



UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-19)
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Address by Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is clear that we cannot solve climate change without sustainable development. And we cannot develop sustainably without solving climate change. Sustainable development and climate change are intrinsically linked.

In 2010, Parties to the Climate Change Convention agreed the Cancun Agreements, which include a commitment to reduce emissions in order to keep the rise of global temperatures to below 2 degrees Celsius.

As per the convention, industrialized countries agree to take the lead in reducing emissions and have officialized their economy-wide emission reduction targets. Developing countries agreed to undertake voluntary nationally appropriate mitigation actions with financial and technological support and which will seek a deviation from business-as-usual by 2020.

Next to the mitigation dimension, the Cancun Agreements also include a comprehensive package to help developing countries deal with climate change.

The Cancun Agreements present a good springboard for moving forward some solutions for both. The agreements firmly anchor low-carbon development as the key direction for the future. Industrialized countries committed to develop low-carbon development strategies, whereas developing countries were encouraged to do so.

This may be testimony to the fact that increasingly, countries are realizing that changes need to be made in their own self-interest.

Many countries depend on expensive oil imports to power their economies and, at the same time, face a growing demand for oil going forward. Additionally, in the context of dwindling oil supplies, more and more countries are realizing that moving the world onto a low-carbon path is not about waging ideological battles between lobby groups.

Rather, the low-carbon pathway is critical because it simply doesn't make sense to rest all economic activity on the back of an overly expensive, finite system.

Acting on climate change and moving onto a more sustainable pathway most often holds win-win benefits, for example in terms of energy security. But win-win results will quickly benefit societies in other ways as well. This may be most easily visible in transport.

Traffic congestion causes the loss of money. In Shanghai, 10 percent of GDP is lost due to traffic jams. In Bangladesh, 1.5 percent of the country's GDP is lost as a result of congestion. Additionally, exhaust fumes from cars are detrimental to people's health. Investing into sustainable public transport systems will not only reduce emissions and health impacts, but also save money in the long term.

But transitions onto sustainable pathways across economic sectors can only happen successfully if the private sector is closely engaged.

In fact, the transition to sustainable growth and consumption that the world needs will be impossible if it is based on policies that do not involve strong cooperation with the private sector.

After all, it is the private sector that holds the essential funds, knowledge and technological capacities that any successful transition requires.

The Cancun Agreements offer many incentives that can support the transition to a sustainable future. The agreements also include avenues for private sector involvement.

Parties need to fully implement the Cancun Agreements and seize the opportunities they include. In this way, a good contribution towards a sustainable future will be made by implementing a growing list of solutions for climate change.

Thank you.

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