

Presented by Mr. Gilles Sommeria, Acting Deputy Secretary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to speak in front of your Assembly and deliver a statement on behalf of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The year 2007 saw an unprecedented increase in awareness related to global warming and climate change. This expansion of knowledge and awareness resulted from a number of events; one of the major ones was the release in four steps throughout the year of the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Our Chairman, Mr Rajendra Pachauri, has delivered here on 21st April a keynote speech on the content of this report and the present statement will rather focus on the organization and the role of the IPCC. Two eminent members of the IPCC community are also participating in this meeting, Mrs Isabelle Niang Diop in the round tables on "globalization, development and poverty reduction", and on "knowledge and technology", and Mr Ogunlade Davidson in the round table on the "institutional environment".

The IPCC, established in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), has two major tasks:

- To carry out periodic assessments of the science, impacts and the economics of climate change and of the adaptation/mitigation options available to address it
- To respond to the need for objective scientific and technical advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

It does not do research directly but carries out comprehensive assessments of published scientific, technical and socio-economic information. It covers all aspects of climate change on an inclusive, transparent and objective basis. It accomplishes this by harnessing the best talent from around the globe, following a process of rigorous peer reviews and final acceptance of all reports by governments through a process of consensus. The latest assessment involved about 500 lead authors and 2000 reviewers, building on the work of a wide scientific community and submitted to the scrutiny of delegates from more than hundred participating nations.

Knowledge and the science related to climate change have progressed substantially in the six years following the Third Assessment Report released in 2001. Hence, the findings of the Panel this time are stronger, the gaps in existing knowledge much narrower and uncertainties substantially lower. They have been prepared by three Working Groups dealing respectively with

- The Physical Science Basis covering observations, understanding of causes of climate change including identifying the influence of human activity, and model projections of future changes at global and regional scale.
- Impacts of climate change on physical systems, biological systems, human activities and health, responses through adaptation and vulnerabilities to climate change, all this with a global and a regional approach.
- Mitigation of Climate Change. This covers key questions such as: What can we do to reduce or avoid the threats of climate change? What are the costs of these actions and how do they relate to the cost of inaction? How much time is available to realize the drastic reductions needed to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere? What

are the policy actions that can overcome the barriers to implementation? How can climate mitigation policy be aligned with sustainable development policies?

The major findings are included in a Synthesis Report adopted by all members and summarized in a "Summary for Policy Makers" approved line by line at a IPCC Session held in Valencia, Spain, in November 2007.

As a complement to AR4, a Technical Paper on Climate Change and Water was finalized and officially released by the Panel at its 28th Session in Budapest on 9-10 April 2008. The report deals with changes in precipitation patterns, river run-off, water availability, occurrence of extreme precipitation and drought events, extent of glaciers and snow cover, and water quality. Those changes may lead to adverse consequences on human societies and ecosystems, with particular concern for freshwater systems and food resources. The report also assesses adaptation options with respect to water supply, the scope and potential impact of mitigation measures on water resources, and the potential impact of water management options in other policy areas.

The mission of IPCC is to provide expertise and policy relevant information, based on agreed scientific facts. The IPCC community at large is conscious of the importance of this expertise and of its responsibility to carry out its mandate with the highest possible quality standards. A reflection is presently under way to decide of the best way forward in the coming years. In September, elections will take place in Geneva to renew the leadership of the Panel and to initiate the updated agenda, accompanied by a celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the IPCC.

Abundant inputs have been received from Governments, Bureau members, Observer Organizations and AR4 authors in response to an enquiry by IPCC Chair on the future activities of the Panel. They have been compiled and lead to a provisional synthesis of proposals. General guidelines have been decided, and a more detailed programme of work is being prepared.

The Panel has decided to carry out a Fifth Assessment Report to be finalized in 2014, with a target date of early 2013 for the release of the first Working Group report. The IPCC working group structure with three working groups and a specific Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories, will be maintained, as well as the size and composition of the IPCC "Bureau". However a number of issues will be reassessed with respect to the mandate and functioning of the groups, in order to take into account recent scientific and policy developments, and improve the relevance of the assessments in response to the suggestions and needs of members and of the UNFCCC. Examples of specific issues include a coordinated treatment of adaptation and mitigation within an integrated sustainable development strategy and the development of a regional approach in complement to the global approach, particularly in assessing the impacts of and vulnerability to climate change. In the shorter term, the Panel decided to proceed with the preparation of an IPCC Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation, to be ready in the second half of 2010. Another outcome of the Budapest meeting is the decision to set up a special trustfund initiated with the 2007 Nobel Peace prize funds, and aimed at supporting the creation and dissemination of knowledge about climate change in a manner which increases the engagement of developing country scientists.

The Panel has agreed to organize the new assessment around a revised set of scenarios of socio-economic, climate and environmental conditions. Instead of resulting from population projections and development hypotheses, as was the case up to now, they will be based on a range of possible evolution patterns for the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases ("representative concentration pathways"), which will serve simultaneously as benchmarks for the development of new climate model simulations and targets for the development of emissions and socio-economic scenarios. This approach,

based on the most recent scientific advances, allows a parallel and more efficient approach of the three working groups and the communities they represent, and also provides an optimal framework to develop impact, adaptation, vulnerability and mitigation analyses.

In summary, a number of IPCC activities and concerns are directly relevant to the topic of this Conference. AR4 includes a number of key messages intended to serve as a reference for development policies. It describes climate evolution scenarios expected from current and alternate development practices, as well as vulnerability and foreseeable impacts by sector and by region. It advocates complementary adaptation and mitigation policies, through a global response to climate change. It also provides guidance on how climate change and response policies can affect or be related to sustainable development. The specific issue of the implications of climate change for sustainable development has been identified as requiring specific attention for the next assessment period.