

29 June 2015

High-Level Event on Climate Change

Background

2015 will be a critical year for the climate change negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The international community is expected to deliver a new, ambitious and universally binding agreement in Paris.

The President of the General Assembly convened a High-Level Event on climate change on 29 June 2015, which intended to provide impetus and political momentum for an ambitious climate agreement, by keeping the issue high on the agenda at the mid-point between COP20 in Lima and COP21 in Paris. It aimed also to provide space for showcasing climate action and concrete initiatives, through multi-stakeholder approaches to address climate change.

2015 will also be a decisive year in shaping the post 2015 development agenda and agreeing on a framework for financing for development. The road from Addis Ababa to New York and finally Paris will be central to the global efforts to improve lives, achieve sustainable development and preserve the planet for the present and future generations.

Format

The High-level event consisted of:

- A high-level opening session,
- Two high-level interactive Panel discussions, and
- A closing session.

Participation

Member States were invited to participate at the highest level. Representatives of the UN Agencies, the UNFCCC Secretariat as well as the private sector, civil society, academia and other relevant stakeholders were also encouraged to attend at the highest level possible.

High Level Event on Climate Change
New York, 29 June 2015
Concept Note

Background

1. Climate change is one of the major global challenges of the 21st Century, and is one of the key priorities during the 69th Session of the General Assembly, having in mind that 2015 will be a critical year for the ongoing process under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The adverse impacts of climate change are affecting all countries, especially developing countries, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, rising sea levels, coastal erosion and ocean acidification, further threatening food security, water, energy and health, and more broadly efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

2. According to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC), warming of the climate system is unequivocal. Human influence on climate system is clear and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) are the highest in history. Continued GHG emissions will cause further warming and will increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems.

3. Combating climate change would require substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions GHG, which, together with adaptation, can limit climate change risk. Indeed adaptation and mitigation actions are complementary for reducing and managing the risks of climate change. These strategies shall be underpinned by common enabling factors, including effective institutions and governance, provision of adequate finance, innovation and investments in environmentally sound technologies and infrastructure.

4. It is crucial for all countries to undertake mitigation and adaptation actions. In the case of developing countries, their efforts at mitigation, adaptation and building resilience would require international financial and technological support including in technology development and transfer and capacity building. Also it is critical to continue mobilizing financing from a variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including innovative sources of finance. In this regard, we commend efforts that allowed the Green Climate Fund to exceeding its initial capitalization target of 10 billion USD. Further, the scale of climate challenge requires that we forge a credible and effective pathway to mobilize the 100 billion USD annually by 2020 to support the efforts of developing countries.

5. As agreed in the Rio+20 Outcome document “The Future We Want” the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, with a view to accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions. In accordance with the UNFCCC, parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future

generations of humankind on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

6. There is an urgent need to close the gap between the aggregate effect of mitigation pledges by parties in terms of global annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020 and aggregate emission pathways consistent with having a likely chance of limiting the increase in global average temperature to less than 2° C, or 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.

7. Strong engagement and political will by all is crucial for reaching a global agreement in 2015 under the auspices of the UNFCCC and for sustaining action thereafter. At the twentieth Conference of the Parties (COP20) in Lima, Parties came to an agreement on « the Lima Call for Climate Action », that paves the way for a new, ambitious and universally binding climate agreement to be adopted at COP21 in Paris. At Lima, Parties were also invited to communicate their “intended nationally determined contributions,” INDCs, well in advance of COP21 (by the first quarter of 2015 by those Parties ready to do so). Parties were also invited to consider including adaptation component in their submissions. They are also expected to intensify the work in order to make available a negotiating text for a Protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention before May 2015, to be the basis for negotiations towards Paris.

8. The Climate Summit held on 23 September 2014 provided a global platform for Member States and relevant stakeholders to make concrete announcements and commitments to combat climate change, enhance resilience and mobilize finance. The High Level Event will contribute to this political momentum for an ambitious climate agreement, by keeping the issue high on our agenda at the mid-point between COP20 in Lima, Peru and COP21 in Paris, France.

