

29 June 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Opening of the High-Level Event on Climate Change**

**Your Excellency, Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to welcome you all to this High-level Event on Climate Change. I particularly welcome His Excellency, Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, and the Honourable Ministers joining us today. The presence of so many high-level participants and the active engagement of Member States show the importance we collectively attach to addressing climate change.

One of the key priorities I selected for the 69th session is climate change. In my acceptance speech in June last year I underscored that climate change is one of the defining global challenges of our times and that this session would give impetus to the ongoing process under UNFCCC.

This high-level event, at the mid-point between the twentieth Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP 20), held in Lima, and COP 21, to be held in Paris, provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the work done so far and keep the momentum towards reaching an ambitious and universally-binding climate change agreement. It will also aim to promote climate action to slow global warming and limit greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), through concrete initiatives and multi-stakeholder approaches.

In a year when the world's attention is focused on the future, a successful outcome at COP 21 will send a resounding message that the well-being of the planet must go hand-in-hand with development efforts.

Indeed, adoption of a transformative post-2015 development agenda in September, achieving a successful outcome from the upcoming Third International Conference on Financing for Development and concluding a global climate change agreement will be monumental milestones towards improving the livelihoods of people around the world.

**Excellencies,**

Climate change poses a serious threat to the well-being of humanity and the security of peoples and States. The adverse impacts of climate change are affecting all countries around the world; developed and developing, alike.

The recurring disasters that are affecting different regions as a result of changing climate patterns, such as the recent cyclone that devastated Vanuatu, are a matter of deep concern for us all. Many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Kiribati, are facing an existential threat due to rising sea levels, while other countries are grappling with devastating droughts that have left precious lands uninhabitable and unproductive.

We are also increasingly witnessing other severe weather patterns as a result of climate change, including droughts, floods and landslides. In my own country Uganda, the impact of climate change is affecting the livelihoods of the rural population who are dependent on agriculture.

Science unequivocally points to human activity as the primary cause of global warming. Yet, science also tells us that there is still a chance for our generation to reverse the current trends and preserve our planet; through bold, collective action.

Simply put – it is not too late. But we must act now. And we must act with courage.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,**

We should continue to be steadfast in our commitment and urgency towards combating climate change. At COP20 in Peru last December, we successfully laid the building blocks for a new agreement to be adopted in Paris. Lima also resulted in an agreement by Parties to submit their “intended nationally determined contribution” (INDC) before COP21.

The subsequent announcements on mitigation commitments made by some of world’s largest Green House Gas (GHG) emitters, as well as the INDCs submitted thus far, constitute critical milestones for building a high level of ambition under the new climate regime.

Nevertheless, these pledges cover only a portion of total global emissions. We must seize this opportunity to make a strong call to all Parties to submit their INDCs, bearing in mind the urgent need for concrete actions by all.

Furthermore, we should redouble efforts to ensure that the negotiations launched earlier this month in Bonn make substantive progress.

While the remaining issues to be resolved ahead of Paris are both challenging, and at times controversial; a successful outcome can be reached if all parties engage constructively and with flexibility.

It will be essential to determine the legal nature of the universally-binding agreement which will be critical for ensuring all countries adopt it. The issue of burden sharing and differentiation of responsibilities among Parties will be critical for its success.

We have to maintain a high level of ambition, and give balanced treatment of all the key issues, including adaptation, mitigation, and means of implementation. We should also enhance the delivery of finance to the most vulnerable countries.

To enhance resilience capabilities to the adverse effects of climate change, enhanced actions on adaptation will be required. In this context, addressing loss and damage associated with climate change, particularly in developing countries is crucial. The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage should support affected countries to undertake appropriate actions, including in terms of finance, technology and capacity-building.

I commend the initial capitalization of the Green Climate Fund and call for scaling-up climate financing through honouring previous commitments, including the mobilization of US\$ 100 billion annually from 2020. It is also important to ensure that effective platforms for developing and sharing technologies and innovative research are enhanced. Barriers to the transfer of green technologies, including intellectual property protection issues, need to be urgently addressed.

Taking concrete steps to incentivize action from all stakeholders including, civil society, local authorities and the business sector, will also be crucial for success.

In this context, we must seek new opportunities to reinvigorate interest in public-private-partnerships and for initiatives to leverage technical support and financial resources for a wide range of actions worldwide, including in developing countries.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am heartened to note that we continue to see strong leadership and concrete actions as we head towards Paris.

I commend the European Union's commitment to cut its emissions to 40 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The joint Presidential announcement by the United States and China on their respective post-2020 actions on climate change, as well as the G7's announcement at its last Summit to "fully decarbonize" the world's energy systems by the end of the century and commitments by other countries are commendable.

The message in His Holiness Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change and the environment has spurred discussions about the moral issues surrounding inaction on climate change.

Climate change is not simply a matter of concern for scientists or politicians; it is an issue that is of profound importance for everyday people; young and old, rich and poor.

In a year when we have pledged to put people at the centre of all we do, we must heed the calls of the collective global community and take concrete and courageous steps to address climate change as a matter of utmost priority and urgency.

This year we have a unique opportunity to take collective action to address the most pressing issue of our time.

Together, we should spare no effort to reach a balanced and universally-binding agreement in December that promotes the achievement of sustainable development and preserves our planet.

I thank you for your kind attention.