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UN names Costa Rican as new climate change chief



Christiana Figueres, new Executive Secretary for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

17 May 2010 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today **appointed** Christiana Figueres of Costa Rica to lead United Nations efforts to combat climate change.

She will take the reins of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**) from Yvo de Boer, who announced that he was stepping down to pursue new opportunities to advance progress on the issue in the private sector and academia.

“Ms. Figueres is an international leader on strategies to address global climate change and brings to this position a passion for the issue, deep knowledge of the stakeholders and valuable hands-on experience with the public sector, non-profit sector and private sector,” Mr. Ban’s spokesperson, Martin Nesirky, said in announcing the decision.

She has been involved in climate change negotiations since 1995, serving as a negotiator for both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol.

Ms. Figueres founded the Center for Sustainable Development in the Americas (CSDA), a non-profit think tank for climate change policy and capacity building, and has both worked on and served on the boards of non-governmental organizations intimately involved in climate change issues.

“There is no task that is more urgent, more compelling or more sacred than that of protecting the climate of our planet for our children and grandchildren,” she said,

upon hearing that she was appointed as the new Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC.

The news comes five months after the Copenhagen Accord was reached at last December's UN conference in the Danish capital.

That non-binding pact aims to jump-start immediate action on climate change and guide negotiations on long-term action, pledging to raise \$100 billion annually by 2020. It also includes an agreement to working towards curbing global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius and efforts to reduce or limit emissions.

The Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that to stave off the worst effects of climate change, industrialized countries must slash emissions by 25 to 40 per cent from 1990 levels by 2020, and that global emissions must be halved by 2050.

The next round of high-level global talks on climate change will be held later this year in Cancun, Mexico.

When announcing his resignation earlier this year, Mr. de Boer said, "I have always maintained that while governments provide the necessary policy framework, the real solutions must come from business."

Countries did not reach a clear legal agreement in Copenhagen, but, he noted, "the political commitment and sense of direction toward a low-emissions world are overwhelming. This calls for new partnerships with the business sector and I now have the chance to help make this happen."

With 194 Parties, UNFCCC has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which has been ratified by 190 of the UNFCCC parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments.

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