

9 July 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Diplo-Foundation Small States – Climate Change Diplomacy
Meeting**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all allow me to thank Ambassador Borg and Ambassador Maurer, as well as the Diplo-Foundation and Unitar for providing us with this opportunity to discuss how we can improve the training available on climate change for the diplomatic community.

As you all know, climate change has been the flagship of this sixty second session of the General Assembly. During the discussions we lead throughout the year, it has become clear that the effects of climate change are complex and multifaceted, and will change many aspects of the way we all live.

I am therefore convinced that it is our responsibility to focus on as many aspects as possible of these threats. It is why the General Assembly has explored questions as different as: how to foster private-public partnerships; increase private investments, strengthen United Nations coherence on climate change and how to best address the impacts on the most vulnerable countries.

All these questions, and the many other issues addressed in the climate negotiation tracks, increasingly require in-depth technical expertise on the part of the negotiators.

And in the era of globalization, instant communications and the internet, knowledge has been democratized and anyone can become an expert - diplomats have lost their privileged status and exclusive access to information.

However, diplomats are not born experts. As a profession, diplomats can add value by deploying strategic thinking, analytical and negotiating skills to quickly get to grips with the complex and interrelated facets of sustainable development.

Not only must diplomats be able to understand the core scientific dynamics of global climate change; they must also master the complex issues underlying carbon markets - not to mention have a basic understanding of the new technologies available to address the issue.

We must be able to speak alike to NGOs and to other diplomatic representatives - but also increasingly to media, businesses, scientists and investors, be these public or private. And, as we all know, each of these stakeholders in the climate process have their own jargon.

To this end, diplomats must learn a new language – one in which climate, carbon, mitigation, adaptation and the complex scientific terminology they each carry, have become core concepts. This is a basic requirement if they want to understand the negotiations; successfully convey their views and interact with other delegations on an equal footing.

In this context, depending of their country of origin, diplomats enter the negotiations with very different sets of professional and technical competencies.

Some States feature specialized diplomatic structures dedicated to environmental issues, some even have created posts for climate change envoys or ambassadors. Other countries have less human and financial resources to train their diplomats. Unfortunately, as was recalled yesterday, it is often the most vulnerable countries who suffer most from climate change. It is also often them who lack most from internal capacity building, and sometimes they lack the capacity to approach climate negotiations on an equal basis with richer or bigger nations, which have larger pools of experts or better training available for their diplomats.

Therefore, I do believe that it is particularly important that these States are offered the best training possible, in order to adequately respond to or address the challenges posed by climate change. In this context, I commend both the Unitar and the diplo-foundation initiatives, which complement each other well as we will see during the course of our exchange today. This meeting will indeed address many of the crucial training issues at hand, and offer some concrete responses to answer them. I look forward to a frank and open exchange of views among all stakeholders during the discussions.

Thank you very much for your attention.