

24 September 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on “The Future in Our Hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge
of Climate Change”**

Mr. Secretary General,
Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,

As the Secretary General stressed in his opening statement in this very Assembly, over 20 years ago, world leaders told us that climate change was real; that we had to make changes and sacrifices - that we could no longer live at the expense of the planet and future generations.

Since then, we have to ask: have we done enough to tackle climate change? Obviously not! And that is why we have gathered here again today.

The science is clear; it is unequivocal. We know how the impact of global warming will change all of our lives if we do not act decisively. Recent events in Africa serve as a stark reminder.

I therefore commend the Secretary General for convening this unprecedented High-level meeting.

Excellencies,

With the political will we can overcome the threat of climate change, and doing so exercise visionary leadership on the world stage.

Beyond the serious consequences, there is an ethical dimension to climate change. Beyond the impact on ecosystems, economics and communities everywhere, we have a moral obligation to our fellow human beings.

To tackle this challenge the United Nations, and the General Assembly, should play a central role. That is why, I chose “Responding to Climate Change” as the theme for the General Debate.

We must build on the outcome of the General Assembly’s first thematic debate on climate change in August, today’s event and the coming General Debate. These discussions can serve as a guide for the negotiations in Bali, but also for other remedies.

Because, and according to the IPCC, to be sustainable our broader adaptive strategies should take into account the full environmental, economic and social affects of climate change.

There is a common understanding that the solutions must be global: that each nation, each city, each town and community have a stake. Your participation today, and in the general debate confirms this.

And because climate change and our response will affect every aspect of human activity and our environment the United Nations is the appropriate global forum to take action to address it.

Indeed, there has been no shortage of action. There are many initiatives this organization has taken since the Framework Convention on Climate Change came into force. But by themselves these alone are not enough in the absence of a binding global agreement.

What we need now is a stocktake; a clear vision of the way forward; and, a strategy to get us there together.

That is why I would like to propose creating a comprehensive roadmap to guide the way forward for the UN system and its Member States: to outline the instruments we have and structures necessary to address climate change.

This process should also draw in the expertise of civil society, business and the academy – to create a global movement, a true global consensus for action.

Therefore, at the beginning of the New Year, I intend to convene a thematic debate, to begin to forge this consensus; and drawing on this broader expertise elaborate the steps the UN family should take to enhance its contribution and coherence. The General Assembly could then consider the full range of policy implications.

We all agree that climate change is unquestionably the biggest challenge facing humanity in the 21st century.

There is no more time to waste. The momentum we have now must not be lost.

Thank you.