



**Fortieth Pacific Islands Forum
Cairns, 5 August 2009]**

**Address by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The decisions that governments make in the next 120 days will define the success or failure of Copenhagen as the turning point in humanity's fight against climate change.

Science tells us that the window of opportunity to put effective measures into place is closing fast.

Climate change is with us. You know that more clearly than most. Your countries, your people, your economies will bear the worst.

Quite simply, Copenhagen cannot fail. It is not that we have time left to decide to act, it is that we have no time left to act.

Copenhagen must be the time and the place where our generation lays the foundations of a new order of political, economic and public behaviour which will avoid the worst effects of climate change.

The words sound grand but, like most lasting historic international agreements, it will happen only if governments are bold but practical, and match political realities to the ultimate goal.

The great political cynic Napoleon Bonaparte said: "If you wish to be a success in the world, promise everything, but deliver nothing."

We know that climate change does not recognize narrow, self-interest, so Copenhagen must not consist of such empty or impossible promises.

A Copenhagen agreement must therefore comprise a founding set of robust and durable political agreements.

These political agreements must allow everyone to participate willingly from the start, and must inevitably lead to the goal of preventing further, human-generated climate change.

The objective is an agreement, whatever its final form, that the world recognizes as believable, achievable, and inviolable, an agreement which future generations will look back to and say: this WAS the turning point.

I believe Copenhagen will be termed a success if at the end of the meeting three things have been achieved:

First, if rich nations have adopted targets that dramatically reduce their emissions by 2020.

Second, if major developing countries have offered national actions which significantly take their emissions below business as usual.

And third, if rich nations have put on the table significant financial resources that, most importantly, help developing countries to adapt, and help them significantly lower their emissions.

Copenhagen must deliver these three essentials in terms of an unequivocal political agreement.

If details on how to structure national planning, international reporting and funding, tools, rules and market mechanisms can be clearly agreed at Copenhagen, all the better. But if not, these details can be worked out later.

Governments have a great opportunity at the informal negotiating meeting next week, in Bonn, to make real progress by focusing hard on these central political issues

At the June session, the negotiating texts were enriched, expanded and clarified, but options must now be narrowed and texts simplified and shortened.

At this stage, it is not acceptable to continue negotiations as usual. Rapid progress must be made to reach consensus on these three essential political outcomes.

As we approach Copenhagen, the alarm bells of science have been ringing louder and louder since the IPCC's fourth assessment report in 2007, telling us the time is ripe to act.

Now, we are also at a high tide of political commitment to reach an agreement.

This moment must be seized, because it may not come again if Copenhagen is seen to fail.

Since the launch of negotiations on a post-2012 international climate change deal in Bali two years ago, not a single government has backtracked on its fundamental commitment to clinch an ambitious and effective deal at the end of this year.

Now, from the highest political levels, we also have a clear mandate to reach an agreement at Copenhagen.

In July, leaders from the G8, the Major Economies Forum and ministers at the Greenland Dialogue all produced declarations calling for this.

All recognized the scientific warning that the global maximum temperature increase should not exceed two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Let me also quote the MEF declaration for you: “We resolve to spare no effort with each other and with other Parties to reach an agreement at Copenhagen ... based on the decisions taken at Bali ... and in line with the objectives, provisions and principles of the Convention.”

The political will exists, and the political objectives are clear.

I believe all sides are closer to achieving their common political purpose than is sometimes evident from the outside.

Let me, therefore, say briefly where I think we stand.

The scientific community has indicated that to stay below two degrees, industrialized countries must reduce their emissions between 25-40 per cent over 1990 levels by 2020.

Almost all individual, industrialized countries now have offers on the table pledging emission cuts by 2020.

It is clear more needs to be done to meet the cuts science has specified.

But it is also clear that ambitions can be raised, once efforts are compared and additional efforts are made through international cooperation, via markets or mechanisms.

Japan, for example, has already said it can raise its offer higher if it includes action through international cooperation.

In the United States, research by the World Resources Institute shows US emissions could be reduced by up to 33 per cent over 2005 by 2020, if all complementary requirements and standards which flow from the Waxman-Markey bill were to be enforced.

Meanwhile, major developing countries have already done a lot to limit the growth of their emissions from business as usual.

This has now been recognized in industrialized world capitals, not least by the US administration.

Industrialized country governments can point to these efforts in order to get more ambitious emissions cuts for their own nations ratified at home.

Many developing countries also plan to do more, with the right finance and technology support. This should be publicized as much as possible.

There is also common agreement that Copenhagen should have a strong adaptation framework, and that urgent action is required to help the poorest and most vulnerable nations.

To make all this work, there must also be clear political agreement on two issues:

- Commitment to deliver predictable and stable finance;
- And commitment on all sides to measurable, reportable and verifiable action, or MRV, to seal mutual trust.

There is no question that very large sums must be mobilized by industrialized world governments and by the private sector in the coming years to meet the developing world's needs to adapt and to mitigate.

This commitment must be part of the Copenhagen agreement.

My own view is that 10 billion dollars is needed immediately to allow developing countries to begin preparing national plans to limit their emissions and to adapt to climate change, through their NAMAs and their NAPAs, as well as for early adaptation action.

For you here today, Copenhagen is a huge opportunity.

It is an opportunity both to protect your countries from climate change, and to move rapidly towards clean, sustainable growth.

Many of the nations represented here have no direct voice in major climate change forums outside the Convention.

But you are the conscience of the Convention.

Use this to demand action, but use it in terms larger nations will respond to, not only from a sense of responsibility, but because they understand the mutual benefits of cooperation.

Adaptation is urgent, but it is only half of the solution. Mitigation for you means economic development and energy security.

Ambitious global mitigation targets will not stop climate change impacts, but they will determine the level of adaptation required and thus the amount of financing.

Weak mitigation ambitions will cost rich countries more in the long-term, both morally and financially.

The key to a successful fight against climate change is an agreement in Copenhagen which gets everyone moving, immediately, ambitiously and willingly.

The history of great change shows repeatedly that to establish a trend, humans need a bold objective, an understandable set of rules and a means to act.

But once the trend is set, they take it farther and faster than could have been imagined.

Fifteen years ago, there was no internet economy. Now it is worth one trillion dollars a year with 1.5 billion users, and is a major boost to development, equal opportunity and wealth creation.

The future of the green economy has even greater potential.

Energy has four billion users of electricity, forecast to double in 25 years. It is set to be the largest economic opportunity of the 21st century for everyone, if Copenhagen releases it.

Copenhagen is not just another international treaty.

Copenhagen must set the political foundations for fundamental behavioural change across the globe.

Governments, the public, industry and investors will make the right choices if the right laws, finance, technology, standards, incentives and mechanisms are put in place to reach the right goal.

But the political commitment to do this must come first, and this is what Copenhagen must deliver.

Without this, I believe we may lose a last chance to act effectively, and the unforgiving effects of climate change will be upon us.

Flying over the vast oceans of this region to get here reminded me of a quote from Shakespeare. He put it like this:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men.
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*

Thank you

- - - - -