

Ban urges rapid progress in negotiations on new climate change pact



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the opening of the World Climate Conference 3 in Geneva

3 September 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, having just witnessed the “sobering reality” of climate change on a visit to the melting glaciers of the Arctic, urged countries to make rapid progress on negotiations for a new international pact to reduce global warming.

“It has been said that the Arctic is our barometer – the canary in the coal mine. But it is much more than that. Changes in the Arctic are accelerating global climate change,” Mr. Ban **told the World Climate Conference** in Geneva.

Standing on rapidly melting polar ice just two days ago, the Secretary-General had witnessed the impacts of climate change on icebergs and glaciers, and was informed by scientists that global warming is altering the Arctic faster than any other area.

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Speaking to reporters yesterday in Svalbard, Norway, he said the visit was “an alarming experience” and one which gave him a strong sense of the power of nature, as well as vulnerability.

“I witnessed the sober reality of change with my own eyes,” he stated today, recalling his visit. “The Arctic is warming faster than anywhere else on Earth. It may be virtually ice-free by 2030.”

He told participants at the conference that instead of reflecting heat, the Arctic is absorbing it as the sea ice diminishes, thus speeding up global warming. In addition, increased melt from the Greenland ice-cap threatens to raise sea levels and alter the flow of the Gulf Stream that keeps Europe warm.

“Our foot is stuck on the accelerator and we are heading towards an abyss,” Mr. Ban said, urging nations to not waste time and ‘seal the deal’ on a new agreement to slash greenhouse gas emissions ahead of the United Nations climate change conference slated for December in Copenhagen.

He added that adaptation deserves as much attention as mitigation in the ongoing climate negotiations.

“Scientists have been accused for years of scaremongering. But the real scaremongers are those who say we cannot afford climate action – that it will hold back economic growth. They are wrong. Climate change could spell widespread economic disaster,” he warned, adding that the answer lies in ‘green’ and sustainable growth.

The Secretary-General pointed out that despite the evidence, there has only been limited progress in the climate negotiations.

“We have 15 negotiating days left until Copenhagen. We cannot afford limited progress. We need rapid progress.”

Specifically, he called for action in five key areas. Measures to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change must be taken, in particular assisting the poorest and most vulnerable nations, as well as setting

mid-term mitigation targets by developed countries, recognizing the need for consensus on an upper limit for temperature rise.

Also important is for developing countries to act to slow the growth of their emissions, and to receive predictable financial and technological support to do so.

Lastly, all institutional arrangements and governance structures under a new climate regime must address the needs of developing countries, he stated.

"We know what the problem is. We know what we must do. Now is the time to do it. Now is our moment.

"We need a deal in Copenhagen that will enable deep cuts in emissions, that promotes green growth, and that will provide the resources and structures needed for adaptation," said the Secretary-General, adding that "the cost of inaction today will be far greater than the cost of action tomorrow, not just [for] future generations, but for this generation too."

Mr. Ban later noted, at a **press conference** in Geneva, that the UN will convene a high-level climate change summit in New York on 22 September.

"I expect candid and constructive discussions. I expect serious bridge building. I expect strong outcomes," he stated. "I am telling people today, and I will tell world leaders in New York, that we must seize the moment."

Also today at the World Climate Conference, more than 2,000 climate scientists, experts and decision-makers established a Global Framework for Climate Services to strengthen production, availability, delivery and application of science-based climate prediction and services.

Michel Jarraud, the head of the World Meteorological Organization (**WMO**), which is convening the Conference, said today was a landmark day for making climate services available to all people. "But the work has really just begun," he added.

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