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In Cancún, UN chief makes impassioned plea for global agreement on climate change



7 December 2010 – [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today made an impassioned plea for agreement at the United Nations climate change conference in Cancún, telling delegates that further delay threatened the health of the planet, the global economy and the well-being of the human race.

“I am deeply concerned that our efforts have been insufficient ... that despite the evidence ... and many years of negotiation ... we are still not rising to the challenge,” Mr. Ban [told](#) the high-level segment of the conference, which began in the Mexican coastal city on 29 November.

“We are here for a reason: to protect people and the planet from uncontrolled climate change. To do that, we need to make progress – in these global negotiations and through national actions each of you takes in your countries to curb emissions [of harmful gases] and increase resilience.

“The longer we delay, the more we will pay – economically ... environmentally ... and in human lives,” Mr. Ban said.

He recalled that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that global emissions of greenhouse gases need to peak within the next decade, before decreasing substantially, if the goal of limiting the average temperature rise to two degrees above pre-industrial levels is to be achieved.

The Secretary-General pointed out that a final agreement on all issues may not be immediately possible, but stressed that there has to be progress on several fronts at the Cancún conference.

“You can take significant decisions here in Cancún on forests ... on adaptation ... on technology ... and on the creation of a new fund for long-term climate financing. You also need to make progress on mitigation ... on anchoring your national commitments ... on accountability and transparency ... and increasing clarity on the future of the Kyoto Protocol,” he said.

Under the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), industrialized countries committed themselves to a reduction of greenhouse gases. The Protocol expires in 2012 and a replacement arrangement is under negotiation.

Mr. Ban said that results can only be achieved through action by every country, emphasizing that the adverse effects of climate change on the planet will not wait for negotiations to be concluded.

“Science warns that the window of opportunity to prevent uncontrolled climate change will soon close. The world – particularly the poor and vulnerable – cannot afford the luxury of waiting for the perfect agreement. We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good,” said Mr. Ban.

He highlighted some of the initiatives that the UN had embarked on to address climate change. They include the REDD Plus scheme, which seeks to create incentives to reverse the trend of deforestation and conserve forests’ carbon stocks, and the coalition of UN entities working with the private sector and governments to achieve universal energy access and significant cuts in energy intensity in the next two decades.

“My High-Level Advisory Group on Climate Financing concluded that it is challenging but possible for developed countries to realize their goal of raising \$100 billion dollars a year by 2020 to support climate action in developing countries. I encourage parties [to UNFCCC] to use the Group’s findings as inputs to your climate finance negotiations,” Mr. Ban said.

On climate change and the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), Mr. Ban said that extreme poverty cannot be eradicated without addressing the rising intensity and unpredictability of weather trends associated with climate change.

“Now, more than ever, we need to connect the dots between climate ... poverty ... energy ... food ... water. These issues cannot be addressed in isolation,” he said.

He recalled the story of a teenage boy he met in Bangladesh who had survived the floods that inundated his village, as mud flows cascading down deforested land nearly washed away his home.

“As the flood waters retreated, cholera struck. He survived. Many did not,” said the Secretary-General.

While in Cancún, Mr. Ban has meetings with President Felipe Calderón of Mexico, as well as with representatives of the [African Group](#), the European Union, the “Group of 77” developing countries and China, and the United States.

Cancun

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