

Foreword



At the 13th session of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in Bali, Indonesia, we met to initiate an ambitious new phase of international cooperation on climate change in the light of compelling scientific evidence. At that time, I spoke of climate change as the “defining challenge of our time”. I also presented the beginning of an unprecedented coordination effort bringing together all the multilateral institutions that are part of the United Nations System to develop a strategic, coherent and operational framework to support the intergovernmentally agreed decisions within the UNFCCC. My intention has been to bring together all the diverse perspectives, expertise and strengths of the UN System so as to deliver as one in the critical area of climate change.

Since Bali we have seen even more compelling evidence why we must act now. Devastating recent climatic events like the tropical cyclones in Myanmar and the Caribbean, widespread flooding in India and China, and drought in Africa have highlighted the vulnerability that people all over the world face. It is clear that those who suffer the most from the increasing signs of climate change are the poor. Those that have contributed the least to this planetary problem continue to be disproportionately at risk.

As we meet in Poznan, we are witnessing the confluence of a series of events that threaten the very fabric of the international system and human and ecological security of individuals everywhere. The high and volatile food and energy prices have thrust at least 100 million people back into poverty. With the global financial crisis, and the recession that is following it, these numbers are likely to rise. We risk that all the efforts that have been made by countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to alleviate poverty, hunger and ill health will be rolled back.

At such a time, risks also present opportunities. In the face of mounting threats, the international community must demonstrate extraordinary will to come together and put in place the foundation for a better future. An ambitious climate agreement must be an essential part of this. Poznan must signal a clear message of commitment, coherence and momentum on climate change. As we look forward to Copenhagen, we must seize the opportunities presented by the multiple global crises to vision a low-carbon economy; one which not only ensures a secure climate but also spurs sustained economic growth. In other words, greatly enhanced investment in renewable energy and energy efficient technologies can not only put the Earth onto a sustainable track, it can generate employment and growth on an impressive scale. Massively increased investment in forest conservation and afforestation can have climate, biodiversity and economic benefits that are mutually supportive and strengthen our ability to reduce disaster risk. We must raise our collective level of ambition and commitment.

In delivering on agreements in the future, the world needs effective, efficient and well coordinated international institutions. This is particularly the case in the area of financing for climate change, both in terms of institutional arrangements and levels of funding. The entire UN System, through its Chief Executives Board, is committed to creating among its member institutions a strong and vibrant joint capacity to play its essential role in the transition to a sustainable and equitable world.

The attached document “Acting on Climate Change: The UN Delivering as One” outlines the second phase of the CEB initiative, as we prepare to roll out a more strategic joint framework of activities that we will present as a contribution to COP 15 in Copenhagen. Executive Heads in the United Nations System have mobilized the wide range of expertise and knowledge available within our organizations to focus on priority areas and specific deliverables which follow the approach defined in the negotiation and in pursuance of broader mandates and capacities already existing in the System.

The initiative brings together expertise and ongoing work in diverse areas ranging from science and technology to agriculture, transport, forestry and disaster risk reduction, to address both mitigation and adaptation. It brings together the normative, standard setting and knowledge sharing capacities of the System with its operational reach in order to support the most vulnerable. The United Nations System is positioning itself as an effective conduit of international action on an unprecedented scale.

We must take a comprehensive approach to address the interconnected issues of economic growth and development, climate change, food and agriculture, and energy. The role of global markets and financial instruments to deliver a low carbon economy and green growth will be paramount. Stimulus packages currently being designed to kick-start economic activity should be invested in infrastructure projects that deliver dividends of economic growth, cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and new green jobs. We must give real meaning to the concept of sustainable development, one that has inclusiveness, equity and environmental sustainability at its heart. An ambitious and fair climate agreement together with the political will to implement it will be a central component of global sustainable development.

On the way to the next Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC, in Copenhagen, the UN system will continue to intensify its efforts for a more coordinated and effective delivery in all areas related to climate change. We hope that our determined efforts in bridging the current implementation gap will contribute to long-term cooperative action on climate change at all levels and thereby help to reach a successful outcome in the negotiations. The UN system stands ready to assist with the implementation of the new mandates that will result from such an agreement.

I wish you every success in your negotiations here in Poznan. The whole world is watching and waiting; we should not disappoint them.

BAN Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations