

12 December 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Side Event on 'Climate Change and Children'**

Excellencies,  
Ladies, gentlemen and children,

I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Greece, Ambassador John Mourikis, and Hilde Johnson the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for inviting me to address this meeting.

I would also like to commend Greece for making 'climate change and human security' the principle theme during their Chairmanship of the Human Security Network.

Excellencies,

Whatever kind of action is taken, climate change it is going to have a profound affect on many aspects of all of our lives.

It will pose a direct challenge to our capacity to provide a wide range of universally recognized rights, such as the right to live in peace, with the security from hunger, adequate housing, health, and water.

Climate change is going to become an issue of social justice and human security.

When we talk about addressing climate change through the abstract concepts like mitigation and adaptation, we should never forget the human dimension.

While climate change will affect everyone, it will affect the poorest and the most insecure groups the most.

Children are among the most vulnerable in all countries and societies. They are likely to suffer the most from climate change.

We all have a common responsibility for their security.

I am very encouraged that UNICEF has recognized these issues and is committed to taking action in coordination with other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

It is high time that we begin to make the world more climate proof, especially to protect our children.

We therefore need to think practically about what can be done to alleviate the suffering that climate change could reap for millions of people: from increased hunger, malnutrition, water shortages, floods, droughts, and diseases, which could be triggered by extreme weather, loss of livelihoods, and displacement.

The brochure UNICEF will present today not only analyses the situation of children in relation to climate change, it offers concrete solutions.

For example, because children are more likely to be victims during natural disasters we have to be better prepared and reduce risks through better contingency planning.

This has implications for future disbursements from the Central Emergency Response Fund and national disaster management policies.

We also know that – due to climate change - disease is spreading as weather patterns alter and temperature shifts. So we have to do more to halt the transmission of diseases through education and preventative treatment.

We know that climate change is expected to exacerbate the quantity and quality of water supplies - without action by 2020 between 75 and 250 million people in Africa alone will face increased water shortages - so we have to manage this valuable commodity more carefully, more efficiently.

There are other practical ways of making an impact to raise the profile of these issues.

One of the most visible has been UNICEF’s “Billion Tree Campaign” that has been made possible through the participation of children in youth and education programmes throughout the world.

It is of utmost importance that the promotion of different approaches towards climate change be a collaborative effort bringing together Member States, international organizations, the UN family, businesses and non-governmental organization.

Only by acting together can we achieve meaningful results.

These themes will be at the forefront of the General Assembly’s High-level debate entitled ‘Addressing Climate Change: the United Nations and the World at Work’, on 11 and 12 of February 2008.

Again in early April, the Assembly will consider these themes as part of at High-level debate on how to accelerate progress to achieve the Millenium Development Goal by 2015.

These and other forthcoming events on human trafficking and human security are further opportunities for us to consider how to make the 'world fit for children'.

Excellencies,

I am very heartened that children have a voice in this event.

It is essential that we listen and let their message resonate.

Children have an amazing imagination and appreciation for humanity. Sometimes they are able to see more clearly than us grown-ups what the future holds. So let us pay attention to their concerns.

As I mentioned yesterday at the opening of the commemorative event on children, I was a delegate at the Special Session on children in 2002.

When I returned this year as President of the General Assembly, I began the session with a video-message made by children from my country; because, there is nothing more important than the future of our children and young people.

They are the next generation of leaders.

Thank you very much for your attention.

May I wish you all a very productive meeting.