



PORTUGAL 2007

UNITED NATIONS

High-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General

The Future in our Hands:

Addressing the Leadership Challenge of Climate Change

THEMATIC PLENARY II – MITIGATION

***“REDUCING EMISSIONS AND STABILIZING THE CLIMATE
SAFEGUARDING OUR COMMON FUTURE”***

Statement by

H.E. Mr. José Sócrates

Prime Minister of Portugal

on behalf of the European Union

New York, September 24th 2007

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Distinguished Co-Chairs,

It is an honour to address this gathering both as Prime-Minister of Portugal and as President of the Council of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia*, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

1. The challenge of Climate Change

Climate change presents Humanity with a major challenge.

The United Nations' Secretary-General focus on this global challenge is much welcomed by the European Union. We hope this High-Level Event will contribute to raising awareness of the severity of the threat posed by climate change and the absolute urgency of dealing with it.

2. Scientific and Economic findings

The time for scientific dispute and uncertainty as to whether climate change is real or not is long gone. There is now solid scientific evidence:

- that warming of the climate system is absolutely certain; and
- that most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to human activity.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

The impacts of climate change, that are literally “knocking at our door” almost every day all over the world, will quickly become unmanageable, with dramatic consequences for Humanity and our environment.

Can we revert this? Yes, we can, by taking swift and effective international action to reduce our global greenhouse gas emissions.

Some say this will affect the global economy. However, if we look at the alternatives, it becomes obvious that without such action the consequences for the global economy will be far worse.

The Stern Review, for instance, estimates that climate change could shrink the economy by up to 20% of global GDP – more or less the same as the World Wars or the Great Depression – whereas tackling this phenomenon will only amount to 1% of global GDP.

3. Political will to tackle Climate Change

My fellow Colleagues,

The Scientists have spoken. The Economists have also spoken. It is now time for us, Politicians, to start acting.

So as to avoid dangerous climate change impacts, the global mean surface temperature increase must not exceed 2°C above pre-industrial levels. To this end, global emissions need to peak in the next 10 to 15 years and be reduced to at least 50% below 1990 levels by mid-century.

These are ambitious, yet feasible goals. In order to reach them, we must all, by the end of 2009, agree on a global and comprehensive climate change framework for the period post-2012.

4. Post-2012 international framework on Climate Change

The European Union has a clear view of what this framework should be.

Firstly, the scale of the challenge calls for unprecedented international co-operation, involving all countries in a global effort to halt climate change, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Secondly, we must agree on binding emission reduction targets for developed countries. Last Spring, the European Council has affirmed our willingness to commit to a 30% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, in the context of an international agreement where other developed countries make comparable efforts and economically more advanced developing countries contribute adequately.

Thirdly, emissions from deforestation and from international aviation and maritime transport must also be addressed.

Fourthly, we believe emissions reductions can and should be achieved in a cost-effective manner, particularly through enhancing the global carbon market and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which are important tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, foster sustainable development.

Finally, we need to put adaptation to climate change high on our political agenda.

5. UN Process as the centrepiece of the multilateral response to Climate Change

The European Union welcomes all ongoing initiatives, at different levels, aiming to facilitate an international agreement on climate change. It must, nevertheless, remain clear that the UN climate change process is the appropriate *forum* for negotiating future global action.

In this context, the Bali Summit at the end of this year stands as a milestone, where we expect the international community to launch an ambitious roadmap for negotiations on a global and comprehensive climate change agreement.

6. Ending

My fellow Colleagues,

Let us unite our efforts in order to effectively mitigate global warming. Climate change poses an immense challenge, but it also offers significant opportunities.

If we gradually start moving towards a decarbonised economy, if we invest on new and clean technologies, if we promote renewable energies, then it is possible to overcome the challenge of climate change and still achieve economic development, doing so in a sustainable way.

This is not a dream; this is something that is in our hands.

Thank you very much.