Objectives

9. The main objective of the high-level event is to highlight the importance of keeping focus on the issue of climate change and to provide impetus and momentum towards reaching a universal and ambitious agreement on climate change in Paris, in December 2015, while reaffirming that the UNFCCC is the appropriate framework for all negotiations related to climate change. It aims also to provide space for showcasing climate action, through concrete initiatives and multi-stakeholder approaches to address climate change.

Some of the key issues to be discussed include:

I) What kind of policies and measures can be undertaken by Member States and other stakeholders to implement and scale up mitigation and adaptation actions, in order to meet the objective of limiting the increase in global average temperature below 2° C, or 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels?

II) Given the critical importance of resilience to addressing climate change impact and risk, what type of strategies and actions can be adopted at all levels to make sure that resilience is incorporated and mainstreamed in international and national planning and budgeting processes, as well as inform investment and development cooperation strategies and decisions?

III) What actions can be taken to create enabling frameworks and incentives at all levels to encourage increased State, private sector, cities and regions engagement in climate action? And more broadly, how can we create an enabling environment to accelerate and scale up climate action by all, towards low carbon and resilient pathways?

IV) Following the initial capitalization of the Green Climate Fund, what is needed to sustain the momentum on mobilizing and scaling up finance from all sources, towards meeting the commitment to mobilize 100 billion USD?

V) What kind of technology transfer and capacity building support are needed and effective at enabling ambitious climate actions by developing countries, especially the most vulnerable?

V) What is the best approach to exchanging experiences, good practices, initiatives and success stories in addressing climate change?

Date and Venue

10. The High Level event on climate change will be a one-day meeting to be scheduled on 29 June 2015, in New York.

Format, Outcome Participation

11. The High Level event will consist of an opening session, high-level interactive Panels discussion as well as a closing session. The outcome will be a President's summary, which will be circulated to all Member States and other stakeholders.

12. Member States will be invited to participate at Ministerial level. Participation of the private sector, civil society, academia and other relevant stakeholders, at the highest level possible, will be encouraged. This event will be also open to the participation of the representatives of the UN Agencies, the UNFCCC Secretariat and its relevant bodies.

**High-Level Event on Climate Change
29 June 2015
Provisional Programme
Trusteeship Council Chamber**

Morning Session	
9.00 – 10.00 a.m.	<p>Opening Segment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E Mr. Sam K. Kutesa, President of the United Nations General Assembly • H.E Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations <p>Video Message</p> <p>Keynote speakers (5 Minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati • H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, Speaker of the Parliament of Denmark and President- elect of the 70th session of the General Assembly • H.E. Mr. Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Minister of the Environment of Peru, President of COP20 • H.E. Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, President of COP21 <p>Statements (5 Minutes each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His Eminence Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace of the Holy See, • H.E. Ms. Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of UNFCCC • H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development • Mr. Xiuhtezcatl Roske Martinez, Representative of Civil Society
10.00 – 1.00 p.m.	<p>Panel 1: <i>Mobilizing political momentum for ambitious actions on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation</i></p>
10.00- 11.30 a. m	<p>Moderator: Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP</p> <p>Briefing by Co-Chairs of the Ad-hoc Group on the Durban Platform ADP (5 Minutes each):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Daniel Reifsnyder • Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	<p><u>Panelists (5 Minutes each)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Dr. Khaled Fahmy, Minister of Environment of the Arab Republic of Egypt • H.E. Mr. Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Environment and Energy of the Republic of Maldives • H.E. Ms. Izabella Monica Vieira Teixeira, Minister of Environment of Brazil • H.E. Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Special Representative on climate change of China • H.E. Mr. Miguel Arias Canete, Commissioner of the European Union in charge of Energy and Climate Change <p><u>Interventions by Member States and stakeholders (3 Minutes each):</u></p> <p>Moderator: H.E. Mr. Felipe Calderon, Former President of Mexico and Chair of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate</p> <p><u>Panelists (5 Minutes each)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ms. Edna Molewa, Minister of Environment of the Republic of South Africa • H.E. Mr. Gabriel Vallejo, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia • H.E. Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister of Water and Environment of the Republic of Uganda • H.E. Ms. Isabella Lovin, Minister in charge of International Development Cooperation of Sweden • Mr. Trigg Talley, US Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change <p><u>Interventions by Member States and stakeholders (3 Minutes each):</u></p>
Afternoon Session	
3.00 - 3.10 p.m.	Statement by Robert Redford, Actor and Environmental Campaigner
3.10 - 5.45 p.m.	<p><i>Panel 2: Mobilizing stakeholders for ambitious actions on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Rachel Kyte, Vice President of the World Bank Group</p> <p>Panelists interventions (5 Minutes each)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Laurence Tubiana, France's Special Representative for COP21 • Mr. Jean Pierre Clamadiou, CEO of Solvay • Ms. Hela Cheikhrouhou, Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund • Ms. Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification • Mr. Adnan Amin, Executive Director of IRENA, • Ms. Naoko Ishii, CEO of the Global Environment Facility <p><u>Interventions by Member States and stakeholders (3 Minutes each):</u></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Closing Segment*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations • H.E. Sam Kutesa, President of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly

