



**Spanish Parliament Commission for Climate Change
Madrid, 25 June 2009**

**Address by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen,

The Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset said it is our duty to accept fate, but within our fate, we must choose one destiny.

Human abasement and degradation, he said, is simply the way of life of those who have refused to be what it is their duty to be.

Climate change is our fate. Confronting climate change is our destiny.

Failure to confront climate change will bring down upon us the greatest abasement and degradation of the human condition that our civilizations have known.

Copenhagen, at the end of this year, is the moment when our generation has the opportunity to rise to the challenge and decisively deal with climate change.

It is beyond the shadow of a doubt that greenhouse gas emissions have to be radically reduced to keep climate change from sliding into climate chaos.

Once we cross the threshold into climate chaos, there will be no place left to hide, for anyone.

Even assuming action by major developing nations, science tells us that industrialized countries need to reduce emissions in the order of -25 to -40 per cent over 1990 levels by 2020 if we are to avoid the worst climate impacts.

At the same time, adapting to the inevitable consequences of climate change is a global priority, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable people.

But climate change impacts have already started to threaten hard-won development progress across the globe, and will increasingly do so as climate change takes an increasing hold.

Copenhagen must be the point where the world closes the door on that threshold of climate chaos. We cannot pass over it.

There is no question that you can help with your influence and advice.

In many ways, Spain has already shown its leadership in acting against climate change, and the parliament in which we sit has demonstrated its commitment.

Spain's longstanding commitment to renewable energy, especially as a pioneer in wind power, is well known.

Spain's membership of the European Union, which has the most ambitious offer on the table so far to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, is established and influential.

Spain's economic and cultural roles within the Latin-American context give it a central position in an area of the world which can significantly contribute to the fight against climate change, but would also be seriously affected by its worst impacts.

Spain has also backed its commitment with generous and targeted financial support for the climate change secretariat's work.

For that, I am glad to be here today to once more personally and sincerely thank you.

All these factors give Spain a critical role in pushing forward the kind of agreement that Copenhagen must produce.

But what must that agreement deliver to be successful?

I can tell you that within the negotiations, we are not yet at a point where we can say that our generation will fulfil its destiny to avoid climate change, for the benefit of all who come after us.

However, although time is short - with only six weeks of negotiating time left before an agreement must be made at Copenhagen - there is still time to deliver success. But this time must be used wisely.

Let me give you an update on where we are, and what must happen.

Internationally, important political processes are at work to support a successful Copenhagen outcome. They must deliver on this potential.

The new United States administration has committed to fighting climate change and has set out clear policies for a clean energy future.

It has also engaged in an intensive and constructive climate change dialogue with China.

The Major Economies Forum of the 17 largest emitters was successfully relaunched in March, and could help provide a tone of greater ambition in a forward looking way.

Meanwhile, in the UN climate change talks, the most recent meeting in Bonn, in June, achieved important progress.

The two-year negotiating process on strengthened international climate change action has now entered its critical phase.

The session marked the launch of real negotiations in both of the main workstreams under the Convention – the work on long-term cooperative action, and the work under the Kyoto Protocol.

Parties have started to discuss concrete texts, a major turning point in the negotiations.

They also met required negotiation deadlines, which means that all options for the legal form of an agreed outcome in Copenhagen are now on the table.

Governments were able to make two full readings of the text on long-term cooperative action, and to make many specific, additional proposals on what they wanted.

At the meeting, therefore, governments provided clarity on which issues they want to see included in a Copenhagen agreed outcome.

In particular, more rapid progress than expected was made on an adaptation framework.

The reading of the negotiating text revealed that there is growing convergence in the negotiations on the need for a strong adaptation framework or programme, which needs to address the concerns of particularly vulnerable countries.

Let me at this point extend my heartfelt thanks for the leadership Spain has shown in recognizing the critical importance of adaptation for the poorest and most vulnerable nations.

Spain's significant financial contributions have allowed for the successful implementation of adaptation-related work under the Convention, which resulted in adaptation being recognized as a major building block in the Bali Action Plan.

In addition, I want to recognize Spain's active engagement in the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, and its pledge to take action through the PIACC, (the Ibero-American Programme on Adaptation to Climate Change.)

This will assist all Parties in improving their understanding and assessment of impacts and vulnerability and in making informed decisions on practical adaptation actions and measures.

In Bonn, good progress was also made on concrete issues under the Convention's two subsidiary bodies on implementation, and on scientific and technological advice.

