

**29th Plenary and 20th Anniversary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Geneva, 31 August 2008**

**Address by Roberto Acosta, Coordinator,
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
on behalf of
Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary,
United Nations Framework on Climate Change**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We have gathered here to celebrate the existence and work of one of the most influential bodies in the history of international relations - the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Your work has influenced global climate change policies. And it continues to provide the international community with the solid scientific basis required for any effective policy.

But at the same time, we cannot expect to significantly strengthen international climate change action without a real public understanding of the issue.

In many developing countries, people are more concerned about where their next meal will come from than about climate change. If you are hungry, climate change is a far-away, insignificant issue. The links between climate change impacts and poverty or food security are often poorly understood. People around the world need to fully understand how climate change will affect them if politics doesn't come up with an ambitious response in Copenhagen in 2009.

Your work and the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore and the IPCC has done much to open the world's eyes to climate change. It created the type of public understanding of climate change that is needed to achieve an ambitious political commitment.

The Fourth Assessment Report last year abolished any remaining scepticism on climate change in the public eye. It has created huge public expectations for the process under the UNFCCC to provide political answers that adequately respond to the science. And there is no doubt that it played a crucial role in achieving the Bali breakthrough: the adoption of the Bali Road Map.

In the past, the IPCC's reports have also created the necessary public understanding for strong political commitments.

The First Assessment Report in 1990 first alerted the world to the link between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. With such alarming findings, based on the views of hundreds of experts, it was clear that the international community needed to respond. Negotiations were initiated and two years later, the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change was adopted and signed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In many ways, we owe the birth of the Convention to the work of the IPCC.

The Second Assessment Report in 1995 had a similarly decisive impact. Its comprehensive assessment of climate change science strengthened the UNFCCC and opened the door for work towards the Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted in 1997.

The consideration of the Third Assessment Report in 2001 led to the introduction of the agenda items adaptation and mitigation. Notably, it increased the importance of adaptation in the UNFCCC process and achieved related work, such as the launch of the Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change. The work programme has now engaged over 100 organisations in knowledge-sharing on adaptation, including the IPCC, WMO and UNEP.

The IPCC's work on mitigation provided input on the inclusion of mitigation-related matters in the Bali Road Map.

We are now well into the two-year negotiating process under the Bali Road Map. The Accra Climate Change Talks, which ended four days ago, produced a good number of proposals for strengthened climate change action from Parties. These proposals will be compiled in a structured way for negotiations at the UN Climate Change Conference in December in Poznan. The meeting laid the foundation of what could serve as a first negotiating text for a Copenhagen agreed outcome in 2009.

Nonetheless, the clock is ticking if the 2009 deadline is to be met, even if Parties seem to be committed to an ambitious outcome in Copenhagen that will result in real emission reductions and reliable and effective support mechanisms. Much work remains to be done on all fronts. Negotiations are deeply political and much is at stake. And politics are fickle.

In a way, we are still riding the wave of public awareness that the Fourth Assessment Report created. The question is: will that wave carry us through to Copenhagen? Or will the negotiating process be working in a vacuum in 2009 because there will be no IPCC report?

Reaching a strong agreed outcome in Copenhagen that matches up to the science is imperative. We need global public understanding, political commitment and strong science to result in a science-based political response.

Public understanding is essential to secure political commitment. The public across the world and the climate change process itself need a scientific wake-up call for Copenhagen. My hope is that the IPCC can in some way help to supply that wake-up call.

Thank you

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