* Possibility of continuation of the Event in the morning of June 30, 2015.



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 July 2015

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the key messages, initiatives and proposals from the High-Level Event on Climate Change which I convened on 29-30 June 2015, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a large, stylized initial 'S' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sam K. Kutesa

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

High-Level Event on Climate Change

29-30 June 2015

United Nations Headquarters

President's Summary

Introduction

The President of the General Assembly convened a High-level Event on Climate Change on 29-30 June 2015. The main objective of the Event was to contribute to building political momentum for an ambitious climate agreement, by keeping the issue high on the agenda at the mid-point between the twentieth and twenty-first Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Lima, Peru and Paris, France respectively. It also aimed at providing a platform for Member States and relevant stakeholders to make concrete announcements and commitments to address the issue of climate change.

The High-level Event consisted of an opening segment, two Panel discussions focusing on the following themes: “*Mobilizing political momentum for ambitious actions on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation*” and “*Mobilizing stakeholders for ambitious actions on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation*” respectively; and a closing segment.

Key messages, initiatives and recommendations

The following is a summary of key messages, initiatives and recommendations from the Event.

1. Participants noted that the High-level event provided a unique opportunity to take stock of the progress made and to provide momentum towards reaching a universal climate agreement at COP21, in December in Paris. They underscored that not a single citizen, nation, or eco-system is immune to the devastating impacts of climate change, which affects indiscriminately all countries and peoples, albeit its impacts are much more pronounced on the most vulnerable including women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly.
2. Speakers pointed out that many regions of the world have suffered from the adverse impacts of climate change, including persistent droughts, flooding, rising sea levels, coastal erosion and ocean acidification, ferocious storms and unprecedented heat waves, which have claimed many lives. They stressed that the foregoing impacts, among others, further threaten food security, water, energy and health. Speakers referred to Africa and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which contribute less but suffer most from the devastating impacts of climate change. Likewise, speakers noted the particular vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), especially the threat of rising sea-level, which requires urgent action to prevent coastal erosion, encroachment of fresh water sources and the destruction of marine eco-systems. They called for urgent measures to support their adaptation efforts.
3. Participants underscored that 2015 is a crucial year for the global sustainable development agenda and for the future of planet Earth, and noted that it is fitting that climate change is among the priorities for the 69th session of the General Assembly, as it requires urgent global action.

They stressed that while the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could be seen as the new “investments pipeline” for both the public and the private sector, on core priority issues that include essential areas for tackling climate change, the climate agenda will mobilize public and private financing for projects that contribute to the achievement of many other SDGs.

4. Speakers underlined the need to act with wisdom and urgency in order to fulfill a long-term vision of achieving climate neutrality and success for both the Post-2015 development and climate agendas, while providing a clear framework for means of implementation. They noted in this regard that adoption of an ambitious financing for development outcome FFD outcome in July in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and a successful post-2015 development agenda Summit in New York in September as well as the conclusion of a global climate change agreement in December will be monumental milestones towards improving the livelihoods of people around the world. As such, they underscored that climate change must continue to feature prominently in all of these multilateral processes. They also called on governments and other stakeholders to promote an inclusive, people-centered and transparent process that would make Paris a success.