These included progress on a methodological basis for including action to reduce emissions from deforestation in developing countries in an agreed outcome, and, importantly, on ways to include indigenous peoples' issues in this work.

They also included progress on technology transfer in terms of future financing, long-term strategy and performance indicators – all of which provide interesting ideas to include in an agreement.

But we now need to get to a greater scale and ambition of action.

An agreed outcome at Copenhagen must shift us decisively towards the low-emission, resource-efficient and equitable path that offers the only sustainable alternative to a future of never-ending crisis.

To do this, a Copenhagen agreement must reflect four essential political elements, which are linked together in cause and effect.

First, it has to deliver unequivocal clarity in terms of what individual industrialized countries will do to reduce their emissions by 2020

Now we have now an almost complete list of industrialized country pledges to cut emissions by 2020 from those nations under the Kyoto Protocol.

In the last month, Japan and Russia added their pledges, which had been awaited.

In the United States, which is not a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, the proposed Waxman-Markey clean energy and security bill incorporates emission cuts.

What this adds up to in exact percentages in global terms, so far, is not clear due to the many different base years on which countries have offered emission cuts. Furthermore, some offers, such as the proposal by the European Union, depend on final commitments by other nations.

But it is clear that the industrialized world needs to do more to reach what science says is required.

At the Bonn meeting, developing countries questioned whether industrialized nations were serious about taking on this required leadership role.

However, with a full list on the table, countries can start to compare efforts and can build this into greater emission cut ambitions.

The second political essential is that it must be clear what major developing countries will do to limit the growth of their emissions.

Without that indication from major developing countries, many industrialized countries would find it impossible to get a Copenhagen agreement ratified at home.

The developing world has not stood still. Many nations, including China, Brazil and India, have climate change strategies in place.

Amongst the economic stimulus packages that different countries have launched to meet the current economic crisis, China's includes one of the largest components of green investment.

Its stimulus package, which totals 586 billion US dollars, includes around 38 per cent to be spent on green measures.

Such efforts are now being recognized in the capitals of the industrialized world; not before time, but politically welcome nonetheless.

Third, stable and predictable finance to help developing countries to adapt and to mitigate must be significantly scaled up.

In Bali, developing countries clearly indicated that they are willing to do more, as long as they received appropriate measurable, reportable and verifiable financial and technological support to implement mitigation actions above those they are already doing.

This must be new money, not just repackaged ODA.

Without that, you will not get developing country engagement, and without developing country engagement, you will not get industrialized country engagement.

It is critical that clarity on financing emerges. A first step must be taken soon, and it is clear that industrialized countries need to take it.

A large share of these funds must come from public funding, and public funding requirements will remain high for adaptation.

But for mitigation, over 80 per cent of financing is estimated to come from private sources by 2030.

This clearly highlights the need for a global, functioning carbon market, and other market-based mechanisms, to provide the right incentives for the private sector.

Such a market, founded on ambitious targets to cut emissions by industrialized nations, would create a new, large-scale source of public revenues for climate action and act as a driver of green technology transfer into the developing world.

Fourth and finally, Copenhagen must deliver an agreement where developing countries feel they have an equal voice in the management of financial resources they are going to need.

On the one hand, developing countries are proposing that funds agreed in Copenhagen come under the authority of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

Industrialized countries, on the other hand, are pushing for governance of funds through existing channels.

A middle ground has to be found to accommodate both.

I am convinced this can be done, but only if it is clear that both donors and multilateral financial institutions work towards the needs that developing countries determine for themselves.

Precise details on how commitments, markets, mechanisms and institutions would work can be finalized after Copenhagen.

But these are the four political essentials which need to be reflected in a Copenhagen agreed outcome.

There is a further step, which involves you as lawmakers, directly and urgently.

Success at Copenhagen will not prove ultimately effective unless legislators back it with laws and levers that allow citizens, business and finance to take the right climate action.

Governments must provide legal, tax, standards and regulatory structures that mean people take climate action not just because they believe it is right, but because it makes commercial and economic sense for them to do so.

Citizens, business and finance need the tools and information that encourages them to take climate action not only because it looks green, but because they understand that their future economic, food and energy security rely on it being green.

It is fitting that the next time I am in Spain, I will be at Barcelona, the last negotiating session under the UN climate talks before Copenhagen.

By then, governments need to be well on the way to understanding how these four politically essential prerequisites must fit into human destiny.

I am certain that the call to duty to prevent dangerous climate change will be answered.

Thank you.
