

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**REMARKS AT OPENING OF CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM  
Dhaka, 14 November 2011**

Your Excellency, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Former President of Costa Rica, Distinguished Guests, Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, Salam Alaykum! It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this second Climate Vulnerable Forum, and I appreciate and commend the leadership of the outgoing Chair, Maldives, and incoming Chair, Bangladesh.

Thank you all for coming to this very important Forum.

You may represent different countries, but the challenges we face are common - climate change – we have to save this planet, we have to save human lives. That is why we are here this morning, and I hope there will be a strong commitment demonstrated by the leaders of the world. We will be able to address this climate change, the single most important challenge which we are facing these days.

To solve them, we must work together. We must be united.

And, of course, is why everybody is here today.

Sheik Hasina, let me begin by saying what a pleasure to be back in Bangladesh again, and thank you for your hospitality.

I visited Dhaka three years ago.

It was my first time as Secretary-General of the United Nations. But it was not my first time ever.

I was here in the 1970s when I was a junior officer of the Korean Government.

Those were the early years of Bangladeshi nationhood.

The nation has come a long way in the past four decades. This impressive, remarkable progress you have made under your leadership.

You have made great strides towards political stability and economic growth.

Your achievements across all the Millennium Development Goals are a source of national inspiration and I hope all these good examples will be emulated by many countries aspiring to this transition.

And you are a world leader in disaster risk reduction.

In 1991, a cyclone killed more than 140,000 people.

Then after twenty years, in 2007, when Cyclone Sidr struck Bangladesh again, many volunteers of Bangladesh with bullhorns and bicycles helped to move thousands and thousands of people out of the disaster region.

Four thousand people unfortunately lost their lives, but look at the difference between 140,000 to 4,000 – that is the difference depending on how you prepare yourselves for natural disasters – you can save human lives. We may not predict earthquakes or tsunami, but depending on how much you make preparations, it will make a huge difference. That is one thing which I have been showcasing -- the example of Bangladesh.

Because of its adaptation and preparedness measures, the people of Bangladesh are much safer today.

The lesson is clear: natural hazards need not cause human catastrophe.

There are many cost-effective remedies that communities and countries can take to reduce the impact of extreme weather patterns.

This is a key message of a special report being released this week by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, known as IPCC, on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters.

The severity of cyclones, floods and other consequences of climate change are increasing.

Strong disaster risk reduction and adaptation policies will be increasingly essential.

Since 1970, 95 per cent of lives lost from natural disasters – both climate-related and other events like earthquakes – have been in developing countries.

The IPCC report provides guidance to governments on disaster risk reduction and adaptation.

And it describes the factors that increase a population's vulnerability – location, age, wealth, education – and gender.

Bangladesh is acutely aware of its vulnerability to the growing impacts of climate change – cyclones, flooding, and sea level rise.

As Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the United Nations General Assembly last September, a one-metre rise in sea level could displace 30 million Bangladeshis.

You are on the front line of climate change.

It is fitting therefore, that Bangladesh is hosting this meeting on climate vulnerability.

Earlier this year I visited Kiribati. I have visited many places around the world, but it was a

most heartbreaking experience for me to observe.

I met a young boy who told me: “Secretary-General, I am very afraid of going to bed at night because I may be drowned”. And the parents were guarding their children during the night time because the highest point of Kiribati is just three meters high.

I was invited to visit the highest point above sea level -- three meters high. The highest sea tide at the full moon comes to three meters, so every day and night this whole country is under water and above water. I and my wife were given life jackets because we may be drowned during the night. That is a real fact.

There are many vulnerable people, many vulnerable nations across the world.

I have been travelling to almost all the places where I could see for myself and learn the impact of climate change, starting from Antarctica; North Pole; Amazon -- where I could see the impact of deforestation which causes climate change; Aral Sea; Lake Chad, where I have seen the dried up sea bed and lake bed, which used to be once a huge ocean and sea and huge lake. These have been all dried up. Only in thirty or forty years time. This is alarming.

Just in three days, this week, I am going to Kalimantan mountain in Indonesia, to see again the impact of deforestation. We have to save this planet earth. That is why we are gathering here.