5. Many speakers welcomed the growing commitments from many governments around the world and from other stakeholders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They acknowledged in particular ambitious climate action announcements by the world’s biggest emitters. Developing countries that are Parties to the UNFCCC and that have submitted their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) were also commended. States Parties that have not yet submitted theirs were urged to do so at the earliest opportunity. It was underscored that while INDCs merely provide a floor rather than a ceiling for ambition, they were critical for building trust. Speakers underlined in this regard that ambitious INDCs should meet the target of keeping the global temperature rise below 2° C. Many delegations informed that their Governments are willing to submit their INDCs before the Paris Conference as agreed, and that some of these contributions are in final stages of preparation.

6. Many participants underscored the urgency of concluding an ambitious, legally binding, balanced and rules-based agreement under the UNFCCC in Paris. They underlined that the Paris agreement would need to strike a balance on all key issues, including adaptation, mitigation and means of implementation; and uphold principles of *equity* and *common but differentiated responsibility*. Moreover, it should establish a mechanism for measuring and monitoring progress, in an open and transparent manner, showing efforts made by Parties in terms of mitigation, adaptation as well as the provision of adequate means of implementation. It should also ensure that each Party contributes to the achievement of the agreed objectives and targets, within the principles and provisions of the Convention.

7. With only 5 months until the COP21, Heads of State and Governments, as well as Ministers, were called upon to give political direction to their negotiators in the UNFCCC process in order to be successful in reaching a durable, comprehensive, flexible and scientifically based agreement, with nationally determined targets and objectives. Speakers also underlined the importance of transforming political will into leadership, while building trust and confidence in the process leading up to the post-2020 period. In this regard, they stressed that the agreement for the post-2020 period must be matched with a strong dedication to scaling up ambitious solutions in the pre-2020 period.

Participants noted that such an agreement would steer countries into a low-carbon emission and highly resilient global economy. They expressed optimism and underlined the importance of accelerating negotiations, with a view to finalizing an agreement in Paris. Other speakers reminded that Paris is not the ultimate goal in itself, but a milestone towards achieving the goal of limiting the increase in global average temperature to less than 2° C, or 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.

8. Many participants highlighted the importance of differentiation of responsibilities and urged each party to offer a fair share of its mitigation and adaptation measures. They also recalled that since the new agreement would fall under the UNFCCC framework, it would need to honour and facilitate the implementation of commitments already undertaken, within the principles of the Convention, including the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and equity. They acknowledged in this regard, the important role of developed countries in leading these efforts.

9. Speakers pointed out the challenge of concerted global action for emissions reduction while allowing space for eradication of poverty and promoting growth in developing countries. They noted that the process will offer an opportunity to guide the international community on a collective path to sustainable development. Many delegations made presentations on their national efforts and policies in terms of achieving their targets of reducing the emissions intensity. They also identified areas for actions, including investment in sustainable land management, transport, promotion of sustainable energy options, such as renewable energy, elimination of fossil fuels subsidies, as well as the reduction of deforestation, and the use of forests as an asset for sustainable development.

10. Participants also underlined the critical importance of resilience to addressing climate change impact and risk. They stressed, in this regard, that Paris would play a major role in making sure that adaptation is addressed, through identifying adequate strategies and actions to enhance resilience capabilities to the adverse impacts of climate change. They noted further that addressing loss and damage associated with climate change, particularly in the most vulnerable countries is crucial, including thorough an effective operationalization of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

11. Speakers emphasized that the efforts of developing countries towards mitigation, adaptation and building resilience would require international financial, technological support and capacity building. In this regard, they welcomed the initial capitalization of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and underscored that in the context of the Paris Conference, pledges would need to be translated into concrete climate projects. Similarly, several speakers emphasized the need for the GCF to approve concrete projects and disburse available funds to developing countries, with a particular focus on LDCs, SIDS and Africa, as soon as possible.

