



**Closing Remarks
by**

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Developing States**

at the

**Informal Meeting
“Climate Change and Most Vulnerable Countries:
The Imperative to Act”**

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Thank you Mr. Moderator,

His Excellency President of the General Assembly,

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished participants,

It is my great pleasure to be part of this timely discussion, and from the interventions made over the course of this meeting, it is quite clear that there is a genuine seriousness regarding the impact of climate change on poor and vulnerable countries.

I would first of all like to extend my appreciation to the General Assembly President to have initiated this invaluable forum and the participants for injecting and maintaining a sense of urgency and heightened awareness about the issue before us.

What has emerged from their input is that it is incumbent on all of us to act, and to act now, if we hope to arrest the devastating consequences of climate change on the livelihoods of millions of people, especially those who live in the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island Developing States.

Allow me to underscore the UNDP Human Report of 2007/2008 which warned us of the risk of unprecedented human development reversal during our lifetime, unless urgent and timely corrective measures are taken.

As the participants so convincingly argued – climate change has far-reaching consequences, affecting economic growth, health indicators, water availability, food production, coastal erosion and poses a threat to vulnerable ecosystems.

What is also abundantly clear is that even though all countries will be affected by climate change, developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island Developing States, where poverty and physical vulnerabilities limit the capacity to act, will be most seriously harmed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has already been noted in other fora that as climate change accelerates we are likely to witness an increase in frequency and magnitude of storms, flooding, and droughts. In the most extreme scenario, as stated in the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predictions, sea-level rise resulting from a 4 degree Celsius increase in the global temperature would submerge and lead to the total extinction of low-lying island states like Tuvalu, Kiribati, Maldives and the Marshall Islands. The issue is a matter of “existential crisis” as Deputy Permanent Representative of Indonesia mentioned.

Many small island developing States are already experiencing considerable erosion due to storm surges and sea level rise. They are, as well, suffering from increasing contamination of soil and drinking water due to the intrusion of salt water. Many countries are likely to experience a decrease in water runoff by 10-30 per cent over some dry regions, dry tropics and some semi-arid areas, due to decreases in rainfall and higher rates of evaporation. It is projected that by 2020, between 75 million and 250 million people in Africa alone will be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change.

This is indeed cause for serious concern and puts before us a sobering challenge; a challenge which the international community is well poised to take up.

In that regard, the guidance of HE Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Maldives, that the UN enacts the “right of the people of Small Island States to live in a safe, secure and sustainable environment” as a new universal right, should be accorded the greatest consideration. It is an issue at the very core of “Climate Justice”. It will address at least partly the question of equity and fairness, raised by Madam Deputy Secretary-General.

The Barbados Plan of Action and the Brussels Plan of Action prescribes policy guidance to address the special needs of the SIDS and LLDCs respectively.

Now that there is the momentum to tackle climate change head-on, we must be prepared to intervene meaningfully. The international community has already identified what needs to be done in order for us to make progress in this regard. This is based on the principle of “Common but differentiated responsibility”.

It is evident that integrating adaptation to climate change into planning processes is a necessary strategy for sustainable development over the long term. This process should be the most inclusive possible at both local and national level.

In many of the LDCs and SIDS there are difficulties in integrating adaptation concerns into national policies due to a host of factors, including poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as limited awareness of adaptation amongst stakeholders and the local populations.

Furthermore, it is critical that risk management and risk reduction be incorporated into adaptation planning at all levels, and that climate change is incorporated into disaster and risk management. Early warning and response systems should be established and strengthened at both country and regional levels.

Given that there is consensus that climate change will impact all countries to some extent, it is therefore imperative that mechanisms are introduced which allow for a sharing of knowledge and experience, especially environmentally sound technologies. In this regard, I would encourage greater South-South and North-South cooperation, as this would be an effective tool for promoting the implementation of adaptation measures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A great deal of work lies ahead of us, but in order for the vulnerable countries to push ahead with adaptation, it is of vital importance that resources are made available to them, especially to the LDCs and the Small Island Developing States, as they are already disproportionately affected by climate change.

Of equal importance is the need to create greater awareness of existing international mechanisms in support of the most vulnerable countries to name a few: the Adaptation Funds of UNFCCC for LDCs which was operationalized in Bali last December; the different schemes of the Global Environment Funds, that Mr. Ian Noble has eloquently elaborated on.

But adaptation policies are not enough. They need to be coupled with mitigation measures, since as it has been said by Mr. Basher, the poorest countries are 5 times more affected by climate change and in certain cases, its impact exceeds GDP of affected countries. But at this stage I would like to reiterate that there should not be a trade-off between climate change and the development priorities of developing countries.

Let me conclude by echoing Secretary-General Ban's remarks that even though the Bali road map was a milestone, we cannot rest there. We need to press on and do all that we can in order to reach a global deal in 2009.

As the Secretary-General highlighted, "We have moved climate change up to the top of the agenda where it belongs; we cannot now let those who depend on us down. We cannot fail succeeding generations who will endure the consequences of our actions; we cannot turn away from the most vulnerable who already face the consequences of climate change today."

I thank you for your attention.
