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PRESS RELEASE

UNFCCC: Latin American and Caribbean countries to play key role in global fight against climate change

(Santo Domingo, 1 February 2008) According to Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Latin American and Caribbean countries will play a key role in designing an international post-2012 climate change agreement and will be among the countries that stand most to benefit from it.

"As part of the initial phase of international climate change negotiations in 2008, there needs to be a focus on designing the mechanisms to support and enable action by developing countries, not least by countries in your region," he said. "This focus will help you cope with the negative impacts of climate change and go the extra green mile when implementing clean technologies."

Mr. de Boer was speaking to Ministers at the Sixteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean (30 January - 1 February), organized by the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROLAC).

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in December of 2007, the 192 Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to launch negotiations on an agreement to step up international action on climate change in the period beyond 2012, when the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires. The new agreement is based on four pillars: mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance and is to be concluded in Copenhagen in 2009.

"We have an incredibly busy time ahead of us", said the UN's top climate change official. "It will be a huge challenge to proceed with current work and to craft an ambitious agreement in less than two years."



Latin American and Caribbean countries are regarded by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to be among those that will bear brunt of climate change impacts over the next decades, with impacts intensifying as time goes by.

These impacts include inundations of small island states and densely populated coastal zones, more intense hurricanes, water shortages, soil erosion, droughts, a drop in food production, melting of mountain glaciers and the loss of biodiversity.

Many countries are already experiencing the impacts of climate change today, such as the increasing intensity hurricanes, along with floods, droughts and the risk of water shortages.

"Latin-American and Caribbean countries only produce around five percent of global emissions, but we are in the front row facing the consequences of climate change and suffering the impacts of the phenomenon such as the recent storms Noel and Olga. These storms took over 100 lives in the Dominican Republic and generated losses of around US \$ 800 millions", said Omar Ramírez Tejada, Minister of the Environment of the Dominican Republic.

"We have a shared responsibility with all the countries of the planet, but not to the same degree," the Minister added. "There is an ecological and historical debt towards our countries and this has to be reflected in a new agreement that provides not only clean technology, but the necessary adaptation funding."

According to the UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer, the world can build on experience with the emerging carbon market over the last couple of years, in particular the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This mechanism supports sustainable development and adaptation in developing countries.

At the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali, the entry into operation of the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund was agreed, with financial resources coming from the CDM.

"In order to address climate change, we need a cleverly designed financial architecture, a plan that will spur green, low-carbon economic growth worldwide and enhanced adaptation, particularly in developing countries," Mr. de Boer said. "We need a new climate change Marshall plan that will reshape the world's future economy and redirect investment flows into a sustainable future."

"The carbon market is a key tool", the UN's top climate change official added. "It needs to be expanded because it can unleash significant financial flows from the North for green economic growth in the South"

"But it is also clear that the market cannot do the trick alone," he said. "We need additional financial and technical tools, because markets do not guarantee equal geographical distribution, do not provide support for national policies and do not provide financing for expensive mitigation options, such as carbon capture and storage."



About the UNFCCC

With 192 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 to date 176 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 36 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.

Note to journalists:

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