

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.