

**CLIMATE CHANGE AS A GLOBAL CHALLENGE:
INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Panel 2—Mitigation Strategies in the Context of Sustainable Development

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The morning Panel addressed the science, impacts and adaptation to climate change. This Panel will address mitigation strategies in the context of sustainable development. A consensus has emerged that the effects of climate change are already being felt, that the human connection is unequivocal, and the cost of mitigation is less than the adverse impacts of inaction. Without urgent and concerted action, climate change will seriously affect the way of life in both developed and developing countries, it will damage fragile ecosystems, and threaten global security through migratory pressures and resource conflicts.

Climate change, its causes, and its adverse impacts are closely linked to economic development, the alleviation of poverty, and energy security. All countries have a legitimate right to economic development, but that need not conflict with strategies to address climate change. While solutions to the climate change problem require harmonization of economic growth and poverty alleviation with ambitious emissions reductions, they also present tremendous opportunities for innovation and technological development, especially in the energy field. In addition, providing clean energy to the 2 billion people currently without access to modern energy services would contribute to poverty alleviation and achieving the Millennium Development Goals as well as to emissions reductions.

Similarly, adaptation to climate impacts will affect development and poverty alleviation efforts. Developing countries, especially least developed ones, where greater poverty and vulnerability limit the capacity to act, will be the most seriously harmed by climate change. Failure to adapt will increase the economic and human impacts of extreme events and set back poverty alleviation efforts. Clearly, future efforts for dealing with climate change must address not only mitigation but also adaptation.

Without energy there can be no development and economic development cannot be sustainable without sustainable energy. The production and use of energy contribute more than any other human activity to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and future energy trends will determine how quickly those levels continue to rise and by how much. If the world continues on its current energy path, which is inefficient and dominated by fossil fuels, CO₂ emissions from energy sources will be two and a half times their current levels in 2050. According to the IEA these emissions can be returned to their current levels by 2050 through a combination of strong energy efficiency;

increased deployment of renewable energy, natural gas, and coal with carbon capture and storage; and increased use of biofuels.

A comprehensive agreement, negotiated under the auspices of the UN, is needed to “stabilize the concentration of greenhouse gases at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system,” as stipulated by the UNFCCC. Such agreement should include all countries and sectors, all sources and sinks, and adaptation as well as mitigation. It will also have to be perceived by all participating countries as equitable and fair. Developed countries should take the lead in emissions reduction, given their historic responsibility and capability to act. Nevertheless, that will not be sufficient to avoid the most adverse and possibly irreversible impacts of climate change. Meaningful engagement of developing countries, especially the rapidly industrializing economies, is essential.

To that end, a number of key issues have hampered negotiations toward a new agreement beyond 2012. I pose seven of these issues and a number of questions to help stimulate discussion in this Panel. They are:

- Differentiated targets and timetables: How can developed and developing countries participate on a fair and equitable basis?
- Forests as carbon sinks: What incentives are possible and appropriate for avoided deforestation?
- Market-based mechanisms: What is their scale and role of private sector?
- Adaptation: Since some amount of climate change is inevitable, what mechanisms will be used to finance adaptation measures and to climate-proof development investments?
- Research, development and deployment: How can they be stimulated and enhanced?
- Technology cooperation: How can innovation and increased collaboration on clean energy technologies be encouraged between developed and developing countries? and
- Finance: What incentives are needed to increase developing country adoption of, and private-sector investment in, clean energy technologies?