



**Bonn symposium 2009 : “Sustainable development in times of crises
Opposition or Opportunity”
Bonn, 23 November 2009**

**Keynote speech by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
(delivered on his behalf)**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to address you on behalf of Yvo de Boer, who regrets not being able to address you in person due to other demands.

This symposium is timely indeed. Sustainable development needs to underpin efforts, especially long-term efforts, to overcome the current crisis. Climate change perhaps illustrates this point best.

And given the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, where a strong deal on climate change needs to be sealed, climate change action perhaps best illustrates the complementarity of addressing the current crisis by means of sustainable development objectives.

Climate change has featured prominently on the international agenda since 2007. This is largely due to the 2007 assessment report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which found that the warming of the world’s climate system is unequivocal and that impacts are already being felt.

Projections indicate faster warming is expected. If emissions continue to rise at their current pace, the world will face an average temperature rise of around 3°C this century.

Serious impacts are associated with this scenario, including sea-level rise, shifts in growing seasons, and an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as storms, floods and droughts.

Developing countries will be disproportionately affected. In the most vulnerable communities, these impacts of climate change pose a direct threat to people’s very survival. Women form a particularly vulnerable segment of those most affected by climate change.

Climate change impacts will also come with an economic price tag. They have the potential to undo development gains made to date, to undermine economic growth and to threaten the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Climate change will impact

every sphere of existence.

But future vulnerability depends not only on climate change, but also on development pathways; and sustainable development can reduce vulnerability. Societies which are pursuing a path of sustainable development are likely to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Efforts to promote development pathways that are sustainable include using renewable sources such as wind, water, tide, wave or the sun to generate energy instead of using fossil fuels such as coal; energy efficiency measures; sustainable agricultural practices; reducing deforestation and increasing forest coverage, among others.

For example, China, with a view to moving its economy towards sustainable low carbon growth, aims to reduce energy intensity per unit of GDP by 20% in five years, from 2006-2010. It is also aggressively investing in the use of renewable source of energy. Investment in wind and solar energy in particular has been growing very rapidly. For example, it plans to invest about USD 200 billion on renewable energy between now and 2020.

Similarly, India's sustainable development pathway includes measures to promote the development and use of solar energy; energy efficiency initiatives, including through reduced tax on energy efficient appliances; increasing forest coverage; and adapting to the impacts in agriculture sector through development of climate-resilient crops, among others.

Effectively responding to climate change requires concerted global action in two key areas: adapting to impacts on the one hand, and radically reducing emissions - or mitigating - on the other. To ensure that development is not impeded in the process, the response to climate change needs to be pinned to sustainable development.

But this requires changing course. The world's economic development must shift to a climate resilient and low-emissions path.

The up-coming Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December presents the world with the opportunity to change course.

In response to the IPCC's report, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change launched a two-year negotiating process in 2007 aimed at strengthening global action on climate change. The negotiating process is set to conclude with a strong outcome in Copenhagen in December this year.

An ambitious deal is an unequivocal requirement to stop climate change from taking lives and livelihoods and from reversing economic growth due to damages.

This will require an unprecedented level of cooperation, not only between countries, but also between different levels of governments, development agencies and the private sector.

Importantly, this will also require a major transition to a low-emissions pathway, especially of the world's energy sector, which is the largest contributor of CO₂ emissions.

The overriding goals of developing countries are poverty eradication and economic growth, which is impossible without access to reliable energy.

According to the International Energy Agency, global energy demand will grow by 55 per cent by 2030. In the period up to 2030, the energy supply infrastructure worldwide will require up to USD 26 trillion, with about half of that in developing countries. If these investments are not greened and directed into climate-friendly technologies, emissions will go up by 50 per cent, instead of down by 50 per cent as science requires.

The financial and economic crises have had huge negative consequences around the globe. But for the fight against climate change, there is a silver lining.

According to latest data released by the International Energy Agency, the economic crisis has created a unique window of opportunity to shift the world energy sector onto a path that offers a 50 per cent chance of keeping the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius. There are two impacts:

1. Many investments in the energy sector have been postponed as a result of the economic crisis. This has also hit investments in renewable energies, but to a larger extent, it has affected investments into unsustainable technologies, which would have locked emission-intensive technologies into energy sectors for the next 20 or 30 years to come. As economic growth picks up again, it is critical to direct new investments into low-emissions infrastructure.

