

**Address by Mr. Phil Hogan, T.D.,
Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government,
Ireland
at COP 17, Durban, 7th December 2011**

Madam President,

At the outset, Ireland wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Commissioner Hedegaard and the Polish Presidency on behalf of the EU and its 27 Member States.

The world is far from a pathway to meet the goal of keeping the global temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius. UNEP's latest gap analysis shows that current pledges could only take us about half-way there.

The reality and impact of climate change are already clear. The WHO has declared climate change to be the greatest threat to human health in the 21st century. The seriousness and urgency of mobilising an effective global response cannot be overstated.

While the Cancun Agreements were an important step forward, the time has now arrived for us to address the difficult outstanding political issues, not least in relation to –

- the legal form of a future international agreement,
- the timeframe for agreement and a roadmap to get us there, and
- the need to increase the level of ambition on mitigation action to respond to the 2 degree Celsius objective.

We must also strive for agreement on a common international accounting system so we can truly keep track of what everyone is doing.

A balanced Durban package should also address issues that are of increasing importance in our climate constrained world, including the establishment of new market-based mechanisms, addressing the international aviation and maritime sectors, and agreement on a work programme on agriculture.

Global food security remains a key issue in Ireland's engagement with this and other global multi-lateral processes. Our historical experience of famine has left an indelible mark on our national psyche and has ensured that our overseas development assistance program has a particular focus on hunger. Recognising the right to food as a key fundamental human right, we are acutely aware that climate change is already impacting on global agricultural systems.

Whether you look at analysis by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, UNEP or the IPCC, the message is consistent and clear regarding the inextricably linked challenges of climate change, agriculture and food security. Building the scientific and technical knowledge base in the agricultural sector is essential and a work programme must be developed that fully addresses both adaptation and mitigation aspects.

Delivering on our commitments on fast start finance is also a key element of our international obligations. Ireland's contribution to the EU pledge of €7.2bn was a commitment to provide up to €100m over the three years 2010 to 2012. To date, Ireland has delivered €66 million which is being used to support activities in a number of countries that are experiencing the worst impacts of climate change, particularly in Africa.

Today, back in our capital, I have arranged for Parliamentary approval to be sought for a further contribution of €10m in Fast Start Finance this year. From this, €8m will be provided to the EU Global Climate Change Alliance, and €2m will be provided to the Least Developed Countries Fund under the guidance of the UNFCCC.

Madam President, we fully recognise that it is the people of the developing world – who contributed least to global warming – that are first to suffer its punishing impacts. I believe there is a compelling case for Climate Justice and I am determined that Ireland will continue to demonstrate solidarity with developing countries in their efforts to tackle the effects of climate change and respond to food security challenges.

For our part in the global mitigation effort, Ireland is on course to meet its Kyoto commitment. Together with our fellow Member States of the EU, we are pursuing an ambitious mitigation agenda in the period to 2020. And, nationally, the Government is prioritising the climate policy agenda to ensure that we realise our 2020 climate ambitions and position ourselves on a pathway to a low carbon economy in the longer term.

Madam President, we remain optimistic about the outcome of COP 17. Our positive attitude has been influenced by the leadership and commitment you and your Government have demonstrated. Working with our EU partners, we are ready to support you in your efforts to lead this conference to a successful outcome at the end of this week.