

Transcript of video statement by James Leape, Director General, WWF International, to the UNGA, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

Hello.

Climate change is hitting us harder and faster than scientists predicted even a few years ago. Devastating droughts in Australia and Africa, forest fires in Greece and California – all are indications of what is now upon us. And a report released just this month tells us we can expect global sea levels to rise by a meter by the end of the century – causing flooding which would affect a quarter of the world's population. So the need for action is urgent.

It's a complex issue, but the bottom line is simply stated: somehow we must ensure that global emissions peak and begin to decline in the next eight years. As world leaders, that must be your priority. In a time of economic recession it may be tempting to defer action on climate and focus on the economic recovery. But that would be a tragic mistake.

For one, any recovery will surely falter unless the challenge of climate change is met.

For another, as you are investing in building the economy of the future, you have a unique opportunity to ensure that economy is low-carbon; that it's an economy which protects the climate.

Finally, when it comes to climate change, any delay is very costly. Solutions become more expensive, success becomes less likely.

Global warming threatens every aspect of our lives. It threatens our health, it threatens our economies, and it threatens our security. That's why we need a global climate deal, not just for the environment but for our future economic and social well-being.

If you are the leader of an industrialised economy, it means you must, here in New York, commit to sharp reductions in your own emissions, and to robust funding which will allow developing countries to meet this challenge. If you are the leader of an emerging economy, it means you must step forward and also play your part. Commit yourself to putting your economy on a low-carbon development path.

Your environment ministers and negotiators have been working hard for the past two years to come to an agreement in Copenhagen, but they cannot succeed without your leadership. It is time for you, as Heads of State, to step up.

Thank you.