12. Participants underlined the need to scale up finance mobilization in order to forge a credible and effective pathway and trajectory to mobilize the 100 billion USD annually by 2020, including in terms of the public finance component, to support efforts of developing countries. They also stressed the critical importance of continued mobilization of finances from a variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including innovative sources of finance towards a low-carbon world.

They noted in this regard that new opportunities must be identified to reinvigorate interest in public-private-partnerships and for initiatives to leverage technical support and financial resources for a wide range of actions worldwide.

13. Speakers underscored that the poor and vulnerable are severely affected by the impacts of climate change. They suggested therefore that these should be prioritized and assisted, including through the adoption of gender sensitive climate action; while also taking into account the challenges of accessibility and the translation of pledges into effective support. Speakers also stressed that any assistance should not be eroded in the process of getting to its intended destination.

14. Participants emphasized that current technologies and business-as-usual technological advances are not adequate to deliver a low-carbon transition at the scale and pace required to stay within the 2°C target. They suggested that there should be faster increases in performance standards in technologies as well as reductions in capital and operating costs. They noted that delivering these improvements would require leadership and improved international collaboration from governments, business and scientific community. In this vein, they welcomed the establishment of the Technology Mechanism under the UNFCCC and expressed appreciation for the work conducted by the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and the Climate Technology Center and Network (CTCN). Nevertheless, they considered that the current institutional arrangements on technology development and transfer under the UNFCCC did not allow for adequate provision of implementation funding for sustainable access to technology development and transfer in developing countries.

15. Speakers stressed that finding solutions to address climate change, including in the context of the SDGs and the UNFCCC is no longer a responsibility confined to governments alone, but one that involves many stakeholders. They highlighted therefore, the need to embrace robust partnerships to address the challenges posed by climate change, including with the active engagement of the civil society, private sector, the scientific community, and by creating an enabling environment and availing appropriate incentives. In view of this, they noted that the Lima-Paris Action Agenda is an essential component and a platform in the creation of synergies of efforts between States, cities and regions as well as companies and investors and other relevant actors.

16. Speakers underscored the strong potential of sustainable land management and restoration of degraded land, which can ensure food security, increase resilience of the most vulnerable people and eco-systems and enhance adaptation capabilities, while contributing to the sequestration of carbon dioxide. In this context, they stressed the need to work towards achieving the target of land degradation neutrality by 2030. Some speakers also stressed that smallholder farmers are a key part of the solution to the climate change challenge, if provided with adequate support as well as the right investments and incentives. They underlined that reducing environmental degradation would require the human community to seriously review the dominant models of production and consumption.

17. Many speakers underlined the need to address energy, which is a big contributor to global GHG emissions, through achieving a fundamental transformation of global energy systems, while taking into account national circumstances and needs of different countries.

They acknowledged the recent advancements in the renewable energy sector in many parts of the world and noted that during the last few years, renewable energy contribution has increased – wind, solar and geothermal generation are cost competitive with other forms of energy, creating further opportunities. Speakers noted that the expansion of renewable energy in tandem with energy efficiency measures and the reduction of fossil fuels subsidies would be an important contribution to limit the global temperatures below 2° C. To this end, they encouraged increased investment in new research, with a view to boosting the potential for economic growth and poverty eradication as mutually reinforcing endeavors. Likewise, they emphasized the need for the provision of adequate financial support as well as technology transfer and capacity building for developing countries.

18. Some participants noted that prices of renewable energy sources are falling dramatically and investors are starting to integrate climate risk into their decision-making. Moreover, some leaders from across government and business sector are sending a clear message to the world that climate change is a risk that cannot be ignored and subsequently, it is necessary to put a price on carbon. They noted, in this regard, that carbon pricing, if expanded, would have the potential of bringing down emissions in a way that supports clean energy and low-carbon growth while giving businesses the flexibility to innovate and find the most efficient choices. In this context, some participants stressed that developing a mechanism for carbon pricing is very important in the context of the Paris agreement.

