

Ban voices hope ahead of final leg of negotiations on climate change treaty



3 October 2009 – The frozen positions preventing governments from making progress in negotiations for a new greenhouse gas emissions treaty are beginning to thaw, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on Saturday in a series of speeches in Copenhagen, aimed at cranking up the pressure on nations to finalize an ambitious new pact at a conference in the city this December.

In an address to the University of Copenhagen, Mr. Ban highlighted the success of the largest climate change summit in history, held at the United Nations last week and attended by 101 heads of State and government.

“Climate change – and the imperative to reach agreement at Copenhagen – is now at the top of the international agenda. This is where it belongs,” he said. “Tackling climate change can set us on the road to peace and prosperity for all.”

Mr. Ban said that the summit helped “turn up the heat” on world leaders and focus their attention on the urgent need for action, especially on finalizing a deal on global greenhouse gas emissions when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

“Leaders voiced broad support for setting a long-term goal to limit global temperature increase to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius,” said Mr. Ban. “World leaders acknowledged the scientific imperative to cut global greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050.”

He said that most importantly, they all recognized that a deal in Copenhagen was possible and showed a keen willingness to achieve the goal.

Underscoring the importance of financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, Mr. Ban said that many leaders rallied around a proposal for providing \$100 billion per year over the next decade.

In his address to the XIII Olympic Congress, which was meeting in Copenhagen this week to vote on the host for the 2016 Summer Games, Mr. Ban noted that their sporting partnership with the UN extends across the world.

"The Olympic movement is making great strides in helping to protect the environment. The fight against climate change urgently needs your support," he said in the message, in which he congratulated Rio de Janeiro for winning the bid to host the 2016 Olympics.

"It carries out scores of projects to help refugees, educate children and protect our planet," said Mr. Ban. "But there is perhaps no area where we cooperate more closely than in protecting our global environment."

Welcoming the IOC's agenda for Sport and Environment and the concept of 'Green Games,' he pointed to last summer's Beijing Olympics that set new records with more than a fifth of all energy used coming from renewable sources.

"I am pleased that Vancouver and London, next year and in 2012, are committed to greening the games they will host," he said. "In a few weeks, an Olympics of another sort will take place right here in Copenhagen."

Sealing a deal on climate change will take an Olympian effort, said Mr. Ban. "We are all running a race against time."

Last month's summit at the UN laid a solid foundation for this effort when world leaders unanimously called for a deal, he said.

"Tackling climate change can set us on the road to peace and prosperity for all, but half-measures or business-as-usual will set the stage for catastrophe," he warned.

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