

Summit on Climate Change, 22 September 2009

**Statement by Prof. W. Maathai, Nobel Peace Laureate,
on behalf of Civil Society**

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last 24 hours, millions of people across the world have made a Global Wake Up Call on climate change calling on your excellencies to provide leadership, to act together, to act now and to act differently. I am deeply humbled by the privilege to represent them and address your Excellencies on their behalf.

Whether they come as erratic fires in California, devastating floods in Bangladesh, and West Africa or melting ice in Iceland, the negative impacts of climate change are already upon us. Scientific evidence show that its dangerous and destabilizing consequences will increase with greater force, frequency and unpredictability.

In my own country Kenya, over ten million people are at risk of starvation. Their crops are failing, their children are hungry, their fields are parched and their cattle are dying. Why? It's called climate change and has only been exacerbated by the country's state of unpreparedness, not only in Kenya but around the world.

Do not tell us you didn't know!

Citizen of the world are looking to you to provide the level of leadership needed to respond to this unprecedented and historic challenge. To day the world is watching and waiting to see what you, their leaders, will commit to at this historic summit. Will you commit to a ***climate for change?***

Will you act now? Will you seize this opportunity to Seal a Deal that is fair, that is ambitious and that is binding before it is too late?

You have the power to turn this around. Please use that power in Copenhagen.

Addressing climate change is not easy. It will take massive political will and it will cost money. That is why we need an accountable institutional mechanism and equitable governance structures to channel resources efficiently and ensure responsibility, transparency and accountability.

No part of the world is immune. We are all in this together although we know the facts. Business-as-Usual would be a tragedy. Your citizens are raising their voices everywhere. In the massive global wake up call in the last 24 hours, your citizens have been calling you. I don't know if they are being answered but I believe this. It is important they be listened to.

As a Goodwill Ambassador of the Congo forest, and especially the major tropical forests, which we refer to as the three lungs of the planet (the Amazon, the Congo and the forest complex in South East Asia around Indonesia and Borneo), I know that reducing deforestation and forest degradation is a viable piece of the puzzle. Even at personal level, we can all reduce, re-use and recycle, what is embraced as Mottainai in Japan, a concept that also calls us to express gratitude, to respect and to avoid wastage.

Your Excellencies,

It is only ten weeks before Copenhagen, We, the Peoples of the World, the people you lead, are here to encourage you, to support you and to urge you to secure in Copenhagen for a fair, ambitious, binding, life saving, inspiring deal.

Your Excellencies, we are all here first and foremost inhabitants on this planet.

Before being leaders, you are someone's mother, father, sister, brother and I am very confident that all of you will personally go to Copenhagen, and for all the six billion people on Earth, seal a good deal.

Thank you.