

11 February 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
on “Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World
at Work”**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Mayor of the City of New York, Michael Bloomberg; the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for climate change, H.E. former President of Chile Ricardo Lagos; as well as, all our distinguished panelists and guests to this special thematic debate of the General Assembly – entitled, 'Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work'.

I invite all of you to give thoughtful consideration to the unique perspectives we will hear today so that we can formulate a clearer understanding of the actions necessary to address climate change comprehensively.

Excellencies,
We must continue to support the ongoing negotiating process that was launched in Bali. It is also clear that we should focus on immediate practical action.

The General Assembly has a key role to play; we have a unique global composition, and cover the broadest range of social and economic issues. However, in order to most effectively contribute we must respond to two specific challenges.

The first challenge we face is to create more effective partnerships.

The UN cannot address climate change alone. No one can. The causes are multiple and complex. Inevitably we need as many actors as possible to get involved and unite in order to address its affects.

What is needed is a common vision, a global consensus, a global alliance for action, shared by individuals, the media, lawmakers, business leaders, governments, regional organisations and ultimately the global community embodied in the UN. Only then will we have a chance to tackle this enormous challenge to our way of life.

The United Nations should be at the forefront – reaching out, facilitating new and strengthening existing partnerships. We need partners from all sectors and constituencies, particularly the

private sector. We are fortunate, that today, many of these stakeholders are represented on the panels or are participating in the debate as special guests.

Second, we must define a global strategy for the United Nations to respond to the many different challenges climate change poses.

Climate change has implications across a broad range of policy issues from the environment, health, security, and migration, to energy, good governance and economic development.

Many steps have already been taken by the United Nations and its Member States. We now must concentrate on streamlining the UN system's many programmes and focusing resources where they will have greatest effect.

We can achieve this by defining a simple, straightforward and effective global strategy around which all parts of the United Nations system can rally. Our goal must be to deliver more than the sum of our parts.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for beginning to take this work forward. We must bear in mind however, that the system has ongoing commitments to support the UNFCCC process, to implement existing agreements and to support Member States own initiatives.

Excellencies,

As the chief deliberative policy organ of the United Nations the General Assembly has an important contribution to make towards a global strategy for action and promoting more effective partnerships.

During the General Debate last September many world leaders spoke passionately about the need for a step change in our approach and attitude towards climate change.

It is clear that the benefits of prompt action far outweigh the cost of inaction - by as much as twenty times.

The Stern Review also concludes that prompt action to stabilize emissions at acceptable levels could still require around 1 per cent of global GDP, or US\$ 500 billions per annum of 'green' investment.

Climate change however, is not just an environmental issue; it is a sustainable development issue.

Our response must be seen in the context of our broader international development agenda, in particular achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

We need to reconcile the economic aspirations of developing countries with the necessity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The challenge is to find policies, instruments and technologies

that can create low-carbon economies which promote sustainable economic growth and provide incentives for individuals to change behaviour.

The links with ongoing United Nations initiatives on Financing for Development, achieving the Millennium Development Goals and improving international environmental governance are clear.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

During this thematic debate, we have a real opportunity to openly discuss solutions for a more sustainable future. Ultimately, we will have to answer some demanding questions of ourselves.

As individuals are we willing enough to change our lifestyles and patterns of behaviour? Are Member States, business and households investing enough in energy efficiency and new technologies to curb emissions? And, globally are we making adequate efforts to adapt to the long-term affects of climate change?

Today, I am pleased to announce that we have done our small part. Our thematic debate is carbon neutral. We have off-set the carbon emissions at United Nations headquarters during the debate, including emissions from the air travel to bring panelists and guests to New York.

We did this by supporting a Clean Development Mechanism approved eco-friendly power plant in Andra Pradesh, India. The project reduces carbon emissions by creating a market in renewable fuels - agricultural waste that would otherwise rot or burn producing carbon.

Finally, I would also like to thank our sponsors - the United Nations Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Citigroup Foundation - for their generous support so that this debate could happen.

Our first panel will focus on partnerships with business, civil society, regional and local government; the second this afternoon, on how best to get the various parts of the United Nations system working together to deliver maximum impact.

I'm very much looking forward to a frank, inclusive and open exchange of views among all stakeholders during the discussions.

Thank you very much for your attention.