



Press Conference

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PRESS CONFERENCE BY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF UNITED NATIONS

FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

With 17 days left before the opening of the Copenhagen Climate Conference, Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said today that there was no doubt in his mind that the event would be a success.

Recent reports that Copenhagen had “failed even before it started” were “simply wrong”, he said at a Headquarters press conference this afternoon, adding that new commitments and pledges from both industrialized and developing countries were coming in almost every day now. This week alone, Brazil and the Republic of Korea had announced ambitious national plans to reduce emissions in a very significant way, while Japan had just tabled a generous offer of up-front financing to help developing countries with mitigation and adaptation. The political leadership that so many countries had promised during the September United Nations High-level Event on Climate Change was alive and well, and would lead to success.

An agreement in Copenhagen must comprise three points, he said. First, “it must record, in black and white, individual targets of industrialized countries to reduce emissions”, a list that must include the United States. Secondly, an agreement must provide clarity on the scope and extent of engagement by developing countries, especially major developing economies. Thirdly, Copenhagen must deliver clarity on short- and long-term financing to support developing countries on mitigation and adaptation.

He said that, to his mind, rich countries must put at least \$10 billion on the table to kick-start immediate action. They must also list what each country would provide and how funds would be raised to deliver very large, stable and predictable financing in the future without having constantly to re-negotiate commitments every few years. “If the lungs of the world collapse, the rest will die,” he warned, pointing to strong support for action on the pressing need for international cooperation to preserve and sustain forests. Governments must also agree on a tight deadline to finalize all parts of that agreement into a legal treaty. Long-drawn-out processes were no longer acceptable. For all those reasons, Copenhagen would be a turning point where talking about action would stop and action would begin. “We need a last push, and this can be done,” he added.

Asked what was “already on the table” on the eve of the conference, Mr. de Boer said that, on the whole, “the picture actually looks pretty good, given the fact that Copenhagen is still to begin”. All industrialized countries, with the exception of the United States, had already come up with their offers of targets. The Russian Federation had, in fact, increased its targets and a number of others had indicated they could do the same if an international agreement was reached. Europe, for instance, having set a minus-20 target, had said it could go to minus-30 if an agreement was in place. In addition, many developing countries already had national climate change and energy strategies in place, including China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

On the issue of finance, he said the picture was “a lot less clear”. Japan had come up with a promising offer to provide financial support, and European countries had indicated their support for a long-term figure of \$100 billion per year and their willingness to contribute their fair share towards that goal. However, the meaning of “a

fair share” ultimately depended on the total amount, he pointed out, adding that Europe had also indicated its willingness to contribute to short-term financing needs.

What was missing were more ambitious targets from industrialized countries, which were needed “to get us into an emission-reduction range that science tells us will help us avoid severe impacts,” he said in response to another question. Also needed was “a good debate” on how the voluntary action that developing countries intended to take at the national level could be reflected in the Copenhagen agreement. Much more clarity was also needed on the question of “who will be contributing what”.

Asked about the role of the private sector, he said companies in various parts of the world had been crying for Government guidance that would drive their investment decisions. The dip in energy-sector investments resulting from the global economic crisis had resulted in a drop in emissions, but the big question remained what would happen when those investments picked up again. Would they be guided by ambitious targets or by a lack of clarity?

To a question about whether the Copenhagen outcome would be binding, the Executive Secretary said he expected to see an agreement on the list of individual rich-country targets for 2020, which would be turned into a treaty text six months later. He added that he did not expect any self-respecting Head of State or Government to back away from such commitments.

Responding to numerous questions about the role of the United States, he said that country was not the only success factor for Copenhagen, yet it was clear that “nobody has any appetite for a second bite at the climate change cherry without the United States”, which must be part of any Copenhagen agreement. It was understood that the United States had a different starting point from those of States parties to the Kyoto Protocol, but people expected it to make an effort comparable to those of other industrialized nations.

President Barack Obama’s Administration had shown incredible courage and leadership on climate change and wanted a deal in Copenhagen, he continued, stressing that he was confident that the President of the United States could arrive in Copenhagen with a target and a financial commitment. President Obama had been reported in the media as saying that if he felt Copenhagen was leading to success, and that negotiations were taking place in good faith, he would like to be there.

He recalled that President Obama had proposed targets in his election campaign, there had been targets in the legislation recently passed by the United States House of Representatives, and there were targets in the legislation presented to the Senate. All of those targets were very ambitious, and that represented a major change of direction in the course of the United States economy. The country could play a strong leadership role once those targets had been written into the Copenhagen agreement.

In response to several other questions, he said he had never seen climate change so high on the international agenda, with so many world leaders committed to reaching agreement. Some 40 ministers from various countries had gathered at a ministerial preparatory meeting earlier this week, where he had sensed a very strong desire “to get the deal done”. The focus in Copenhagen would be on the substance, on trying to ensure that real action began on the ground the day after the Conference ended.

Asked about the time frame for concluding a treaty on climate change, he said he did not know how much detail would still remain to be settled after the Conference. While hoping that those details could be settled within a six-month time frame, it was important to remember that the Copenhagen process was about fundamentally changing the direction of world economic growth. World leaders would do that at the speed with which they felt comfortable. Yet, that assessment was based on the political will demonstrated by those leaders, and on their desire to use the current economic crisis as a stimulus to change direction.

Asked to comment on reports that African countries would walk out of the Conference if their expectations concerning assistance to developing countries were not met, Mr. de Boer said there was no official number yet, so he did not know whether or not it was too low. However, if the international community succeeded in Copenhagen, there would be immediate action to support the greening of economic growth in developing countries, to transfer

technology, to help those countries adapt to the impact of climate change, and to build institutional capacity. Those were four issues that he would be reluctant to walk away from.