

**EL SALVADOR**  
**Statement by Herman Rosa Chávez**  
**Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources**  
**at the High Level Segment of COP17/MOP7**  
**Durban, 8 December 2011**

Madame President, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Our climate system has been seriously disturbed and many countries are paying a very heavy and increasing price due to this. Madame President, let me illustrate what is happening in my own country with a graph – that is being distributed – that shows how over the past 50 years, we went from being impacted by one extreme weather event per decade in the 1960s and 1970s, to nine in the last ten years.

Tropical Depression 12E that struck El Salvador just two months ago was the last of this terrible and destructive sequence. Over ten days it dumped up to 1.5 meters of rain. Landslides, the flooding of ten per cent of our territory, major losses in agriculture and infrastructure were some of the impacts.

Although in comparison to previous events, we managed to reduce the loss of human life due to a much strengthened civil protection system, still almost 40 persons lost their lives. On the other hand, we could not prevent the economic losses that reached US\$840 million dollars or 4% of GDP.

In its aftermath, we received just over \$6 million dollars in emergency assistance and my government is grateful for the solidarity from the United Nations, our regional development banks, Norway, Taiwan, Switzerland, Canada, United States, Korea, Spain, Japan, Brazil and others. We were specially touched by Guatemala, who was also struck by Tropical Depression 12E, but nevertheless decided to share with us some of the emergency aid that had herself received.

It is precisely that spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility that we have to bring to our negotiations here in Durban. Let us not make the mistake to think that there are other crisis more important today than the disturbance of our climate system. We can all make a difference here in Durban. Thank you Madame President for the respect you have shown for all of us, by hearing all of our voices and not just of those that seem to matter. The truth is that we all matter here in Durban.

Madame President, we often hear that we need to achieve a balanced package of decisions. But what does that mean for the peoples who are already being so hard hit by the disturbance of the global climate system and who are seeing their hopes for a better future nullified, due to our persistent collective failure?

I think there are at least three essential elements of that balanced package:

First, we need very clear and concrete decisions on funding. All vulnerable countries need funding to support their urgent adaptation actions. That is why we have to decide here to operationalize immediately the Green Climate Fund, with all the essential elements that we have been discussing under your able guidance, including an initial significant capitalization so that we do not start with an empty shell.

Increasing significantly our efforts for adaptation and the corresponding resources is a second essential element of a balanced package. If we fail to do so, loss and damage will increase much more in the near future and many of our countries will face increased threats to their stability. Massive internal displacements of population and outmigration would be an almost certain result.

An essential third element has to do with the serious mitigation commitments that are required by developed and major emitting countries, as this is essential to moderate the growing destabilization of the global climate system. Yet, we have to make sure that the right for an equitable access to sustainable development and the principle of historical responsibilities are respected fully.

Madame President, even though our contribution to global emissions is negligible we also want to contribute, by seeking synergies between adaptation and mitigation, as will be the case in our flagship National Landscape and Ecosystem Restoration Program that we hope to launch next year.

This initiative, if it gathers sufficient external support will transform our degraded landscapes and agriculture, thus increasing our resilience to extreme weather events. We intend to do this through the massive expansion of agroforestry and sustainable agricultural practices, thus we will be able to enhance biodiversity while capturing carbon in the soil, vegetation and trees. This “adaptation-based mitigation” model is also the basis for our REDD+ program and is what makes sense for our particular needs and circumstances.

Madame President, you can count with our support. Under your wise leadership we trust that the Durban Outcome will send a powerful message of hope for our peoples that have been weary and disappointed for so long. We cannot and must not disappoint them again.

Thank you, Madame President.