2. The economic crisis has impacted emission trends to 2020.

This year is projected to show a decline in emissions of 3 per cent. As a result, emissions are projected to be 5 per cent lower in 2020 than estimated one year ago.

Consequently, there is an opportunity to be more ambitious in adopting emission reduction targets at relatively low cost.

Overall, action targeting economic growth and action on climate change can be mutually reinforcing and create new national and international economic opportunities. Around the world, greening the economy is widely regarded as a viable way of moving economies out of recession, restoring job growth and achieving more sustainability.

This is evidenced by the numerous economic recovery packages that contain large green elements. For instance, about 80 per cent of the stimulus package of the Republic of Korea is directed towards green measures; for Germany it is 13 per cent; China has allocated 34 per cent of its stimulus package (about 218 billion) and the US 12 per cent (about 117 billion) in green measures.

Furthermore, latest data released by the HSBC Asia-Pacific clearly shows that despite turbulent markets, companies that are making climate change investments are seeing the most growth.

But the window of opportunity is small and will close rapidly if the right policies, measures and investments are not put in place now.

A major way to seize that opportunity will be an ambitious deal in Copenhagen. Copenhagen needs to create the basis for a legal and policy framework to enable a transition to a global green economy and to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Copenhagen does not need to come up with all the fine-print of a climate change deal. But it needs to ensure that the heart of an agreed outcome is functional and that implementation can swiftly begin.

To date, the negotiations have made good progress on a number of issues, including adaptation, reducing emissions from deforestation and capacity-building.

While the importance of these issues is beyond dispute, a Copenhagen deal can only lay the foundation for green, climate-resilient growth if the following political essentials are resolved:

1. Increased action to assist the most vulnerable and the poorest in adapting to the impacts of climate change;
2. Ambitious emission reduction targets by individual industrialized countries;
3. Clarity on the scope and scale of nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries;
4. Significantly increased financial and technological support for both mitigation and adaptation actions in developing countries;
5. And an equitable governance structure to manage the support.

These essentials require further work and urgent progress. Most industrialized countries have come forward with intended emission reduction targets, but are still in the process of assessing their final level of ambition.

Clarity on nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries is also essential. They need to be enabled with the necessary financial and technological support. For developing countries, nationally appropriate mitigation actions could drive a shift to sustainable development and help them not to follow the emissions-intensive development path of industrialized countries.

Next to a strong deal on the essential elements, Copenhagen needs to unleash prompt implementation of adaptation action, clean technology cooperation, capacity- building and actions to reduce emissions from deforestation in developing countries.

Developing countries need urgent assistance with these important issues that will contribute to sustainable development aims.

While the political focus necessarily needs to be on the Copenhagen deliverables, life after Copenhagen will have to focus on taking forward and implementing what has been agreed.

Initially, both adaptation and mitigation need to be integrated into national development strategies. And actions will need to be planned and, ultimately, implemented, both to the benefit of countries and the climate.

Development agencies need to have a key role in boosting sustainable development by assisting with the implementation of all elements of the Copenhagen outcome.

But while stringent mitigation is likely to create attractive, new and sustainable economic opportunities around the globe, it is essential that adaptation is equally advanced.

Adaptation is needed to protect societies and economic progress going into the future, but may be less assisted by economic opportunities than mitigation. It is critical that development agencies assist with advancing urgent adaptation.

Additionally, it is very likely that significant synergies can be exploited in bringing climate change to the development community.

Efforts to cope with the impacts of climate change and attempts to promote sustainable development share common goals and determinants including: access to resources (including information and technology); equity in the distribution of resources; stocks of human and social capital; access to risk-sharing mechanisms.

Action on climate change will significantly boost efforts towards a truly sustainable way forward.

The signs are promising. Momentum on climate change towards a strong outcome at Copenhagen has never been higher.

Copenhagen presents an opportunity to deal decisively with one of the greatest threats humanity and the planet have ever faced. It presents an opportunity to change course and to truly embark on a sustainable development pathway. And it represents an opportunity to put in place the policy framework needed to achieve this.

A strong agreement on climate change will do much to internalize the principles of sustainable development going into the future.

Thank you.
