

**OPENING HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT**

**25<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION**

**ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COP 25)**

**REMARKS BY H.E. TIJJANI MUHAMMAD-BANDE,  
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I am honoured to address the 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP25). I commend Minister Schmidt for her able leadership in steering our deliberations. I thank the Government of Spain for its superb hosting of the Conference at short notice. I also thank the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for organizing it.

Excellencies,

Four years ago, world leaders adopted the only universally binding agreement to address the climate threat. This was a feat of multilateralism which began in embryonic form as a General Assembly Resolution. The normative development of climate action reached its pinnacle in Paris. By adopting the Paris Climate Agreement, we have committed to limit global warming.

We reached consensus to limit the rise in temperature to 2°C above pre-industrial levels and committed to pursuing efforts to hold it to 1.5°C.

Current trends of global emissions will cause further warming; and humans will face severe and extreme weather events. Recurrent climate disasters are becoming global and are of course borderless. It is already causing unprecedented human and socioeconomic costs. The progress made in reducing global poverty and improving people's lives and livelihoods are threatened.

Lands are being degraded. Forests, ecosystems and biodiversity are being lost. Our oceans are facing pollution, acidification and loss of coastal habitats.

Excellencies,

The latest World Meteorological Organization Report informs us that the global average temperature has already increased by 1.1°C since the pre-industrial period.

We know that commitments made in the context of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are not enough to keep global temperature at the agreed threshold. Failing to raise global ambition will put us on track for a 3 to 4°C temperature rise. This would be a catastrophe.

It is imperative that we deliver significant results now. Global emissions need to peak fast and to be immediately cut down significantly.

Indeed, science is unequivocal on the urgency to act, both at global and national levels.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), solutions still exist if we act urgently and boldly. Any delay will come at a high cost: to everyone, everywhere. Over the last 5 years, economic losses by extreme weather conditions were estimated at about 572 billion USD. This year, Hurricane Dorian alone caused an estimated 3.4 billion USD worth of damage to the Bahamas.

We need to take collective action, now. We must partner with leaders of cities and local authorities, business, NGOs, indigenous groups and civil society to take climate action at national and global levels.

We must address the mitigation gap and review our individual and collective NDCs to ensure that they are integrated into policies and budgets across all sectors.

Many countries demonstrated leadership at the Climate Action Summit by making commitments to scale up their NDCs by 2020 and achieve carbon neutrality by mid-century.

I encourage all other Member States to emulate them in order to ensure a better world for all.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

We need an economic model that provides for prosperity for all, while disassociating economic growth from environmental degradation.

To dramatically change our consumption and production patterns, we must invest in a structural shift in global energy, transport, food production, and urban systems.

Cities contribute more than 70% of global emission. We need to practice climate-conscious decision-making in terms of planning, transport, and energy efficiency, when it comes to our cities and urban infrastructure.

We need to build on the low-carbon energy sources which are developing around the world.

I am passionate about reaching zero hunger and have set this as a priority for the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. This involves not only production and consumption but solidarity as well. I am concerned about the one in four economically active women engaged in agriculture who bear the brunt of climate change. Their issues are our issues, and these must be mainstreamed in all we do. Women's issues cannot be an afterthought.

We need to improve our food systems so that they are sustainable and inclusive. This begins with climate-smart agricultural systems which can withstand climate shocks.

Investing in resilience and adaptation measures is crucial – particularly for the most vulnerable countries and communities. Some of these communities have already experienced devastating impacts of climate change and we know that further effects are imminent.

We must act now, to safeguard the lives, livelihoods, and homes of the people we serve.

Excellencies,

Implementing the Paris Agreement and ensuring a transition to resilient low carbon economies requires the mobilization of a broad range of public, private, international and domestic financial resources and investments.

Developed countries agreed to support climate action in developing countries by mobilizing 100 billion dollars per annum by the year 2020.

The deadline is fast approaching. I commend those who have made pledges in favour of climate finance. However, the funds remain low. We need to expedite the catalysation of all financing flows to meet the growing demands for both adaptation and mitigation.

There have been positive trends in green investments, as renewables are becoming much cheaper and more accessible. We must capitalise on this momentum. Climate action is not a philanthropic endeavour; it is also a means to boost economic growth, to create jobs and to improve livelihoods worldwide.

Climate action can lead to a net economic gain of 26 trillion dollars by 2030. According to the IRENA Global Energy Transformation report, energy transformation alone would result in 11.6 million jobs.

Excellencies,

The UN Climate Change Conference presents us with the opportunity to forge partnerships, deepen alliances, and build momentum at a crucial juncture on the road to 2030.

Both the September 2019 Climate Action Summit convened by the Secretary-General and the SDG Summit convened under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly offered us an opportunity to assess the level of progress achieved, and to mobilize support at the highest political level.

They have also set the pace for the Decade of Action and Delivery. We must work together to ensure that no one is left behind, especially those furthest behind.

I call on all world leaders to work to reverse the loss of biodiversity and to protect and restore nature.

According to the latest reports of the IPCC and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), biodiversity loss is accelerating dramatically; with one million species at risk of extinction in the coming decades.

Current trends in biodiversity and ecosystem will undermine the long-term resilience of the world's most vulnerable people as we are not achieving progress towards 80% of assessed SDG targets relating to poverty, hunger, health, water, climate and land.

In 2020, the UN General Assembly will convene an important Biodiversity Summit, ahead of COP15 in China. We are setting the stage, and I expect us to act.

Excellencies,

Our oceans are heavily affected by human activities, including pollution, overfishing and loss of coastal habitats and acidification.

The General Assembly is convening the second Ocean Conference in Lisbon, in June 2020. The Conference aims to galvanize multilateral action to reverse current negative trends and protect the health of our oceans and livelihoods.

I will convene a high-level dialogue to assess the progress made in the fight against desertification, land degradation and drought. It is alarming that every year, the world loses 24 billion tons of fertile soil. Action is needed to restore degraded land.

These seminal events will provide you with the platform to invest in nature-based solutions that contribute to reducing emissions, increasing resilience and improving livelihoods. These actions result in crucial co-benefits in the overall strategy to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Excellencies,

The United Nations will mark its seventy-fifth anniversary in 2020. As always, it remains committed to ensuring peace and development, and the protection of human rights throughout the world.

We are duty-bound to eradicate poverty, address inequalities, tackle climate change, prevent conflict, sustain peace, and uphold human rights in the name of the people we serve.

As we celebrate seventy-fifth anniversary of the UN, we must strengthen our rules-based international order. Clearly, the solutions to our current challenges, including the climate emergency, will only be found through collective action and equality of voice.

Excellencies,

The responsibility for solutions falls upon each and every one of us here. To ignore the impacts of climate change would be to fail the peoples of the world, and future generations.

Neither a small island developing State, nor a large Member State, can hold back the wave of climate change alone. We need to take collective action.

Risk reduction measures have the potential to safeguard up to 280 million people at risk of displacement due to sea level rise. It is our decision: to go down with this ship or to change course immediately. This is the time to act.

We are defined by our actions, and *every* day we have a moral obligation to take action in favour of the next generation and beyond. I am confident we will rise to this challenge.