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PRESS RELEASE

UNFCCC Executive Secretary calls for speedy and decisive international action on climate change

(Paris, 2 February 2007) – Against the background of the most conclusive scientific evidence to date that the warming of the climate system is unequivocal and accelerating, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Yvo de Boer, today called for speedy and decisive international action to combat the phenomenon.

According to a report released by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Friday, the world faces an average temperature rise of around 3°C this century, if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at their current pace and are allowed to double from their pre-industrial level.

"The findings, which governments have agreed upon, leave no doubt as to the dangers mankind is facing and must be acted upon without delay. Any notion that we do not know enough to move decisively against climate change has been clearly dispelled," Mr. de Boer said.

The new report says that warming during the last 100 years was 0.74 °C, with most of the warming occurring during the past 50 years. The warming per decade for the next 20 years is projected to be 0.2 °C per decade.

"It is politically significant that all the governments have agreed to the conclusions of the scientists, making this assessment a solid foundation for sound decision making," Mr. de Boer said.

The United Nations' top climate change official called on governments to provide the necessary leadership and to move negotiations under the auspices of the UN forward.

"The world urgently needs new international agreement on stronger emission caps for industrialized countries, incentives for developing countries to limit their emissions, and support for robust adaptation measures," he said.

According to the Stern review issued last year by the UK government, an average temperature rise of 3°C would translate into severe water shortages and lower crop yields around the world, with climate change already causing setbacks to economic and social progress in developing countries.

An assessment by the IPCC of the impacts of climate change will be released in early April.



The UNFCCC Executive Secretary called for a step change in negotiations and warned against resignation in the face of the problem.

"The good news is that the worst predictions of the IPCC are based on scenarios which do not take into account action to combat climate change now or in the future. Both the policies and technologies to prevent such consequences are available and putting them in place is precisely what the Climate Convention and the Kyoto Protocol are designed to do."

Mr. de Boer called on countries to overcome their inhibitions to acting against climate change on economic grounds.

"The Stern Review not only points to effects of unabated climate change such as premature deaths due to rising temperatures. It clearly shows us that the economic costs of inaction – for example, permanent displacement of millions of people – will be much higher than the cost of action," he said.

The IPCC will complete its assessments of the impacts of climate change and of available preventive measures within the next four months and inform of the findings at the next UNFCCC talks and negotiations scheduled for May 2007 in Bonn.

A synthesis of all three reports will be presented approximately one month before this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference in December.

The UNFCCC Executive Secretary said he believed it was possible to build on the success of the Kyoto Protocol in using market-based approaches to reduce the cost of action on climate change.

The Kyoto Protocol presently requires 35 industrialized countries and the European Community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 5% below 1990 levels in its first commitment period between 2008 and 2012.

"Any future agreement, which will require global participation, should recognize that industrialized countries need to continue to take the lead in reducing emissions and be prepared to undertake emission reductions on the order of 60 to 80% by 2050," said Mr. de Boer.

"This is the target that must be achieved in order to stabilize concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level which prevents the worst consequences," he added.

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