Every country is affected – there is no country which is safe.

Each faces threats to lives, ecosystems and prosperity.

Climate change is a global problem requiring a global solution, global solidarity. That is why I am asking the leaders of the world to demonstrate their political leadership.

It requires urgent efforts on the part of every country, every citizen, every business community and civil society. We need scaled-up national, international and regional efforts.

As the IPCC has pointed out, it is imperative that global greenhouse gas emissions peak within this decade.

Yet, carbon emissions last year unfortunately were the highest in history.

Just last week, the International Energy Agency released a report saying we are close to a point of no return for staying under two degrees centigrade [temperature rise] which was recommended and agreed by the international community and by the IPCC.

If we keep adding fossil fuel-based infrastructure, we will forever lose the chance to avoid dangerous climate change.

Climate impacts will be with us for decades to come as a result of emissions released today.

Adaptation must be a priority for all countries, but especially the most vulnerable countries.

They need help with resources and technology.

But, our capacity to adapt is limited.

It is only viable in the context of effective mitigation.

I commend the lead taken by Bangladesh to follow a pro-development, low carbon path.

You have also established a Climate Change Trust Fund and a Resilience Fund.

In this time of global economic uncertainty, let your commitment to green growth be an inspiration to more developed countries -- the major emitters.

We are in the middle of a serious economic crisis.

But even in these difficult times, we cannot afford delay.

Climate change is not a luxury. We cannot ask the poorest and the most vulnerable to share the brunt of this impact.

Governments will soon meet in Durban next month.

Unresolved issues are both critical and complex.

Compromise and common sense will be crucial.

I count on the members of the UNFCCC to arrive with a strong and united voice. And there is a crucially important role by the members of this CVF to speak up. You have the politically very legitimate right to speak up, in your case to, particularly, the developed world.

Durban must complete what was agreed last year in Cancún. Governments must ensure that adaptation framework and technology transfer mechanisms are up and running as soon as possible.

Durban also must advance a work programme on loss and damage to respond to the needs of countries like Bangladesh that are particularly affected by extreme climate events. But this will not be enough.

In Durban I expect that countries will make the clarification on the future of the Kyoto Protocol. They have to launch the Green Climate Fund and they have to have a clarification on the short term and longer term climate change financing, as President Figueres has just said. There was a 30 billion dollar promise in Copenhagen. We have identified only 27 billion dollars. We have to make it happen and we have to have clear understanding and agreement on how the developed world will generate 100 billion dollars per year by 2020. That was a promise made in Copenhagen three years ago.

The Fund needs to be launched in Durban. An empty shell cannot be unanswered. We must fill this shell. Governments must find ways now to provide financial and technological support to the developing world who do not have any capacity at this time.

This is the message I am taking to Durban next month.

A measure of any society is how well it looks after its most vulnerable. Our hosts here today in Bangladesh are making extraordinary progress in protecting the safety and well-being of our people. Some of the world's most vulnerable countries, also represented here, are some of the best models for a clean energy future - Costa Rica, Ethiopia, the Maldives, Samoa, all plan to go carbon neutral. I recently launched my Sustainable Energy For All Initiative.

Energy is a very effective cost cutting tool. We have still 1.4 billion people in this world who do not have access to electricity. Without energy, we cannot realize all our blueprints - MDGs, and sanitation and health. It will help end poverty, drive economic dynamism, and reduce climate risks.

It is a win-win-win for all countries. I urge all Members of this Forum to join us in this initiative. We must work together to build a safer world and a more prosperous world.

Ladies and gentlemen, last month, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, we have welcomed the seven billionth citizen of this world family. Whether it is a blessing or a concern - that depends upon on how we can prepare to make this world better for all.

A seven billionth citizen can be a challenge, but that also can be an opportunity, depending upon on how we are united. We have to address all these issues in a sustainable way, in a comprehensive way, from a broader perspective; we have to link the dots among climate change, food crisis, nutrition, water scarcity, energy shortages and gender empowerment. All these are interconnected. If we link all this with one "golden thread", we can expect a solution to all the challenges which we are having.

So let us work together to make this world better for all and more prosperous for all the countries, and I count on your leadership and commitment.

Thank you very much.