



Remarks by

H.E. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

Warsaw, Poland

19 November 2013

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
Nineteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 19)
and the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the
meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 9)**

Please check against deliver

President of the Conference, Minister Marcin Korolec,
Prime Minister of Poland, Donald Tusk,
President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete,
Honourable Ministers
Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Madame Christiana Figueres,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dzień Dobry.

It is an honour to be in this historic city and I want to begin by thanking our hosts for the warm hospitality extended to me and my team and, I am sure, to each and every one of you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am no stranger to the process of intergovernmental negotiations on climate change. As a former lead negotiator of my country, Antigua and Barbuda, to many of the previous COPs- some would say probably too many- I have sat side-by-side with many of you who are here today in a variety of climate change fora across the globe over the past two decades! And so I can tell you that I have heard many of the very same arguments you have made in the past and are now again making; and - indeed I know the arguments, challenges, the difficulties, and the frustrations of the negotiating process all too well.

But today, I stand before you in a somewhat different capacity. I stand before you as President of the United Nations General Assembly and therefore as a representative of the entire membership of the United Nations – all 193 member States, ALL of whom are also parties to the very Convention whose future well-being lies in your hand. By virtue

of this position I am required – indeed I must – hang up my individual representative hat - and encourage you strongly to look at the larger picture that should be clearly visible to each and every one of us gathered here today as a global whole in this conference facility in Warsaw.

And I am sorry to say that the larger, global picture, Distinguished Delegates, looks pretty bleak – and can only get bleaker if we continue to cling to our old arguments and dig our heads and heels into the proverbial sand.

From this larger global perspective, I see one human family, confronting the same global challenges albeit given differing needs and circumstances. Some members of this family, through no apparent fault of their own, have suffered terribly and unjustly from the ravages of extreme climate-induced weather events, whilst others are fearful of the impacts of an economic slowdown on top of already dismal development prospects. Some are terrified of watching their livelihoods erode away; others are concerned about the integrity and health of their planet. But whichever way we choose to look at it, we need to remind ourselves that if there is one constant that binds us all in this our UN global family, it is this: we are all committed to the overarching goal of improving the lives of our respective peoples.

If you accept that this is so, then my hope is that our mutual concern for the greater good will bring us together in an urgent and timely fashion, and our collective sense of responsibility will expand to include all people, including those of our own future generations.

Excellencies,

If you individually scan the horizon of the intergovernmental climate change negotiations process that is before you, and which you also control and will ultimately be held accountable for in the long run, you will undoubtedly hold these simple truths to be self-evident:

- 1) We *must* reach a deal by 2015;
- 2) This deal must be comprehensive and must of necessity bind us all;
- 3) It should contain the necessary means of implementation; and
- 4) To avoid what has typically become a mad dash as the end of the negotiation horizon closes upon us, we should begin to put in place the necessary elements of the 2015 deal right now and right here at this COP.

On the first point, I don't need to elaborate much, but let me underscore one important fact. As you know, the United Nations is embarking on a task of monumental proportions with the post 2015 development agenda, and as President of the UN General Assembly, I have chosen *setting the stage* for this agenda as my main area of focus. But neither I – nor anyone in this room – can dispute nor afford to ignore the role that climate change plays and will continue to play in impacting all other sustainable development pathways, planning and prosperity gains and challenges. Hence, we all are faced with the collective need to adequately address climate change in the post-2015 development agenda. Anything less is highly irresponsible.

2015 has the potential to be a watershed year that delivers not only a new climate change agreement, but also a new development agenda that will guide the international community – all of us – in the post-2015 era, as well as a new global framework on disaster reduction. But in order to deliver on this potential, it is imperative that a number of processes are conducted in a mutually reinforcing manner including under the UNFCCC and in the broader UN system.

