

**BRIEFING STATEMENT OF
UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOYS ON CLIMATE CHANGE TO THE
HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY INDEPENDENCE
AND GLOBAL WARMING**

Introduction

Chairman Markey and distinguished committee members, this hearing is extremely important and could not be timelier given Monday's historic High-Level Event on Climate Change at the United Nations, this past weekend's important decision to accelerate implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and President Bush's gathering on energy security and climate change this week. Today's briefing is a welcome opportunity to discuss what has happened at the UN and what this means as we look toward Bali in December.

In order to prepare Monday's High Level Meeting at the UN, the Secretary-General asked us to engage with Heads of State and Government to help elevate governments' consideration of these issues. From Brasília to Beijing and Pretoria to Port Moresby, we have held consultations with more than thirty countries in six continents. These discussions with key stakeholders not only helped to shape Monday's event, but also provided a clearer picture of the global politics of combating climate change.

We now have a common understanding. To mitigate the effects of global warming and to protect the environment for our children, and our children's children, we need strong leadership and action. It is not too late. Acting on climate change can be consistent with the growth and development aspirations of both developed and developing nations.

The state of Climate Change and responses to it

The science is indisputable – global warming is real, and it is affecting people around the world. According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the evidence is now unequivocal that human activities are affecting the earth's climate. Human activities are causing glaciers to melt, and sea levels to rise, putting water and food resources at risk.

For one-third of the world's population living in dry lands, especially those in Africa, changing weather patterns threaten to exacerbate desertification, drought and food insecurity. At the same time, several low-lying island states are in danger of disappearing.

The IPCC concluded that measures exist and are affordable. Now a political response based on science is needed. Since the Kyoto Protocol's targets expire in 2012, there is growing consensus that a new agreement must be in place in time. World leaders need to push the talks forward. A great opportunity will be at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference in Bali from 3-14 December.

The role of the United Nations

Monday's event at the UN saw the largest-ever group of world leaders meeting to discuss climate change. Eighty Heads of State and Government were present, and more than 150 countries were represented.

They were joined by local government, civil society and business leaders, demonstrating that everyone has a role to play. The discussions were fruitful, and the desire for action was strong. There was a clear call from world leaders for a breakthrough on climate change in Bali and a major political commitment to achieve that.

Throughout the day, leaders indicated that we need to step up the pace. There was recognition of the need for an inclusive process on a new international climate change deal at Bali. This process needs to cover all aspects of the solution to climate change: adaptation, emissions reductions, carbon sequestration in land forests, climate-friendly technologies and the necessary financial aspects.

The Secretary-General's event was not meant as an occasion for negotiations. But it did express the political will of world leaders to tackle climate change through the most appropriate global venue, the United Nations.

Leaders emphasised that any solution has to be equitable and based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and any action requirement has to be commensurate with the respective capabilities. Nevertheless, there was also broad based agreement on the need for much deeper emission reductions by industrialised countries, which must continue to take the lead in this respect. It was encouraging to hear many of the leaders from the industrialised countries themselves expressing their willingness to do so.

Climate change is a major global challenge – not just because its cause and effects transcend national boundaries, but also because it requires cooperation and coordination by all parties. These are precisely the kinds of issues, for which the UN was established. Local, national and regional initiatives are welcome and can complement but cannot replace the global effort required.

The UN has assisted in bringing the best science, the likely impacts and the probable costs to the attention of governments and the general public through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It is through the World Meteorological Organization that the world is able to obtain much of the data that is needed in the study of climate change. And it is through the United Nations Environment Programme and other agencies that action has been taken on environmental concerns, such as the phase out of ozone depleting substances.

The UN has been central to the successful results of the Montreal Protocol in reversing ozone depletion. Last Friday, on the 20th Anniversary of the Montreal Protocol, the 191 Parties signed a landmark agreement to freeze production of ozone-damaging hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), an ozone depleting substance that is also an extremely potent greenhouse gas, in 2013. Without this agreement, experts estimate that the production and consumption of HCFCs would have doubled by 2015, adding to the twin challenges of ozone depletion and climate change. It is encouraging that all participating countries agreed on legally binding targets to phase out this substance.

Moreover, development cooperation is essential to the management of the environment and natural resources. The UN has helped bring clean water to communities, encouraged land use choices that spur sustainable development and helped achieve major gains in energy efficiency around the world.

Finally, the Framework Convention on Climate Change has established a legal framework for action and for global cooperation. Through the Kyoto Protocol's development mechanism, important private investments are being channelled into emission reduction actions in developing countries.

The role of the US and the International Community

There is no time to lose in addressing the warming of our earth's atmosphere. Business as usual cannot carry on. The United States has been the indispensable leader of the world in addressing many global challenges over the last several decades. U.S. leadership in the area of climate change is essential, not only because it is a big emitter of greenhouse gases, but because the U.S. is on the cutting edge of developing technological solutions and bringing them to the global market.

The U.S. has fully participated in the UN Climate Change Convention and in the preparation of the IPCC reports. Specific and bold steps must be taken. Collaboration and cooperation must now be the guiding principles of a global response. On climate change, no one can go it alone.

Conclusion: the way forward

Currently, human activity is compromising human security. Policy choices made in Washington, California, Texas, Beijing or Brasília have real implications for people in Tuvalu, Barbados and Bangladesh. As stated by the Secretary-General in the Chair's Summary of the event, "Action is possible now and it makes economic sense. The cost of inaction will far outweigh the cost of early action."

A successful global response to climate change depends on the participation of all countries. But while climate change is affecting everyone, it will hit the poorest and the most vulnerable the hardest. Climate change should be addressed in a way that is fair and that meets the economic, social and environmental concerns – the three dimensions of sustainable development – of communities in a holistic manner.

Mitigation and adaptation measures must be implemented hand-in-hand. In the long-term, technology holds great promise for reducing the cost of addressing global warming, but there is a need for greatly increased investment in research, development and deployment.

A global challenge is before us, but there are clear actionable steps. Just as the Governments in Montreal acted decisively last week, we must seize the opportunity to deal with the climate change issue in a comprehensive manner now.

Thank you for your time. We welcome your questions.