19. Participants emphasized that religious leaders have an important role to play in lending their moral voice towards addressing climate change. In this regard, many participants welcomed His Holiness Pope Francis's Encyclical letter, which highlights that climate change is a global common challenge that needs to be urgently addressed. They noted that the Pope called for action and reminded the whole humanity of the moral imperative of acting on climate change, which is a global problem with serious implications. Furthermore, the Pope pointed out that lack of effective responses to tragedies involving and affecting people around the world demonstrates a loss of moral obligation. As such he encouraged nations and communities to make courageous choices aimed at reversing the trend of global warming and reducing the negative impact of climate change.

20. The speakers further welcomed the important role played by the civil society. A youth representative gave a passionate presentation, which noted that every generation leaves behind a mark on the planet, and that this generation, which is at a tipping point, would either be remembered for destroying or preserving the Earth. As such, he pointed out that we are being called upon to use our creativity and our passion to preserve the planet.

21. The High Level event constituted also an opportunity for many delegations and other actors to make announcements and inform about initiatives; namely:

- The PGA-elect for the 70th session announced that if deemed beneficial to the negotiations, he is willing to convene another High-level meeting in November, before COP 21 in Paris. Furthermore, a High Level event on the implementation of the SDGs will be convened in April 2016, which will catalyze climate action as one important

component. Some speakers also announced their intention to convene other events related to climate change.

- Some delegations informed of their financial pledges to the Green Climate Fund as well as their intentions for future contributions. Furthermore, many speakers stressed the need to enhance South-South and triangular cooperation, including through the provision of appropriate financial support.
- Many delegations announced their intention to submit soon their INDCs. They made announcement of their emission reduction targets, trajectory as well as policies and actions to achieve it. This included investments in the development of renewable energy and the creation of appropriate incentives.
- Some speakers proposed a global partnership on renewable energy, which would include an initiative between developed and developing countries as well as other relevant stakeholders such as UN agencies, development banks and the private sector.
- Many other initiatives were presented, including inter alia: “SIDS Lighthouse initiative”, “The Africa clean energy corridor”, “Global Geothermal Alliance”, “The G7 climate risk insurance for the most vulnerable countries”, “The World Bank Carbon Pricing initiative”, “One hundred Smart Cities’ as well as the creation of clubs of countries, cities and businesses around different objectives such as carbon pricing and green technologies.

Conclusion

The High Level Event on Climate Change provided a unique opportunity for Member States and other relevant stakeholders to exchange views on the progress made in the ongoing process under the UNFCCC, and to build the much needed political momentum ahead of Paris in order to speed up negotiations towards adopting a new, ambitious and universally binding agreement. The urgent need to engage in a constructive spirit and make the needed compromises in order to meet the high expectations was highlighted. In this regard, it was underscored that making significant progress in the next two negotiating sessions would be crucial.

29 June 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the High-Level Event on Climate Change**

**Your Excellency, Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to welcome you all to this High-level Event on Climate Change. I particularly welcome His Excellency, Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, and the Honourable Ministers joining us today. The presence of so many high-level participants and the active engagement of Member States show the importance we collectively attach to addressing climate change.

One of the key priorities I selected for the 69th session is climate change. In my acceptance speech in June last year I underscored that climate change is one of the defining global challenges of our times and that this session would give impetus to the ongoing process under UNFCCC.

This high-level event, at the mid-point between the twentieth Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP 20), held in Lima, and COP 21, to be held in Paris, provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the work done so far and keep the momentum towards reaching an ambitious and universally-binding climate change agreement. It will also aim to promote climate action to slow global warming and limit greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), through concrete initiatives and multi-stakeholder approaches.

In a year when the world's attention is focused on the future, a successful outcome at COP 21 will send a resounding message that the well-being of the planet must go hand-in-hand with development efforts.

Indeed, adoption of a transformative post-2015 development agenda in September, achieving a successful outcome from the upcoming Third International Conference on Financing for Development and concluding a global climate change agreement will be monumental milestones towards improving the livelihoods of people around the world.

