

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON'S
OPENING STATEMENT
TO THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE**

Poznan, Poland, 11 December 2008

Thank you Mr. President of the COP,
Minister Nowicki,
President Kaczynski [Poland],
President Jagdeo [Guyana],
Prime Minister Ielemia [Tuvalu],
Prime Minister Reinfeldt [Sweden],
Executive Secretary de Boer [UNFCCC]

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Most of you have noticed, entering this hall, a sculpture of a 10-foot-high “wave” of carbon-dioxide emissions, about to engulf the planet.

This is no empty metaphor.

We all know the science judging from the evidence presented over the past few years and days, we know the problem is growing worse.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

The world is watching us.

The next generation is counting on us.

We must not fail.

Together, we face two crises: climate change and the global economy.

But these crises present us with a great opportunity—an opportunity to address both challenges simultaneously.

Managing the global financial crisis requires massive global stimulus.

A big part of that spending should be an investment—an investment in a green future.

An investment that fights climate change, creates millions of green jobs and spurs green growth.

We need a Green New Deal.

This is a deal that works for all nations, rich as well as poor.

It is an idea that was embraced with enthusiasm at the recent development conference in Doha, Qatar, and at the meeting of finance ministers in Warsaw which concluded this past Tuesday.

We also urgently need a deal on climate change to provide the political, legal, and economic framework to unleash a sustained wave of investment. In short, our response to the economic crisis must advance climate goals, and our response to the climate crisis will advance economic and social goals.

What we need, today, is leadership -- leadership by you.

We look for that leadership from the European Union. The decisions currently being made by European leaders in Brussels are at great consequence for the whole world.

We look for leadership from the United States.

It is therefore encouraging to hear about the incoming administration's plan to put alternative energy, environmentalism and climate change at the very center of America's definition of national security, economic recovery, and prosperity.

We see encouraging movement elsewhere, as well.

China is dedicating one-fourth of its sizable economic stimulus plan to scale-up renewable fuels, environmental protection and energy conservation.

Denmark is investing in green growth.

Since 1980, it has grown GDP by 78 percent with only minimal increases in energy use.

Brazil has built one of the greenest economies in the world, creating millions of new jobs in the process.

India has launched a comprehensive National Climate Change Action Plan that lays out the path for shifting to greater reliance on sustainable sources of energy, particularly solar power. India is also fourth in the world in terms of new wind capacity.

This is the way of the future. A future we must all embrace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This coming year is the year of climate change. It is only twelve months ahead to Copenhagen.

Here in Poznan, we have three challenges:

First, is a work-plan for next year's negotiations. I am glad that an agreement has already been achieved.

Second, you need to sketch out the critical elements of a long-term vision. We need a basic framework for cooperative action starting today, not in 2012.

Within this framework, industrialized countries must set ambitious long-term goals, coupled with mid-term emission reduction targets.

Developing countries need to limit the growth of their emissions, as well. To do so, they will need robust financial and technological support—not just promises, but tangible results.

Adaptation will be key, including risk reduction and management. Change must be integrated with strategies for development and poverty alleviation. One without the other means failure for both.

The world's poorest should not suffer first and worst from a problem they did least to create.

Third, we must re-commit ourselves to the urgency of our cause.

This requires leadership — your leadership.

Yes, the economic crisis is serious. Yet when it comes to climate change, the stakes are even far higher. The climate crisis affects our potential prosperity and our peoples' lives, both now and far into the future.

We must keep climate change at the top of national agendas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There can be no backsliding on our commitments to a future of low-carbon emissions.

We must break free of entrenched positions—who is to blame, who must act first.

We are all in this together.

As we travel our road to Copenhagen, you can count on my support.

I will continue to press hard world leaders for their commitment to action.

I will do all I can as Secretary-General of the United Nations to see that the UN family delivers as one.

Our UN agencies, funds and programmes will support you in implementing all agreements under the UNFCCC. We have worked hard to fast-track the Bali roadmap, and we look forward to next year's World Climate Conference.

It is fitting that we meet in Poland, the land of Copernicus.

Let us launch a new Copernican revolution—a revolution in thinking, a revolution in action.

Let us save ourselves from catastrophe and usher in a truly sustainable world.

Remember, too, that Poland is the birthplace of the famed trade union, Solidarity.

Precisely 20 years ago here in Poland, it set in motion an historic transformation.

Today we need a global solidarity on climate change, the defining challenge of our era.

Twenty years from now, let our children and grand-children look back upon this day and say:

“Yes, that is where it began.”

A revolution. A turning point. A moment when we turned away from a past that no longer works toward a more equitable and prosperous future.

Thank you.