



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO UNFCCC COP17 HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
Durban, 6 December 2011**

It is a great pleasure and privilege to be with you today.

President Zuma, we thank you – and the citizens of South Africa and particularly the citizens of Durban – for your gracious and stirring welcome.

The negotiations over the coming days will be challenging. This we know. Let us therefore determine that, in spirit, we will be as warm and generous with one another as the hospitality we have been shown.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me speak plainly.

We must be realistic about expectations for a breakthrough in Durban.

We know the reasons: grave economic troubles in many countries, abiding political differences, conflicting priorities and strategies for responding to climate change.

And it may be true, as many say: the ultimate goal of a comprehensive and binding climate change agreement may be beyond our reach – for now.

Yet let me emphasize: none of these uncertainties should prevent us from making real progress here in Durban.

Indeed, we can and must move forward on key issues.

I am pleased that many parties have proposed creative ways forward.

Throughout human history in any great endeavour requiring the common effort of many nations and men and women everywhere we have learned – it is only through seriousness of purpose and persistence that we ultimately carry the day.

We might liken it to riding a bicycle. You stay upright and move forward so long as you keep up the momentum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We must keep up our momentum.

That is the challenge before us today. That is the imperative.

It would be difficult to overstate the gravity of this moment.

Without exaggeration, we can say: the future of our planet is at stake.

People's lives, the health of global economy, the very survival of some nations.

The science is clear.

The World Meteorological Organisation has reported that carbon emissions are at their highest in history and rising.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us, unequivocally, that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by half by 2050 – if we are to keep the rise in global temperatures to 2 degrees since pre-industrial times.

According to the International Energy Agency, we are nearing the “point of no return,” and we must pull back from the abyss.

You are the people who can bring us from the edge.

The world is looking to you for leadership.

As Secretary-General, I travel widely. And everywhere, people ask me for help – they ask for our help as the United Nations -- as nations, united.

This year, on the Pacific island of Kiribati, a young boy told me: “I am afraid to sleep at my home night.”

Because his land, his island, Kiribati, is slipping beneath the waves. There are many such islands in the Pacific and elsewhere.

He is afraid he will be swept away by the tide while sleeping.

In the Andes and the Alps, I have seen melting glaciers.

At both of the Earth's Poles, I have seen open sea where ice once dominated the horizon.

I have seen arid lands where in the sun once shone on mighty rivers and great lakes -- in the Amazon, flying over Lake Chad in the African sahel and flying over the Aral Sea on the vast steppe of Central Asia.

I have met, personally, with thousands of people who have lost all to catastrophic floods and spreading deserts.

And, just last month, I flew over miles and miles of devastated virgin forest and peatland in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Is this the future we want?

A world of out-of-control climate change and a devastating scarcity of vital resources?

A world divided bitterly between rich and poor, and the vulnerable and the privileged?

Or do we want a sustainable future that fulfils the promise of the United Nations Charter?

The answer is clear, even if the exact path is not.

Yes, we all recognize the realities of our time: the economic crisis, the dictates of fiscal austerity, often difficult domestic politics.

Yet the world and its people cannot accept “no” for an answer in Durban.

To the contrary, I say to you that now is the moment to be ambitious.

This is not the first time that we have confronted the sceptics, the naysayers, and proved them wrong.

In 2007, you showed leadership and came away with the Bali Roadmap.

In 2009, people said Copenhagen was a failure.

Yet it was not.

There were significant commitments on financing for mitigation, adaptation and technology transfer.

Last year, in Cancun, you firmed up and built on these foundations.

We saw international commitment to deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions that will hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius from industrial times.

You have shown that multilateralism can deliver.

Here in Durban, we must keep up the momentum.

Let us not falter. Let us not allow our valuable work to go to waste.

I expect four things from you at this conference – four incremental advances that will carry us toward the future we want.

First, we must implement what was agreed in Cancún.

This means ensuring that the Adaptation Framework and its Committee, and the Technology Mechanism and its Climate Technology Centre and Network, are ready to start working as soon as possible.

Assisting the most vulnerable is both an obligation and a smart investment in a sustainable future.

Second, we need tangible progress on short- and long-term financing.

On short-term, fast-track financing, \$30 billion dollars has been pledged, and almost all of it has been identified in national budgets.

However, recipient countries want to see greater transparency in how the funds are allocated and disbursed.

The UNFCCC Secretariat has created a tool to do this.

We also need prompt delivery of these funds to where they are most needed.

On longer-term financing, we need to mobilize \$100 billion per annum by 2020 from governmental, private sector and innovative new sources.

My High Level Advisory Group on Climate Financing, led by Prime Minister Meles and Prime Minister Stoltenberg, has shown that this is feasible – and it is essential that we stick to our commitment.

In Cancun you created the Green Climate Fund.

Let us launch it here in Durban.

And I appeal to industrialized nations to inject sufficient initial capital to allow the fund to begin its work immediately.

This will inspire confidence and generate further momentum for action.

Third: the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

In the absence of a global binding climate agreement, the Kyoto Protocol is the closest we have.

While Kyoto alone will not solve today's climate problem, it is a foundation to build on, with important institutions.

It provides the framework that markets sorely need.

Carbon pricing, carbon-trading depend on a rules-based system.

It is important that we do not create a vacuum.

Therefore, I urge you to carefully consider a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol here in Durban.

Fourth and finally: we must not forsake our collective vision of a comprehensive, binding climate change agreement that is both effective and fair for all.

Here in Durban, we can and must take concrete steps towards a more robust climate regime -- steps that will carry the momentum to next year's Conference of Parties in Qatar.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Time is not on our side, nor is the rest of the world waiting for us to decide.

Across the globe, governments, cities, businesses and individuals have recognized the threat of climate change.

They are acting.

They are choosing a lower-carbon path because they know it is good for the planet – and good for them, good for us.

Global investment in clean energy rose from \$50 billion dollars in 2004 to \$240 billion in 2010, according to one recent report.

Several UNFCCC parties have taken significant steps on mitigation -- including putting a price on industrial emissions, pledging to reduce carbon intensity, committing to drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions and working to reduce deforestation.

The REDD+ programme is creating a financial value for the carbon stored in forests.

Governments and the private sector are combining to create a vision for Sustainable Energy for All – a win-win-win for poverty reduction, economic growth and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us take inspiration from the progress some are making.

Let us find the will to lead, despite the many difficulties.

Let us prove that we not only know where we are going – and how to get there – but that we are prepared to take collective action that will move us down that road.

Let us make Durban a profile in political courage.

Thank you.