

**Thirty-second session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and  
the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice  
Bonn, 9 June 2010**

**Farewell statement at the closing plenary by Yvo de Boer  
Executive Secretary  
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Thank you, Robert and Mama, for providing me with this opportunity to say a personal farewell, rather than goodbye.

I would like to begin with a commendation and a vote of thanks to all of you: to the negotiators, to the NGOs, to the business community and to the international organizations represented here, and to my colleagues in the secretariat.

Trying to find balance in achieving the ultimate goal of the Convention sometimes feels like an irreconcilable challenge. I have had the honour of working for you and with you to achieve this. In some cases our relationship has lasted for almost four years; in others it is closer to 14. Philip Gwage, Harald Dovland, Bernaditas Muller, Bill Hare, Mohammad Al Sabban, Richard Kinley and Michael Zammit Cutajar are just a few of the many that have sought, in those 14 years or more, to find a way forward that reconciles the seemingly irreconcilable. I commend you for your efforts.

Fourteen years is a long time and we do not have another 14 to show the world that this process can deliver. To use World Cup imagery: we got a yellow card in Copenhagen and the referee's hand will edge towards the red one if we fail to deliver in Cancun and beyond.

Allow me to share with you a few personal reflections on how this process is evolving.

The first issue is the ultimate outcome that you are working towards. For many, that way forward is a legally binding agreement. This seems like a strong point of convergence, but you know that the words "legally binding" mean different things to different people. This is good, because it offers an opportunity to define the concept in much broader terms than internationally binding rich-country targets alone.

Legal rigour and ambition are, in and of themselves, not a sine qua non. Perhaps even the opposite. Rigorous sanctions combined with a lack of clarity on tools and incentives are more likely to engender caution than bravery. At the same time, everyone agrees that we need a broad package of incentives, credible reporting guidelines, measurement, reporting and verification in different forms, and market mechanisms that lead to real reductions. A good debate on rules and compliance can help bring us closer to an ambitious and credible regime.

I hope that I have not lost too many friends with this statement and will not lose more with what I am about to say now. Slapdash is easy, perfection takes time. We are on a long journey to address climate change. Yes, rich nations as a group are willing to commit to a –80 per cent goal for the middle of the century. Deciding what each and everyone of them will contribute to this requires more than one round of negotiations. We know that the current pledges from industrialized countries are not sufficient to bring us into the 25–40 per cent range that the IPCC projects in its most ambitious scenario, but we are on a longer journey. Having said that, we cannot afford to postpone more stringent action much longer. As things currently stand, we will not be able to halt the increase in global greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years. The 2°C world is in danger and, as a result, the door to a 1.5°C world is rapidly closing.

The second thing I hope for is more room for discussion in order to complement negotiations. Often the focus is on the interpretation of stated positions, rather than debate to understand the nature of underlying interests. Not all that long ago, the former German Environment Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, was heavily criticized when he said that the private sector would be the main source of international financial support. This was seen as passing off a public financial responsibility. What he actually meant was that the revenue generated through the auctioning of emission rights should be used to fund adaptation and green growth in developing countries. Robin Hood would have been proud of him. With hindsight, many of you probably are as well. This is one example of a case where conversation can help.

The third thing I look forward to is how this process will evolve. At the moment, we are still in a phase where political essentials need to be addressed, and this translates into calls for a Party-driven process. Both understandable and correct. It also raises three questions:

1. What is technical and what political?
2. What political decisions are needed to make technical work possible?
3. How should technical talks be effectively organized?

Even with an intensified meeting schedule we cannot, in a timely manner, finalize operational aspects of measurement, reporting and verification, national communications, technology support, finance and the rest. In addition, these are not issues that you need to finalize with 15,000 people in the room. A clear mandate to work in a smaller group and report back to the COP is enough. I used to hate Howard Bamsey's statements that our talks, like those of WTO, should be permanent. It sounded like being sentenced to solitary confinement in the Maritim Hotel for life. More permanent technical talks based on clear mandates are a notion that, I must admit, I am becoming increasingly sympathetic to. This is, however, only useful if we can effectively separate the political and the technical.

Party-driven is important. I really mean that. But the consequence should not be that we cut off our nose to spite our face. Many observer organizations and international organizations have important insights to offer and can help to implement the climate policies which Parties decide upon. Over the past few years, the United Nations system, for example, has worked hard on coherence and to “deliver as one” on your implementation agenda. At home, we would never seek to reform

agricultural policy without involving the Ministry of Agriculture. We would, however, give that Ministry clear terms of reference and ask it to report back to Cabinet. Asking observer organizations and international agencies to provide options for how they can deliver on your implementation priorities and what they need to deliver effectively is, I believe, important and is something that can be done while Parties remain firmly in the driving seat.

Over the past three years and 11 months I have had the honour and pleasure to work with the most dedicated group of people I have ever known. Secretariat staff members are immensely committed to the issue, the process and helping you to deliver. Close to 450 of these people are now on your payroll, working to implement your mandates. They embody much of the most expert knowledge on the substantive issues under negotiation and they are deeply in tune with the concerns and interests that need to be addressed to achieve successful advances. I hope that the secretariat can increasingly become the resource on which you draw to help you take the executive decisions that need to be made.

Sarah Palin recently referred to the work of the IPCC as “snake oil science”. This remark was symptomatic of a growing distrust with regard to the science that underpins climate policy. This is not something we can afford. I am very happy that a review of the IPCC’s working methods is taking place. If we undertake a broad review of the Convention in 2015, we will need a strong, credible and robust Fifth Assessment Report on which to base that review.

My final substantive remarks relate to the role of markets and market-based mechanisms. I know that certain other issues need to be resolved so that the debate on markets can begin in earnest. There must be clarity on domestic ambition in rich nations, which is not diluted by market-financed low-hanging fruit in developing nations. At the same time, green growth is a priority that all of you share. How, and how fast, green-growth goals are achieved depends to a very large extent on the operating environment that you provide to the private sector through regulation, tax policy and markets. I was very struck by a recent report indicating that green tax policy in rich nations is so fragmented, confusing and marginal that the private sector generally ignores it. There are, I believe, huge opportunities to ask the private sector what policy design is needed to achieve the greatest possible green growth, while safeguarding economic growth and poverty eradication.

The Copenhagen conference did not entirely deliver what anyone had expected or hoped for. There is a multitude of reasons for this. But, as Professor Al Sabban said only yesterday, we have experienced disappointments before and have advanced in spite of them. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again, the saying goes. I am confident that in Cancun you will not only try, but also succeed. The Cancun conference can provide an agreed architecture to deliver on adaptation, mitigation, technology, finance, capacity-building and REDD.

The national slogan of my country is: “unity in diversity”. I am confident that you can find that unity in diversity. You did it in Rio. You did it in Kyoto. You did it Bali. You will do it again in Cancun.

I thank you for your support, I thank you for your indulgence, I thank you for your friendship, but above all I thank you for your continued dedication.

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