



Plenary Statement
Joke Waller-Hunter, Executive Secretary
WSSD, Johannesburg, 30 August 2002

Mr. President
Distinguished Ministers
Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman

1. Climate Change has an impact on Sustainable Development. Increased temperatures will alter local and global weather patterns. Indeed, the extreme weather situations that we are currently facing in Southern Africa, Asia and Europe— be they floods or drought - are consistent with model predictions. Climate is changing, and the challenge to limit and cut emissions and to adapt to climate changes already taking place is upon all of us, depending on the common but differentiated responsibilities of countries to take action.
2. For example, climate change affects drylands by influencing freshwater supplies, heat extremes, the humidity and temperature of soils, and agricultural production. It threatens biological diversity, on land and in the sea. As climate zones shift ecosystems are disrupted, and species that cannot migrate or adapt die. There will be direct and indirect impacts on health, such as increases in water- and vector-borne diseases. You may have recognized already the WEHAB themes, water, health, agriculture and biodiversity. Greatest challenge is in the energy field, where, when designing energy strategies in support of sustainable development, we must keep in mind that in the long term a transition to a decarbonized economy is possible and essential.
3. Addressing the many challenges of climate change –mitigation, as well as adaptation - will make contributions to achieving sustainable development as a whole. Conversely, moving closer to sustainable development will often help in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and usually increase the capacity of countries and people to adapt to climate change.
4. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, along with its sister conventions on Biodiversity and Desertification grew out of the 1992 Earth Summit. Now, after a decade, they provide coherent frameworks, as well as practical tools and actions for promoting and implementing sustainable development. For Climate Change, while keeping an open eye on long term developments and needs, the time has come to shift gears and to emphasize the implementation of existing agreements. It is in the implementation phase, when we get to action on the ground, that it becomes clear what science has already told us: that the three conventions often address the same resources and are better off by joint action. The three conventions work together on these synergies.

5. The Convention was signed in Rio de Janeiro, and has been in force since March 1994. Since then it has achieved near universal membership, and resulted in many concrete achievements: Parties gather and share information on greenhouse gas emissions, national policies and best practices. National communications have been provided by 121 Parties, including 85 developing countries. Many Parties have launched national strategies for limiting greenhouse gas emissions and for adapting to the expected impacts.
6. The ultimate objective of the Convention, as enshrined in Article 2 is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. As a first step, the Convention aimed to limit the 2000 emissions of developed countries at the 1990 level. In reality, emissions from OECD countries, as a whole, have increased since 1990. If the emissions from all Annex I Parties have dropped by some 5.6%, this is due to the decline in economic activity in economies in transition.
7. The Kyoto Protocol is a first step to actually reduce emissions. The Protocol has now been ratified by 87 countries, covering 37.1% of Annex I emissions – meeting one of the two triggers necessary for entry into force. The Kyoto Protocol, when it enters into force, offers the opportunity to begin the transition to low-carbon production and consumption patterns. The Kyoto Protocol also created the first truly new instrument for financing sustainable development since Rio: the Clean Development Mechanism. The CDM is meant to assist developing countries on their path towards sustainable development, while at the same time achieving cost-effective greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Mr. President,

8. Allow me to close with the following remarks:
 - The sources of climate change, and the ability of countries to adapt to Climate Change will all be affected by decision of this Summit on WEHAB. Conversely, the implementation of the Climate Convention, its Kyoto Protocol, and any future, related agreements will enhance the ability of the international community to implement Agenda 21, and the specific agreements of this Summit. I trust that the political momentum generated by this Summit will encourage a speedy entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.
 - Access to sustainable, climate-friendly energy supplies and technologies is key to make happen the shift to a low-carbon future – in developed and developing countries alike. Coupled with sustainable consumption and production patterns, the ultimate objective of the Climate Convention, and goals of this Summit can be met.

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