Distinguished Representatives,

We have to be realistic and we cannot afford to ignore the harsh realities that the climate change challenge brings to the overall task of sustainable development for all. We have

now entered the era of super storms, and the human tragedies and ravages such storms and typhoons bring are part of our daily vernacular. However, we in this room must never ever become inured to this. What is the point of focusing on providing jobs, livelihoods, education, and healthcare, if one storm – or maybe future super storms - wipes it all away in a few hours? What does the loss of valuable and endemic biodiversity - caused by rising sea-levels and inundation of fragile coastal zones that provide livelihoods for millions of the poor - mean for all of us in this room? Have we made enough of an effort or are our efforts being slowly undermined by desertification that renders already arid lands increasingly unusable and makes ensuring food security even more difficult?

Those of you who know me well - know that I like to keep it simple and straightforward. So please, let me repeat: We, all of us in this room, who represent the UN family, must reach an agreement by 2015! Period.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are here today because we must begin work on a deal that we will share in common, and the clock is ticking with only a year and a half left to get the most effective and equitable deal possible. I believe that the conditions are propitious for such a deal to emerge at the end – provided that we put our minds to it and truly apply our best efforts. Here in Warsaw, we need to take decisive steps towards our onward journey to Lima in 2014, and finally to Paris in 2015. This means addressing a number of items, which include:

1. the fact that emissions are set to peak by 2015 and addressing the pre-2020 ambition gap;
2. taking into account the results of the 2013-2015 review of the long term global goal;
3. operationalizing and capitalizing post haste the Green Climate Fund;

4. putting in place the relevant compliance mechanisms that will be essential for any legally binding agreement, which will be applicable to *all* Parties;
5. ensuring the linkages of any future agreement to existing structures under the UNFCCC.

Distinguished Delegates,

How do you pull all this together in a meaningful way? In a word: IMPLEMENTATION!
Real and meaningful implementation.

It is time to make real progress on this vexing and frequently divisive issue, which includes financing, technology transfer and capacity building. We have made some progress with the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Technology Centre and Network to date, but this is not enough to adequately tackle the challenges we will all face through climate change.

As highlighted in the IPCC's most recent report, climate change impacts and developmental issues are inextricably linked. It is therefore imperative that we approach financing for sustainable development and climate finance in a coherent manner. This means addressing the artificial disconnect between climate change and the multilateral development process in regards to financing.

Distinguished Delegates,

Within each of our countries, there is a wealth of knowledge and experience about how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, extend energy access, make our economies more efficient, reduce local air pollution, and limit our vulnerability to fluctuations in the price of fuel. We have solutions – good solutions – we just need to implement them and deploy them faster. The IPCC has indicated that by 2050, with the right instruments in place, some 70% of our energy needs could come from renewable resources. The further we

advance in the negotiations around this table, the closer we get to bringing about a green growth revolution.

But it's true that the world is increasingly becoming frustrated at the pace at which we take decisions under the Convention. Civil society, the private sector, and local governments from the Global North and South have all grabbed the proverbial bull by the horns and have taken on this cause. They recognize the sheer urgency and they are raising awareness, innovating new ideas and transforming their environments as we sit here. But they are also looking at these negotiations, and saying what has changed in the last 20 years? They are asking why we have abdicated our responsibilities. Why are we not fulfilling our roles as leaders?

The time has come for you to push back. For you to stand up and say: yes we will. Yes, we will do something. We will act. Not tomorrow, not next week, but right here. Today!

Excellencies,

Recent catastrophic events have made it all the more obvious that action is needed; they call for resolute measures and a vision well beyond the usual political posturing; they require a political willingness by climate change negotiators, and indeed all people, to look beyond our particular narrow interests and focus instead on the common good for all. The saying that neither time, nor tide waits for man or woman or child in this case is a tough truism in a world impacted by the adverse effects of climate change. The people of this world who are outside of this room are waiting for us to act and they have been waiting for a long time. These negotiations must begin to yield true benefits, beginning now. I urge you to match the rising conviction that is already evident around the world. Draw on your strength and your sense of global solidarity to take the difficult decisions – the ones that benefit all people and the generations yet to come.

Let me end with one heartfelt appeal: Do what needs to be done for 2015 – if not for yourself – then for the children both present and for those yet to come.

Thank you.
