen
Minister Hedegard
Mr. De Boer
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Before we begin, let us pause to reflect on how far we have come ... to this defining moment in history.

Many said this day would never come.

For years, skeptics called climate change a myth. The science has proved them wrong.

Two years ago, they wrote off our efforts to launch a new climate negotiation.

And yet, in Bali, we gave them a roadmap to Copenhagen.

As recently as a month ago, they again cast doubts.

“Copenhagen will fail”, the skeptics said. The road is too hard, the difficulties too large

We are here today to write a different future.

More than 130 heads of state and government have confirmed their presence in Copenhagen – clear proof that climate change has risen to the top of the global agenda.

Every day brings new commitments to our cause – from industrialized countries, emerging economies and developing nations alike.

We know what we must do. We know what the world expects.

Our job, here and now, is to seal the deal ... a deal in our common interest.

A deal that reduces greenhouse gas emissions that protects the most vulnerable ... that ushers in a new era of clean development and green growth for all.

Now is the time. For three years I have sought to bring world leaders to the table to solve climate change. Now they are coming. Three years of effort have come down to three days of action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

From my first day in office, I have spoken out about climate change. It is the defining challenge of our era.

No issue is more fundamental to the global challenges we face – reducing poverty ... maintaining economic growth ... ensuring peace and stability.

The evidence assaults us: melting ice caps, advancing deserts, rising sea levels.

We have a chance ... a real chance ... here and now ... to change the course of history.

The momentum is there.

We see it from all sectors of society.

Business people ... civic leaders ... religious leaders ... young people.

Two months ago, I convened a special climate change summit on the eve of the General Debate in New York.

Many of you were there.

You will remember the young people, from around the world, reaching out to us.

“Show us change,” they asked. “Show us leadership.”

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are here today to seal a deal on climate change.

To forge an agreement that all nations can embrace.

An agreement that is fair ... ambitious ... comprehensive.

That acknowledges the demands of science ... that involves all countries working to limit global temperature rise to within two degrees ... that charts a path for green growth and strengthens our ability to adapt to inevitable climate changes.

Excellencies,

We all know what this means:

First, more ambitious mid-term mitigation targets from industrialized countries.

Second, more action by developing countries to limit emissions growth below “business as usual.”

Third, an adaptation framework for all countries.

Fourth, financing and technology support.

Fifth, transparent and equitable governance that gives all countries a voice.

Financing will be key, particularly in helping the poorest countries.

That is why we can welcome the emerging consensus among developed countries to provide approximately \$10 billion dollars annually for the next three years to The Copenhagen Launch Fund.

With this money, we can deliver real results ... strengthen climate resilience ... limit deforestation ... “jump-start” low emissions growth.

But a fast start is just that, a start. \$10 billion annually will not solve all our problems.

Here in Copenhagen we must also address medium and long-term financing scaled up to needs.

We cannot leave here without an understanding of how we will proceed on this vital question.

Excellencies,

As I say, we have come a long, long way.

Let us not falter in the home-stretch.

Our goal is to lay the foundation for a legally binding climate treaty as early as possible in 2010.

We do not have another year to deliberate.

Nature does not negotiate.

I understand that every leader coming to Copenhagen faces domestic pressures and domestic politics.

I also know that the legitimate concerns of the most vulnerable remain. Ambition levels are not sufficient.

But every citizen’s well-being is at stake if we do not muster a truly global response. Now.

The time for maximalist negotiating positions is over.

The time for unreasonable demands and pressure on your negotiating partners is over.

The time for consensus has arrived.

No-one will get everything they want in this negotiation.

But if we work together and get a deal, everyone will get what they need.

The stronger the agreement here in Copenhagen, the sooner it can be transformed into a legally binding treaty.

Until we get such an agreement, the Kyoto Protocol remains the only legally binding instrument that captures reduction commitments.
As such it must be maintained.

These talks in Copenhagen are among the most complex and ambitious ever to be undertaken by the world community.

In sheer sweep and consequence, they are as momentous as the negotiations that created our great United Nations ... and built our modern era ... from the ashes of war more than sixty years ago.

Once again, we are on the cusp of history.

Once again we are present at the opening of a new era.

Our future begins today.

Thank you.