Excellencies,

Climate change poses a serious threat to the well-being of humanity and the security of peoples and States. The adverse impacts of climate change are affecting all countries around the world; developed and developing, alike.

The recurring disasters that are affecting different regions as a result of changing climate patterns, such as the recent cyclone that devastated Vanuatu, are a matter of deep concern for us all. Many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Kiribati, are facing an existential threat due to rising sea levels, while other countries are grappling with devastating droughts that have left precious lands uninhabitable and unproductive.

We are also increasingly witnessing other severe weather patterns as a result of climate change, including droughts, floods and landslides. In my own country Uganda, the impact of climate change is affecting the livelihoods of the rural population who are dependent on agriculture.

Science unequivocally points to human activity as the primary cause of global warming. Yet, science also tells us that there is still a chance for our generation to reverse the current trends and preserve our planet; through bold, collective action.

Simply put – it is not too late. But we must act now. And we must act with courage.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,**

We should continue to be steadfast in our commitment and urgency towards combating climate change. At COP20 in Peru last December, we successfully laid the building blocks for a new agreement to be adopted in Paris. Lima also resulted in an agreement by Parties to submit their “intended nationally determined contribution” (INDC) before COP21.

The subsequent announcements on mitigation commitments made by some of world’s largest Green House Gas (GHG) emitters, as well as the INDCs submitted thus far, constitute critical milestones for building a high level of ambition under the new climate regime.

Nevertheless, these pledges cover only a portion of total global emissions. We must seize this opportunity to make a strong call to all Parties to submit their INDCS, bearing in mind the urgent need for concrete actions by all.

Furthermore, we should redouble efforts to ensure that the negotiations launched earlier this month in Bonn make substantive progress.

While the remaining issues to be resolved ahead of Paris are both challenging, and at times controversial; a successful outcome can be reached if all parties engage constructively and with flexibility.

It will be essential to determine the legal nature of the universally-binding agreement which will be critical for ensuring all countries adopt it. The issue of burden sharing and differentiation of responsibilities among Parties will be critical for its success.

We have to maintain a high level of ambition, and give balanced treatment of all the key issues, including adaptation, mitigation, and means of implementation. We should also enhance the delivery of finance to the most vulnerable countries.

To enhance resilience capabilities to the adverse effects of climate change, enhanced actions on adaptation will be required. In this context, addressing loss and damage associated with climate change, particularly in developing countries is crucial. The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage should support affected countries to undertake appropriate actions, including in terms of finance, technology and capacity-building.

I commend the initial capitalization of the Green Climate Fund and call for scaling-up climate financing through honouring previous commitments, including the mobilization of US\$ 100 billion annually from 2020. It is also important to ensure that effective platforms for developing and sharing technologies and innovative research are enhanced. Barriers to the transfer of green technologies, including intellectual property protection issues, need to be urgently addressed.

Taking concrete steps to incentivize action from all stakeholders including, civil society, local authorities and the business sector, will also be crucial for success.

In this context, we must seek new opportunities to reinvigorate interest in public-private-partnerships and for initiatives to leverage technical support and financial resources for a wide range of actions worldwide, including in developing countries.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am heartened to note that we continue to see strong leadership and concrete actions as we head towards Paris.

I commend the European Union's commitment to cut its emissions to 40 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The joint Presidential announcement by the United States and China on their respective post-2020 actions on climate change, as well as the G7's announcement at its last Summit to "fully decarbonize" the world's energy systems by the end of the century and commitments by other countries are commendable.

The message in His Holiness Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change and the environment has spurred discussions about the moral issues surrounding inaction on climate change.

Climate change is not simply a matter of concern for scientists or politicians; it is an issue that is of profound importance for everyday people; young and old, rich and poor.

In a year when we have pledged to put people at the centre of all we do, we must heed the calls of the collective global community and take concrete and courageous steps to address climate change as a matter of utmost priority and urgency.

This year we have a unique opportunity to take collective action to address the most pressing issue of our time.

Together, we should spare no effort to reach a balanced and universally-binding agreement in December that promotes the achievement of sustainable development and preserves our planet.

I thank you for your kind attention.