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PRESS RELEASE

UN's top climate change official calls on governments to quickly transform Cancún Agreements into action, provide clarity on future of the Kyoto Protocol

(Tokyo, 1 March 2011) – Speaking to media Tuesday on a visit to Japan, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres called on governments to quickly transform the Cancún Agreements, agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference in Mexico in December of last year, into tangible action on the ground, and provide clarity on the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

“Governments must now implement quickly what they agreed in Cancún and take the next big climate step this year in Durban,” she said.

Ms. Figueres is presently in Japan to meet with government officials, Japanese business and other civil society representatives, and to attend the 9th informal consultations on Thursday, jointly organized by the governments of Japan and Brazil.

Ms. Figueres described the outcome of the UN Climate Change Conference in Mexico as a solid step forward for strengthened global climate action, encompassing the basis for the largest collective effort the world has ever seen to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, she said the Cancún Agreements formed the most comprehensive package ever decided by governments to help developing nations deal with climate change, and a long-term global agreement to keep average global temperatures below two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

However, she warned that the sum of promises to reduce or limit emissions so far equals only 60% of what the scientific community says is required by 2020 for the world to stay below 2 degrees, and that emissions need to peak by 2015 to avoid the agreed temperature goal slipping out of reach.

Looking ahead to COP 17 in Durban and the international climate change activities to take place in the course of this year, Ms. Figueres explained governments need to agree a way to cut global emissions about twice as fast as they have already promised, along with increasing the certainty that they will do what they say.

“Governments meeting in Durban must resolve the remaining issues over the future of the Kyoto Protocol,” she said. “In this context, we need to keep in mind that the Kyoto Protocol remains the only working, binding international model to reduce emissions, and nations have an urgent task to decide how to take forward the protocol’s unique benefits of transparency,



certainty, compliance in handling national emission targets, and common but differentiated responsibilities," she added.

According to Ms. Figueres, the other major challenge this year is for governments to ensure that the agreed climate finance, technology for developing nations and new institutions to manage this which were agreed at COP16 in Mexico appear on time.

The UN's top climate change official described three central areas in which this needs to happen: the Green Climate Fund needs to be fully operational by Durban, and industrialised countries need to agree concretely how to deliver a promised US\$100 billion per year by 2020. Secondly, the UN Climate Change Secretariat needs to receive promised details of the US\$30 billion in fast-start financing from industrialized countries to cover 2010-2012. And thirdly, the Cancún Adaptation Framework and Technology Mechanism need to become fully operational, through agreement on their composition and the precise ways they will work.

"By Durban, the poor and vulnerable of the world need to see real change has happened, and the businessmen, scientists and engineers who launch real solutions on the ground need to see a new era of international climate action has truly begun," said Ms. Figueres. "And in Durban, governments need to take the next step to increase their ambition to reduce global emissions together," she added.

Ms. Figueres praised Japan for having subscribed to a –25% emission reduction goal by 2020 (over 1990 levels), thereby demonstrating leadership, ambition and foresight.

"Japan has already invested a great deal in international climate change infrastructure, not least in the economic opportunities provided by the Kyoto Protocol," she said. "Japan's national well-being is highly dependent on a secure and sustainable world economy, free of climate disaster. I am therefore confident that Japan will push for successively stronger international climate agreements to make sure that this happens," the UNFCCC Executive Secretary said.

About the UNFCCC

With 194 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has been ratified by 192 of the UNFCCC Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

See also <<http://unfccc.int>>